

The Truth-Seeking Objective of Chinese Philosophy of Mind

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Abstract

Most scholars believe that western philosophy of mind is endowed with the truth-seeking goal in its investigation of the nature of the mind, whereas Chinese philosophy of mind aims at the value-seeking objective through its endeavors to the interpretation of the mind's function to human being's becoming saints. However, we insist that, besides the value-seeking tendency, the Chinese philosophy of mind also demonstrates its truth-seeking objective. This thesis reveals and reconstructs the focus questions, content and features of the truth-seeking Chinese philosophy of mind by means of looking into the soul concept, mind-body theory, psychological phenomenology and psycho-semantics in Chinese philosophy.

Keywords

Mind, The Meta-Question, Psychological Phenomenology, Mind-Body Problem, Ontology of Mind, Psychosemantics

1. Background

The meta-problem of philosophy of mind refers to the problem of philosophy of mind itself, such as what is philosophy of mind, whether a theory of mind is the standard of philosophy of mind, and so on. If a philosophical theory has a critical reflection on folk psychology and a philosophical study of the ontology and essence of the mind itself, it can be regarded as a philosophical theory of the mind. Chauvinism is a theory about the meta-problem of philosophy of mind, that is to say, only western philosophy of mind based on linguistic analysis is philosophy of mind, and other philosophies of mind such as India and China are not true philosophy of mind. Liberalism believes that any theory that discusses

the problem of mind can be regarded as philosophy of mind. Eclecticism is a theory between the above two theories.

According to Professor Xinmin Gao, there are two domains of discourses in philosophy of mind: the truth-seeking philosophy of mind with the objective of clarifying the nature of the mind; and the value-seeking philosophy of mind that aims to interpret the mind's function to human being's becoming saints (Gao, 2006: pp. 23-32). Distinct from the widely-accepted idea that western philosophy of mind meets with the former, whereas Chinese philosophy of mind squares with the latter, this thesis points out that Chinese philosophy of mind demonstrates the truth-seeking objective in its elaboration on the existence, constituents, structural function and nature of the mind and its relation to the body as well as its value-seeking tendency. The underlying reasons are revealing. On the one hand, Chinese philosophy cannot resist the temptation of the truth and understanding. On the other hand, its exploration of the potential value of the mind can hardly do without the learning of it. Besides, we believe that the concept of Chinese philosophy of mind refers to the theoretical system of philosophy of mind created by Chinese philosophy in different times since the pre-Qin Dynasty to answer questions such as psychological language, folk psychology, spiritual outlook, psychosomatic questions, other mental knowledge, self, self-consciousness, intentionality, nature of feeling, gifted mind (mind), and the value dimension of mind. Among them, the dominant philosophy of mind is value-oriented philosophy of mind, but there are also truth-seeking philosophies of mind. Many of their contents are of modern significance and worth carrying forward, such as the anti-dualism or ultra-dualism thought, non-substantialism, non-centralism, broad-mindedness, special form of embodied thought, and so on.

This thesis reveals and reconstructs the focus questions, content and features of the truth-seeking Chinese philosophy of mind by means of looking into the soul concept, mind-body theory, psychological phenomenology and psychosemantics in Chinese philosophy.

2. Conceptual Schemata of Humans: Multi-Dimensional Mind Observation

The “mind” became a frequently-used concept after Northern Song Dynasty because of the development of *lixue* (理学, a Confucian school of idealist philosophy), especially *xinxue* (心学, the philosophy of the mind). Meanwhile, it has been one of the controversial concepts since then. People not only referred it to the heart but also gave it multi-functions, like spiritual substance, numenon and the subject of teleognosis and thinking. Zhu Xi said, “The mind is the essence of the pneuma (*Xinzhe, qi zhi jingshuang* 心者, 气之精爽)”, and the mind can “perceive and is the psyche of the pneuma (*Nengjue zhe, qi zhi ling zhe* 能觉者, 气之灵者)”. “The mind is very nimble; it knows everything past and predicts the future (*Xinguan zhi ling, zangwang zhilai* 心官至灵, 藏往知来).”¹ The heart

¹Zhuzi Yulei (*Zhu Xi's Language Categories*). (In Chinese)

performs the functions of clarification and awareness and memory and prediction.

However, multi-dimensional observation of the mind in ancient China began in as early as the spring and autumn period, due to people's anatomical knowledge about human bodies. Ancient Chinese had not only access to numerous terms concerning their integral structure, features and constituents, but also different terms indicating the integral body, body (*shen* 身), physique (*ti* 体), trunk (*qu* 躯), form (*xing* 形). As Zhuangzi concluded, the body is “the contour of all the bones (*baihai zhi zongkuo* 百骸之总括)”, and can be called the “trunk (*qu*)”.² Liu Xi pointed out in *The Explanation of the Terms* (*Shiming* 《释名》) that the body is the unity of “bones, flesh, hair, blood and skin (*grou maoxue bialo daxiao xiang cidi* 骨肉毛血表里大小相次第).”³ In *The Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 《易经》), there are already many terms about the five sense organs and the others, like head (*shou* 首), eyes (*yan* 眼), ear (*er* 耳), nose (*bi* 鼻), mouth (*kou* 口), tongue (*she* 舌), cheeks (*jia* 颊), skin (*fu* 肤), arms (*gong* 肱), belly (*fu* 腹), buttocks (*tun* 臀), thigh (*gu* 股), calf (*fei* 腓), heart (*xin* 心), blood (*xue* 血), and even their physiological functions.

It is worth noting that ancient Chinese possessed the concept of the “mind” before the formation of their own soul concept, though the primitive “mind” referred to the biorgan, the heart (Chinese called it the flesh heart, *routuan xin* 肉团心). And due to its unique position in the human body, it was given various non-physiological functions, which led to people's belief that there was spiritual mind inside it. According to *The Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 《左传》), Chinese formed the concept of the spiritual “mind” and related it to the soul and vigor (*hunpo* 魂魄) which was regarded as “the essence of the heart” (“*xin zhi jingshuang* 心之精爽”) in the spring and autumn period, though subtle, fundamental to life; its departure from the body without return would bring an end to life.

As to questions like what the soul (*hun* 魂) is, what the vigor (*po* 魄) is, how they begin and what their relation to the body is, Kong Yingda's (574-648 CE) *Exact Implication of the Commentary of Zuo* (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi* 《春秋左传正义》) has made a simpler interpretation of what *The Commentary of Zuo* says:

Human beings bear the five vital elements (*wuchang* 五常) to live and perceive *yin* (阴) and *yang* (阳) to be nimble. They possess the body and entitle it form (*xing*); they possess the respiration and name it pneuma (*qi* 气). The combination of the two is used to build up one's strength and finally makes one a person... At birth, a man begins with the form whose psyche (*ling* 灵) is the vigor (*po*). And inside the vigor (*po*), one can find *yangqi* (阳气). The spirit of pneuma (*qi*) is the vigor (*po*). The soul and the vigor (*hunpo*) are the names of the spirit (*shen* 神) and the psyche (*ling*)

²Zhuangzi: *Waiwu* (*Zhuangzi: External Things*). (In Chinese)

³Zuozhuan: *Zhengyi* (*The Commentary of Zuo: The righteous*). (In Chinese)

which come from the form (*xing*) and pneuma (*qi*) respectively. Now that the form (*xing*) and pneuma (*qi*) are different, so are the soul and vigor (*hunpo*). The psyche (*ling*) attached to form (*xing*) is the vigor (*po*); the spirit (*shen*) attached to pneuma (*qi*) is the soul (*hun*). The former means one's ears and eyes, hands and feet and movement and cry and making sound at the beginning of the life; it is the psyche of the vigor (*po zhi ling* 魄之灵). The latter refers to the spirits and innate ability of judgment (*jingshen shixing* 精神识性); they are gradually learned. Such vigor (*po*) forms before the soul (*hun*); therefore, having the vigor (*po*), a man possesses *yangqi*, i.e. the soul (*hun*). Though both the soul (*hun*) and the vigor (*po*) are nimble in nature, the vigor (*po*) owns fewer abilities of judgment than the soul (*hun*).⁴

This interpretation not only shows the early formation of the Chinese concept of the mind (earlier than the western one which came out in the 5th Century BCE after Pythagoras), but also elaborates the most distinctive features of ancient Chinese theory of the humans and mind-body problem, more complex than its western counterpart, annotating human as having constituents like the form, pneuma, vigor and soul which appear orderly during humans' coming into being and function respectively then, not as a unity of the soul and the flesh. To "re-construct" this concept in modern terms, we tend to put it as follows. Firstly, human is made up of gold (*jin* 金), wood (*mu* 木), water (*shui* 水), fire (*huo* 火) and earth (*tu* 土) (the five vital elements (*wuxing* 五行)) through the movements of *yinqi* and *yangqi*. Secondly, the above elements become different constituents of human after their entrance into the body. For example, the five vital elements (*wuxing*) become the body, or the form; *yinqi* and *yangqi* become the pneuma (*qi*) all over the body which prompts human to move, to identify and to think. Thirdly, these functions of human are formed after the formation of different organs or mechanisms in the interaction of the form and pneuma. For instance, the psyche (*ling*), or vigor (*po*), the very subtle and nimble substances in the interior of such elements in forming of the "form" (*xing*) appear during the process; they are "the psyche attached to form" (*fuxing zhi ling* 附形之灵), responsible for human perceptual cognition, limb movements and respiration. And meanwhile, the soul, "the spirit of pneuma (*qi zhi shen* 气之

⁴People are born after bearing the five elements, and are moved by the spirit of yin and yang. There is the essence of the body, called the form table. There is a movement of blowing and sucking, called Qi. 'The combination of form and qi makes it possible to become human... People who begin to change into shapes and form the soul are called soul.' Since there is moonlight, there is yang in the soul. The spirit of Qi is called soul. The soul, the name of a god, is derived from form and qi. The body is different, and the soul is also different. The soul attached to the body is the soul, and the spirit attached to the Qi is the soul. A person who is attached to the spirit of the body knows, moves, cries, and cries in the eyes, hands, feet, and hearts of the newborn. This is the soul of the soul. People who possess the spirit of Qi gradually gain an understanding of spiritual awareness, which is the spirit of Qi. This is because the soul is in front and the soul is behind. Therefore, since the soul is born, Yang says the soul. Although all souls are souls, they have less soul knowledge and more soul knowledge." Yingda Kong, Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi 《春秋左传正义》(Exact Implication of the Commentary of Zuo). (In Chinese)

神)”, or “the spirit attached to pneuma (*fuqi zhi shen* 附气之神)”, is dispensable to human. It follows that the concepts of the “spirit (*shen*)” and the “psyche (*ling*)” are obviously earlier than those of the “soul (*hun*)” and the “vigor (*po*)” they are used to decipher. The hieroglyphic “spirit (*shen*)” appeared in the oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions resembling the lightening in the sky. At that time, people were unable to understand this natural phenomenon, so they regarded it as mystery and apparition thus in awe and respect of it. And in the process of their self-recognition, people found that their intangible and invisible ideas and imagination are, just like the “spirit (*shen*)”, beyond time and space; therefore, they believed that there is “spirit (*shen*)” inside them, that is the soul (*hun*) which is made of *yangqi* and can be the subject of advanced mental activities such as thinking and imagination, thus performs the functions of the “spirits and innate ability of judgment (*jingshen shixing*)”. Fourthly, the soul and the vigor (*hunpo*) are distinct in position, formation time and function, though they are pneumatic, nimble and subtle. Human possesses the vigor (*po*) prior to the soul (*hun*) which on the contrary, exerts more influence as the truly “spirits and innate ability of judgment (*jingshen shixing*)”. Fifthly, Chinese ancient theory of mind-body relation, in a crisscrossed network of the form (*xing*), pneuma (*qi*), soul (*hun*) and vigor (*po*), is more complex than the western one. The soul and vigor (*hunpo*) represents the spirit of human, while the form (*xing*) and pneuma (*qi*), the body. Human mind or spirit has various functions which belong to different parts of the body. So come into being the interrelating relations within the network. Sixthly, the “death of the soul (*linghun zhisi* 灵魂之死)” was involved in this understanding. The soul and vigor (*hunpo*), as the spirit (*shen*) and essence of the pneuma (*qi zhi jing* 气之精), will never vanish but to change the way of existence or dependence after the death of the human body which lives by the five vital elements (*wuxing*). What is more, ancient Chinese realized that the influence of the soul (*hun*) of a ghost or its harm depends on its strength before its death.

The idea of the soul and vigor (*hunpo*) became prevailing in Chinese philosophy of mind as soon as it came into being and has maintained its status for 2000 years. Zhu Xi in Northern Song Dynasty, underlain by Zheng Zichan’s thoughts, summarized the two concepts of the “vigor (*po*)” and the “soul (*hun*)”:

The one who said “substance begins to change at birth” means that at the beginning of its formation, substance’s essence and blood are gathered, among which the psyche is called the vigor. “Having the vigor, a man possesses *yangqi*, i.e. the soul” means that a man will have the warm pneuma after possession of the vigor, and that the spirit of this is called the soul. The combination of the two converts the spirit and pneuma into the substance. After the death of the substance, the soul becomes the god, whereas the vigor becomes the ghost. The one who said so didn’t prove that, but according to his explanation, it seems not that reasonable to equal the vigor to the movement of respiration, though justifiable to distinguish *yin* with *yang* in

the light of the spirit and psyche. What is more, what he said about the psyche attached to the form and the spirit attached to the pneuma seems to be close to the truth too.⁵

The vigor is the spirit of the form; the soul is the spirit of the pneuma. The soul and vigor are the essence of the spirit and pneuma, i.e. psyche... The soul is the reason why humans can think and plan; whereas the vigor explains why humans can memorize and identify.⁶

Except for the above concepts of the “spirit (*shen*)”, “psyche (*ling*)”, “soul (*hun*)” and “vigor (*po*)”, there are many other ones that denote the concept of human essence. Take “essence (*jing* 精)” for example. Before Zhuangzi, this word was used individually to refer to mental phenomenon. The composition of it is similar to the vital essence and seminal fluid, thus called pneuma (*qi*); however, it has unique and huge effect on both the outside creatures and itself as the subject of recognition and thinking. *Guanzi* says, “[Such pneuma (*qi*)] cannot be stopped with enforcement but can be stabilized with virtue; it cannot be summoned with sounds but can be greeted with thoughts (*Buke zhi yi li, er ke an yi de; buke hu yi sheng, erke ying yi yin.* 不可止以力, 而可安以德; 不可呼以声, 而可迎以音).”⁷ Besides, thinking is the peak of the “vital essence (*jingqi* 精气).”⁸ But *Internal Canon of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi Neijing 《黄帝内经》)* defines the “essence (*jing*)” as the root of life (*Fujingzhe, shenzhiben ye.* 夫精者, 身之本也).⁹

3. The Range of the Mind: The Extended Boundary of Psychological Phenomenology

Unlike its western rival in psychological phenomenology, Chinese philosophy of

⁵“The beginning of the formation of things is the beginning of transformation.” The cloud refers to the beginning of receiving the form, the gathering of essence and blood, and the presence of spirits in the process. The name is also called Soul’ ‘Those who produce both soul and yang call soul, and those who produce this soul have warm (yang) qi, and those who have gods in between are named soul’. ‘Both combine, and then there is something. It is also easy to call the essence as something’. ‘If it is extremely scattered, the soul will swim and become a god, and the soul will descend and become a ghost’. ‘The speaker does not examine this, but according to Zuo Shu, if it is reasonable for him to divide yin and yang by gods, it would be lost if he took the movement of hissing and sucking as his soul’. It seems that the spirit attached to the form and the spirit attached to the qi are also close to being. ‘Everything is born and transformed,’ which refers to the gathering of essence and blood at the beginning of the terrain, and the person with a spirit in it is called the soul’ ‘Since the soul is born, Yang speaks of the soul, and since the soul is born here, there is heat (Yang). Among them, those who have gods are called souls’. ‘After combining the two, something changes the so-called essence into something’. When he disappears, the soul swims and becomes a god, and the soul descends and becomes a ghost. ‘Those who like it don’t take this test, but if they occupy the left distance, they divide yin and yang by gods. Although it seems reasonable, it’s just because the movement of blowing and sucking is the soul, which is wrong’. His words, the spirit attached to form, the spirit attached to qi, seem to be close to this.” *Chuci Bianzheng (Identification and Demonstration of The Songs of Chu)*. (In Chinese)

⁶“The body of the soul is the god, the breath of the soul is the god, the soul is the essence of the spirit, the so-called soul.” *Zhuzi Yulei (In Chinese)* “The embodiment of the soul in which one can think and plan; The embodiment of the soul that can be recognized by memory.” *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷*Guanzi: Neiyue (In Chinese)*.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Suwen: Jinkui Zhenyan Lun (Plain Questions: Truly golden speech)*. (In Chinese)

mind failed in the attempts to establish a theory of recording and depicting the manifestation, range and type of psychological phenomena in descriptive phenomenological approach; however, it has carried out a lot of research studies in this field and made clear classification of various psychological phenomena. For example, according to Shimao Ye's full-scale reorganization of the points in *The Internal Canon of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi Neijing)*, it has already recorded the extensive psychological phenomena and described them from aspects of cognition (*zhi* 知), emotion (*qing* 情), will (*zhi* 志) and intention (*yi* 意) and their subdirectories as well (Nie, 1986).

In the pre-Qin period, many ideologists observed cognitive phenomenon. Laozi and Zhuangzi's speeches related to "cognition" and Mencius's proposition of "the organ of the heart thinks" ("*xin zhi guan ze si* 心之官则思") are quite similar to Aristotle's thinking. Cognitive phenomenon mainly falls into two categories. One is the cognitive thinking, that is, the advanced cognition through the sense data processing. The other is the practical thinking, i.e. the selection of various possible behavioral patterns and the arrangement of the acts and processes by means of thinking. Moreover, Liu An, the king of Huainan in the Western Han Dynasty, has found different forms of the former kind of thinking, for example, the phenomenon of "analogy" ("*lei ke tui* 类可推"): "to analogize the small to the big; to analogize the close to the distant (*yixiao mingda, yijin lunyuan* 以小明大, 以近论远),"¹⁰ "seeing the beginning to know the end (*jianshi zhizhong* 见始知终),"¹¹ and "getting to know man by knowing one of them (*yinren yi zhiren* 因人以知人)."¹² Besides, he also noticed deductive reasoning as in "listing by virtue of Daoism (*yin dao zhi shu* 因道之数)."¹³

Besides, propositional attitudes like belief, intention, etc., are also involved in ancient Chinese philosophy of mind, but the nature and mechanism of them being seldomly explored with ontological or scientific psychological methods. For instance, words like "belief (*xin* 信)", "intention (*yi*)" and "desire (*yu* 欲)" appeared frequently in the early canons like *Laozi* (《老子》) and even so in the latter Neo-Confucianist works in Song and Ming dynasties. Due to its value-seeking objective, the Chinese philosophy of mind pays more attention to propositional attitudes like "desire (*yu*)", "will (*zhi*)", and "intention (*yi*)", among which "desire (*yu*)" is considered as a potential propositional attitude.

With regard to emotions, *The Internal Canon of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi Neijing)* talks about them from two aspects. On the one hand, it tries to reveal the basis, nature and forms of the emotions. Emotions are generated as a result of the movement of the vital essence from the five internal organs and changes along with them. For instance, "The one with liver disease usually has pains from the lateral thorax to lateral lower abdomen, which leads to anger.

¹⁰Huainanzi: Si Lun Xun. (In Chinese)

¹¹Huainanzi: Quanyan Xun (Huainanzi: Commentary on the Interpretation of Conduct Codes). (In Chinese)

¹²Huainanzi: Si Lun Xun. (In Chinese)

¹³Huainanzi: Zhushu Lun (Huainanzi: Commentary on Power Tactics). (In Chinese)

Liver deficiency causes invisibility and inaudibility (*Ganbingzhe, liangxiexia tong yin shaofu, lingren shannu, xu ze muwusuojian, erwusuowen* 肝病者, 两肋下痛引少腹, 令人善怒, 虚则目无所见, 耳无所闻).¹⁴ “Heart deficiency leads to sorrow whereas excess produces laughter (*Xinqi xu ze bei, shi ze xiaobuxiu* 心气虚则悲, 实则笑不休).”¹⁵ Emotions manifest in different forms: pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy. On the other hand, the book reveals emotions’ effect on the quality of life, like the negative effect of bad mood and the positive effect of the good one:

Numerous diseases are the results of the change of the pneuma. Anger raises the pneuma; pleasure discourages it; sorrow extinguishes it; fear weakens it; coldness shrinks it; hotness leaks it; shock exhausts it; melancholy ends it.¹⁶

Wang Chong in Han Dynasty enriched Chinese’s knowledge of the range of the mind with a comparison of “illusion” (“*cuojue* 错觉”) and “hallucination” (“*huanjue* 幻觉”) in terms of psychological phenomenon. A fact has been found that an object seems big when seen from the nearby whereas small from the distant and an illusion of inexistence beyond sight. If we ask a man to hold a torch walking on the beaten road, we will see “the fire extinguished after he walks not more than one mile. Actually the fire is not distinguished but far away (*quren bu yili, huoguang mieyi, feimie ye, yuan ye* 去人不一里, 火光灭矣, 非灭也, 远也).”¹⁷ The distant fire not being seen is due to the illusion brought about in the distance. In contrast, a typical example of hallucination is the ghost. Wang Chong furthered that the existence of ghost on the earth is not because of the spirits after death, but due to people’s memories and obsession. “Why is this so? Sickness (*Zhizhi heyou? Youyu jibing* 致之何由? 由于疾病).”¹⁸ That is to say, ghost is the result of the hallucination or “delusion (*xujian, wangjian* 虚见, 妄见)” caused by diseases.

4. Mind-Body Problem: The Contributions of the Ontology of Philosophy of Mind

In western philosophy, the ontological question of philosophy of mind refers to the mind-body problem. Generally speaking, ontology is the metaphysical theory about the nature of all the existence, there-be and being, whose object involves all the existence that can be predicated with “be”; therefore, as the study of “the ‘be’ as be”, ontology has multi-tasks, one of which is to define the boundary between existence and non-existence and between be and not-be and to

¹⁴Suwen: Zangqi Fashi Lun (Plain Questions: On the Synchrony of the Functioning of the Five Internal Organs with the Four Seasons and Five Elements). (In Chinese)

¹⁵Ling Shu: Ben Shen. (In Chinese)

¹⁶“All diseases arise from qi. Anger leads to qi, joy leads to discouragement, sadness leads to qi elimination, fear leads to qi depression, cold leads to qi withdrawal, heat leads to qi leakage, shock leads to qi disorder, labor leads to qi depletion, and thought leads to qi stagnation.” Suwen: *Jutong Lun* (Plain Questions: On Pains). (In Chinese)

¹⁷Lunheng: Shuori Chapter (On Weighing: On the Sun). (In Chinese)

¹⁸Lunheng: Dinggui Chapter (On Weighing: Textual Criticism on Ghosts). (In Chinese)

discover the sign of existence and be.

Ancient Chinese philosophy of mind has forwarded a clear reply to some primary questions concerning existence forms like what is in the universe and what is in human bodies and their relations with richer and more profound intension, though it has hardly answered the above general and advanced ontological question. Emphasizing more forms of existence like the form, pneuma, blood, soul, vigor, spirit, etc., than the two, the mind (or the soul) and the body (flesh), confirmed by western philosophers of mind, Chinese philosophy of mind even covered the issue of ghosts, which might not be simply incorporated in the mind-body dichotomy in the pre-Qin period and Western Han and Eastern Han Dynasties, thus a reason why its ontology is featured differently from that of western philosophy of mind.

Though the body-spirit relation was under discussion throughout the pre-Qin period to the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Chinese philosophy of mind has never resorted to substance dualism as in western philosophy on basis of the deep-rooted dichotomy and ontology and the mathematical and mechanical foundation, even spiritual existence like the soul (*hun*), vigor (*po*), spirit (*shen*) and consciousness (*shenshi* 神识), psyche, essence never being defined as without extension or non-material. Since ancient Chinese did not observe the objects with quantitative prescriptions like extension, most philosophers regarded the spiritual existence as either subtle or “essential (*jingshuang de*)” pneuma (*qi*) or the accumulation of it or as the function of it or such accumulation. *Guanzi* has set out this and came up with the near-perfect “pneuma-monism” (“*qi yiyuanlun* 气一元论”), pointing out that pneuma (*qi*) is the stem of mental activities of human beings. What is vital essence (*jingqi*)? “[Pneuma] seems high and distant as if one feels when climbing into the sky, without a trace as if one feels when falling into the abyss, humid as if one feels when in the sea, and in a haste as if it lies in itself (*Gaohu ru dengyutian, yaohu ru ruyuyuan, naohu ru zaiyuhai, zuhu ru zaiyuji* 杲乎如登于天, 杳乎如入渊, 淖乎如在于海, 卒乎如在于己).”¹⁹ These sentences highlight the clueless and unpredictable features of the pneuma (*qi*). The pneuma (*qi*) exists in all spaces and substances in the universe; it lives mainly in the heart of a human body. “After pneuma is gained in the heart, one gains life, and then one can think which brings knowledge about how to fulfill one’s various wishes (*Qidao nai sheng, sheng nai si, si nai zhi, zhi nai zhi* 气道乃生, 生乃思, 思乃知, 知乃止).”²⁰ The body and the spirit are inseparable to each other; the combination of the two makes a person. So *Huainanzi* (《淮南子》) says, “The body, spirit and pneuma stay in their suitable positions. If one loses its position, the others will be damaged too (*Xingshen qizhi, geju qi yi, yi shiwei ze sanzhe shang ye* 形神气志, 各居其宜, 一失位则三者伤也).”²¹ Though Zhuangzi thinks they can be separated, he does not think the substantive mind exists. Like most of the philosophers at that time, he elaborates the

¹⁹Guanzi: Neiyue. (In Chinese)

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Huainanzi: Yuandao Xun (Huainanzi: Commentary on the Original Dao). (In Chinese)

mind-body relation with a metaphor. “Firewood will end burning one day, but the fire will be passed on (*Zhi qiongyu weixin, huo chuan ye, buzhi qijin ye* 指穷于薪, 火傳也, 不知其尽也),”²² meaning that the reference or description of the flesh will end with the end of its referent, but the spirit will be passed on like the fire spreading to the other firewood and continue to burn endlessly. Liu Zhou in the Northern Qi Dynasty depicted a man from the relationship of three aspects, the form, heart and spirit, “The form is the vessel of the life; the heart is the master of the form; the spirit is the precious of the heart (*Xingzhe, shengzhiqi ye; xinzhe, xingzhezhu ye; shenzhe, xinzhibao ye* 形者, 生之器也; 心者, 形之主也; 神者, 心之宝也).”²³ Claiming that “the spirit is generated after the readiness of the form, then likes, dislikes, pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy are possessed (*xingju er shensheng, haowu xinu aile zang yan* 形具而神生, 好恶喜怒哀乐臧焉),”²⁴ Xuncius also denied the dependent source of the spirit.

Besides, Chinese philosophy of mind’s admission of the existence of the ghosts and gods in specific meanings reflects atheism. *Lisi: The Righteous Chapter* (*Lisi: Jiyi* 《礼记·祭义》) recorded a conversation on this topic between Confucius and Zaiwo:

Zaiwo said, “I don’t understand what the terms ghosts and gods mean.” Confucius replied, “Pneuma is the vessel of the gods while vigor, that of the ghosts. The belief of and respect to ghosts and gods is the zenith of the indoctrinization. All the people will die and return to the dust; thus they are ghosts. The flesh and bones are decomposed and become the mud beneath the earth; its pneuma is wafted into the sky and becomes various bright visible lights, and it shows all kinds of odor to make human feel wretched and sentimental. This is the vital essence of all things and the prominence of the gods.”²⁵

Wang Chong in the Eastern Han Dynasty forwarded a monistic view of pneuma (*qi*), with a materialistic explanation to the spirit, holding that human’s thinking and cognition capacities and activities are originated from human’s possession of the vital essence (*jingqi*), i.e. *yangqi*. In the generation of *yangqi*, human gains the essence (*jing*) and spirit (*shen*). *Yinqi*, on the other hand, is the foundation of the flesh and bones. He concluded, “The vital essence and spirit make one knowledgeable while the flesh and bones make one strong. They combine with each another to gain mutual support (*Jingqi weizhi, gurou weiqiang. Gurou jingshen, hecuo xiangchi* 精气为知, 骨肉为强。骨肉精神, 合错相持).”²⁶

²²Zhuangzi: *Zhi Beiyou* (Zhuangzi: *Zhi’s Northward Journey*). (In Chinese)

²³Liuzi Xinlun: *Qingshen* (New Essays of Liuzi: *The Essence of the Sun*). (In Chinese)

²⁴Xuncius: *Tian Lun* (Xuncius: *On the Heaven*). (In Chinese)

²⁵“I have heard of the name of God, but I do not know what they say”. Confucius said, ‘A man of Qi is the abundance of God’. People with souls have more ghosts. With ghosts and gods, the highest realm of education. All living beings must die and return to earth after death, which is called ghosts. ‘The flesh and bones die under the sun, and the yin is the wild soil’. Its qi is brought into play in order to make it clear that the wormwood is desolate, which is the essence of all things, and is remarkable for God.” *Lisi: Jiyi* (*Lisi: The Righteous Chapter*). (In Chinese)

²⁶Lunheng: *Dingui Chapter*. (In Chinese)

The second form-spirit (*xingshen*) view favored by Liu An, the King of Huainan and successor of Daoism in the Western Han Dynasty, is dualistic. Liu pointed out that the form (*xing*) and spirit (*shen*) both have their respective origin, “The spirit is endowed by the heaven whereas the body is generated from the earth (*fu jingshen zhe, suoshou yutian ye; er xingti zhe, suobing yudi ye* 夫精神者; 所受于天也; 而形体者; 所禀于地也).”²⁷ What is more, Liu realized that the form (*xing*), pneuma (*qi*) and spirit (*shen*) all play an indispensable role in human lives and activities, and that the proper functioning of the three in right positions may guarantee human’s survival and health development. He said, “The body is the shelter of the life which is full of the pneuma and regulated by the spirit. Therefore, the loss of the one will definitely cause damage to the other two (*Fu xingzhe, shengzhishe ye; qizhe, shengzhichong ye; shenzhe, shengzhizhi ye. Yi shiwei ze sanzhe shang yi* 夫形者, 生之舍也; 气者, 生之充也; 神者, 生之制也。一失位则三者伤矣).”²⁸ Between the form (*xing*) and the spirit (*shen*), the former plays a fundamental role. For example, “a life comes out of the completion of the body and generates its purport for the possession of the body (*fu xingmingzhe, yuxing ju chuqizong, xingbei er xingming cheng* 夫性命者, 与形俱出其宗, 形备而性命成)”²⁹ Besides, the spirit (*shen*) is fairly significant too:

The vigorous spirit accumulates the pneuma; thus the pneuma is regulated, balanced, smooth and spiritual. This will enable the views can all be seen, the sounds can all be heard and the deals can all be done.”³⁰

The debate became heated in Liang Dynasty in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Except for the previous questions like the generation of the form and spirit (*xingshen*), the relationships between them and whether they can be separated from each other, etc., there were new problems. Firstly, why can’t the trees be knowledgeable as humans now that they possess the same form quality? Secondly, why can’t the dead? Thirdly, what are the relationships between the difference of form qualities and the other differences like difference of forms, of spirits, of mentalities, and especially of inner life qualities and of personhoods?

With regard to another ontological question in the philosophy of mind, the immortality of the soul, ancient Chinese flied their own colors. To begin with, ancient Chinese did not design a separate concept of the soul as an entity, though they talked about the “soul (*hun*)”, “vigor (*po*)”, “ghost (*gui* 鬼)” and “spirit (*shen*)”. For instance, the so-called “soul (*hun*)” was only an aggregation of the vital essence (*jingqi*). According to Zheng Zichan’s view, “a human starts with the vigor; as long as it is formed, the human needs the soul (*rensheng shi-hua yue po, jisheng hun, yangyue po* 人生始化曰魄, 既生魄, 陽曰魂).” This

²⁷Huainanzi: Jingshen Xun (Huainanzi: Commentary on the Spirit and Essence). (In Chinese)

²⁸Huainanzi: Yuandao Xun. (In Chinese)

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰“... energetic and unable to disperse. ‘When the spirit is vigorous and the qi does not dissipate, there is truth. When the reason is balanced, there is justice. When the average is achieved, there is justice. When the spirit is enlightened, there is justice’. God uses what he cannot see, to hear what he does not know, and to believe that there is nothing unsuccessful.” *Huainanzi: Jingshen Xun...* (In Chinese)

reveals that the soul (*hun*) is formed after a man's possession of the form (*xing*), pneuma (*qi*) and vigor (*po*), and that it is a kind of vital essence aggregation which belongs to *yangqi*. With the soul (*hun*), man possesses lives and the spiritual prudence and awareness. When a man is dead, its vigor (*po*) descends and returns to the soil and becomes ghost (*gui*); but *yangqi* wafts up into the sky and scatters as the drifting pneuma (*qi*). What is more, before coming into the body and after leaving it, the soul (*hun*) in the form of an aggregation of pneuma (*qi*) does not exist as the soul (*hun*) in the form westerners considered.

Of course, ancient Chinese admitted immortality, only in a specific meaning. Mr. Mu Qian summarized the various forms of immortality Chinese believed. One common belief is that after human's death, its soul scatters and becomes the vital essence so that the alive can call it back by means of their previous kinship (Qian, 2004: pp. 85-86). Therefore, it was believed that "the function of sacrificial rites is compared to that of playing the stringed instrument (*youju tanqin yu jili zhi xiaoyongzhe* 有舉彈琴喻祭禮之效用者)" in China: the previous music of a broken instrument can be brought back by the new instrument as long as it is precisely played according to the previous music score (Qian, 2004: p. 86). Moreover, the objective forms of the spirit, like virtue (*de* 德), merit (*gong* 功) and speech (*yan* 言), can be immortal. For instance,

Sun Bao, the senior official in Kingdom of Lu in the spring and autumn period, considered the establishment of the virtue, merit and speech as the three forms of immortality, for the reason that the dead will and only will be remembered for the three forms of immortality in spite of the loss of life.³¹

5. Concept and Entity Problem: The Endeavors of Psychosemantics

Psychosemantics is a discipline that specializes in the analysis of mental concepts and terms with purpose of investigating the references and meanings of the mental terms thus providing a solution to the chaos in the field of philosophy of mind and the controversial issues. Chinese philosophy of mind began to reflect on and answer some of the questions therein from the pre-Qin period, but it is a pity that it failed to develop a complete system of psychosemantics theories, and that it had no successors afterwards.

Xuncius's *On the Identification and Correctness of the Concepts Chapter* (*Zhengming pian* 《正名篇》) is notable in this case. Xuncius categorized the prevailing terms as proper names in criminal law, official position and etiquette, and general names (*sanming* 散名) which include mental concepts. After his elaboration on the origins of the proper names (the names in criminal law follow those in Shang Dynasty; the names in official position follow those in Zhou Dy-

³¹"During the Spring and Autumn Period, Sun Bao, a senior official of the State of Lu, regarded the three immortalities of virtue, merit, and speech. Because only virtue, merit, and speech are known to a person, and although his body is dead, the theory of merit and virtue he established is often manifested in the world and forever in the minds of others, so it is called immortality." Ibid., 87.

nasty; the names in etiquette follow those in *The Book of Rites*), Xuncius analyzed the formation of the general names (*sanming*), i.e. “the specific names of various common things follow the established customs and conventions of the states in Central China (*sanming zhi jiyu wanwu zhe, ze cong zhuxia zhi chengsu quqi* 散名之加于万物者, 则从诸夏之成俗曲期)”. This also applies to the general names (*sanming*) of human body and the mind, for example, people define “the reason for a life being so as nature (*sheng zhi suoyiranzhe weizhi xing* 生之所以然者谓之性)”, and

the likes, dislikes, joy, anger, sorrow and happiness in human nature as emotions. That the mind helps emotions make choice is contemplation. That the senses act according to the contemplation of the mind is behavior... The human ability of knowing is perception. The accordance of perception to the perceived things is wisdom. The human ability of dealing with affairs is instinct.³²

The above pure mental terms refer to cognition (*zhi*), emotion (*qing*) and intention (*yi*) in western psychology, and “nature (*xing* 性)” which western psychology and philosophy of mind did not even study.

Besides, Xuncius analyzed the concepts related to sensory perception, though he did not regard them as pure mental terms. Although the phenomena these terms refer to are inseparable from the awareness and consciousness of the mind, their references are decided by the body. Specifically speaking,

the forms, colors and textures seem to be different because of the different eyes; monophony and consonance, unvoiced and voiced sounds, the harmonizing instrument yu and dissonance are because of the different ears; sweetness, bitterness, saltiness, tastelessness, spiciness, sourness and weird tastes are due to different mouths; the scented, stink, aromatic smells, various animal odors, and some other peculiar smells are different because of different noses; and pain, itch, cold, heat, smoothness, roughness, lightness and heaviness are different because of different bodies.³³

It shows that the concepts representing sensory perception are a display of mind-body coordination. The references of these concepts, on the one hand, are “generalized and judged” (“*zhengzhi* 征知”) by the mind, that is, the mind’s analysis, distinction, selection and judgment on the perceptual materials by ponderation; and on the other hand, are underlain by “the perception from the

³²“The feelings of sexual preference, disgust, joy, anger, sadness, and joy. Feeling but heart chose the right consideration for him. The actions that the mind can do are called fake... knowing that they are in someone else’s name is knowing. Know what wisdom there is to speak. What makes it possible is the ability of people to speak.” *Xuncius: Zhengming (Xuncius: On the Identification and Correctness of the Concepts)*. (In Chinese)

³³“The shape, body, color, and texture of the eyes are different; Different sounds are used, such as clear and turbid sounds, tuning rods, and strange sounds; Sweet, bitter, salty, light, spicy, sour, and peculiar flavors differ from mouth to mouth; Fragrance, stink, aroma, depression, fishiness, leakage, and strange odor, even with the nose; Disease, nutrition, heat, slippery, beryllium, light, heavy, because the body is different.” *Ibid.*

sensory organs (*dai tianguan zhi dangbo qilei* 待天官之當薄其類)”.

According to Xuncius', mental terms are not vacuous but referential and based on the objective existence in human body not on non-substantial existence, activities, states, processes or events. Because people followed the principles of “coining a term for demonstration of the physical truth (*zhiming yi zhishi* 制名以指實)” and “conventionality (*yueding sucheng* 約定俗成)”, insisting that coining a term for nothing might cause confusion and ambiguity, and that conventions would guarantee the real references of the terms. He said:

There have never been originally appropriate terms; their validity is gained by means of people's discussion and agreement on the coining of them... Likewise, not a term is originally fixed to refer to an entity; it becomes the name of an entity after people's discussion by agreement.³⁴

Xuncius also admitted that due to people's violation of the principles of “coining a term (*zhiming* 制名)” and “using a term (*yongming* 用名)”, a lot of confusion and ambiguity have been generated. Generally speaking, there are three forms of confusion: “using a term to create confusion for another term (*yongming yi luanmingzhe ye* 用名以亂名者也)”, “using an entity to create confusion for a term (*yongshi yi luanmingzhe ye* 用實以亂名者也)”, and “using a term to create confusion for an entity (*yongmingn yi luanshizhe ye* 用名以亂實者也)”³⁵

Xuncius even tried to reveal the reasons why there is concept-entity confusion. For one thing, he said, the reason is that “playing word game and making arbitrary decisions on coining the terms have created confusion for a term (*xici shanzuoming yiluan zhengming* 析辭擅作名以亂正名)”. For another, it is because that “the enlightened monarch's death allowed people's slackness on compliance with the conventions and the deluge of the controversies, which resulted in the conflict between the name and the entity (*shengwang mo, mingshou man, qici qi, mingshi luan* 聖王沒, 名守慢, 奇辭起, 名實亂)”. After the analysis of the above reasons, Xuncius also provided a solution of eliminating the confusion:

If the entity is not specific, name it. If it is still so with a name, then understand it. If it is incomprehensible, explain it. If it defies explanation, then it will need a debate. Therefore, understanding, naming, explaining and debating are all crucial modifications of the application of terms thus the start of the great undertaking of the monarch.³⁶

Although the above are based on the “residuals” from ancient times, they shed astonishing light on the solution to the controversial and most confusing ques-

³⁴The name is not taken for granted, and the agreement to name should be completed for him. It is called Wugushi, and the agreement to name the real name is established as a real name.” Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶“If you really don't understand, then command. If you don't understand, then be late. If you don't understand, then say. If you don't, then distinguish'. So those who anticipate, identify, and like, use the big pen, and are the starting point for entrepreneurship.” Ibid.

tions in philosophy as well as psychosemantics.

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