

## 書評

*Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax*. by Christoph Harbsmeier. Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series No. 45. London/Malmö: Curzon Press, 1981. 303pp. Introduction, Selected Bibliography, Bibliographical Abbreviations, Index, Danish Summary. No price.

Christoph Harbsmeier is an analytical philosopher and a linguist. In other places (e.g. *Zur philosophischen Grammatik des Altchinesischen*), he has pursued an analysis of the classical Chinese language on behalf of philosophy of language and general linguistic theory. In so doing, he seems to have purged himself of the heavy terminology and esoteric speculations that often obstruct the function of a grammar handbook. Most readers of Harbsmeier's most recent work, such as this reviewer, are undoubtedly students of classical Chinese philosophy or literature who are prepared to make fair use of any instrument that will facilitate access to the early corpus. And Harbsmeier serves us well. This book is marked by a general clarity of expression and a reading comfort that is unusual for a study on such a technical subject. The author reflects the best of the analytical tradition in the precision, explicitness and comfort of his language, and at the same time, is able to report important insights without recourse to neologisms and cumbersome linguistic apparatus.

This very accessible book contrasts well with W.A.C. Dobson's notorious *Late Archaic Chinese* which pretends to comprehensiveness, is loaded with linguistic jargon, and is unreliable to the point of being internally inconsistent. Harbsmeier does not claim that his is a complete grammar; rather, it is fairly described as a handbook which concentrates "on basic features of the language that are not at present properly understood." He organizes his study around the four crucial areas of any natural language: negation, quantification, conditionals, and (prenominal) reference, attempting to establish distinctions in areas which he believes have been inadequately understood. There is an identifiable pattern of brief theoretical analysis followed by an ample supply of illustrative and collaborative examples that serve to flesh out his observations. In large part, he allows the language to speak for itself. The examples are, with important early Han exceptions, primarily drawn from the pre-Han sources, and the search is for those conventions which unify this body of literature as ancient (classical) Chinese, rather than those which distinguish the various texts under review.

This book contains much that is original. Because the prenominal *fei* 非 as negative has been dealt with satisfactorily in other studies, Harbsmeier simply provides a summary statement and a few examples of this more common usage, and then goes on to devote his energies to the pre-verbal *fei* that has not been properly explained. With a series of appropriate examples, he demonstrates convincingly that this pre-verbal *fei* is a feature of negation that has been neglected.

The work contains a very insightful and original discussion of *chien* 兼 as quantifier, suggesting that it does not simply mean “all the objects,” but tends to mean something rather like “all of the different objects,” or “each of the objects in their (*sic*) own way.” (pp. 50–55)

Harbsmeier must be given credit for systematically tackling what must be some of the most puzzling elements in classical Chinese. Characters such as *t'e* 特, for example, have always been a humbug to translators who, by the very range of their imaginative renderings, demonstrate their lack of certainty.

The author provides a rather extensive analysis of the semantic force of *yi* 亦 in ancient Chinese. He then brings the implications of his analysis together in an insightful speculation on the fundamental and then the derived meanings of *yi*: a weak “surely!” – “irrespective of what was said before, surely!” – “nonetheless, surely!” – “in spite of the difference,” “but also,” – “too.”

The discussion of classical grammar is clearly informed by a detailed reading of available materials. For those of us familiar with Lionel Giles' *Sun Tzu on the Art of War* and his vitriol against the unhappy translator, Captain Calthrop, for sins against Chinese grammar that in context are far less remarkable than those of Dobson, we must congratulate Harbsmeier for his charitable restraint. Only on one occasion (his rejection of Dobson's claim that *fan* 凡 is an adjectival quantifier which works like “all”) does he seem to flog Dobson's error (20 strokes) with unrelenting gusto.

Harbsmeier's honesty as a scholar is always in evidence. For example, with respect to a passage in the *Hsun Tzu* which contains the mysterious *an* 案, he says: “Unfortunately, I do not understand the use of *an* 案 as a particle in Hsun Tzu generally, and in this sentence particularly.” (pp. 195–6)

One respect in which this valuable and very important study falls down badly is in the quality of its presentation. One expects the degree of care and accuracy from a linguist and analytical philosopher that he requires of a fine surgeon. Harbsmeier's very admirable skills and his years of work are somewhat compromised by a criminal lack of editorial care.

Typographical errors abound. These flaws are usually obvious, and clearly detract from the presentation. Moreover, there are occasions when this error creeps into textual references: p. 102 Lao 41 (should be Lao 44), p. 119 ZGZHIS (should be ZGZHJS), p. 123 LSQ (should be LSCQ), etc.

Harbsmeier sets up conventions in his work, and then inadvertently violates them. A relatively insignificant one is his abbreviation of ancient Chinese as AC: on a single page (p. 40), he has “AC,” “Ancient Chinese,” as well as “ancient Chinese.” Of more scholarly concern are his inconsistencies in referencing textual citations: compare p. 28: ZGC 75 (I. 81) and p. 32: ZGC Qi Ce 4. And then again on p. 117 he cites an entire chapter: HNT 2.

Harbsmeier's text is disappointing in its numerous copying errors: characters are missing on pages 33 and 247. And on pp. 26–27 (37), the English translation goes far beyond the cited Chinese text. Furthermore, on p. 109 the Chinese passage for (42) belongs in (43), the passage cited as (43) is not translated, and the Chinese for (42) is nowhere given. On page 33 (10) in citing the *Lun-yü*, Harbsmeier has 其為人矣

for 其為仁矣 . The Chinese cited on page 177n2 is surely wrong, and the entire note makes little sense.

Another inconsistency in translation is apparent where the author renders the same passage in significantly different ways. On p. 52 (14) the phrase 兼享之 is translated as “entertained them all,” and then in the very next passage (15) it is transformed into the rather curious English: “gave them all an entertainment.” Again on facing pages 54–55, Harbsmeier translates an identical passage from the *Chuang Tzu* with important differences:

墨子汎愛兼利而非鬪

(29a) Mo Zi loved everyone, worked in the interest of everyone and criticized war.

(36) Mo Zi advocated universal love, benefitting everyone, and he argued against war.

Harbsmeier undoubtedly has a very engaging style of writing, but given the subject of his book, his few grammatical errors achieve a prominence that they do not really deserve. For example, the text contains the occasional lack of agreement between a plural pronoun and its singular antecedent: p. 84 “Each of them in their different ways love Duke Huan of Qi.” p. 90 “If any of the feudal lords invade each other, you must punish them.” Harbsmeier uses a few expressions that are awkward and problematic: p. 170 “thiefs,” p. 166 “planets of the earth,” p. 89 “That sons should kill fathers was something that happened.”

Although Harbsmeier maintains an admirable quality of accuracy in his translation, a few passages are simply incorrect. On p. 143, *Lun-yü* 20/2: 擇可勞而勞之又誰怨 is rendered:

“If the gentleman rewards those worthy of rewards who else (among the unrewarded) will be angry resentful (*sic*) of him?”

I do not follow how the character *lao* 勞 can mean “reward.” Cf. D.C. Lau (“Lao” for Harbsmeier on p. 154): “If a man, in working others hard, chooses burdens they can support, who will complain.” and Waley: “A gentleman ... can get work out of people without arousing resentment ...” On page 109, to make his point that *hsien* 鮮 quantifies the subject, he cites *Lun-yü* 6/29 民鮮久矣, translating this phrase as “Few people are able to persist in it (virtue) for a long time.” While *hsien* 鮮 quantifies the subject here, the subject might be *te* 德 as “rare” rather than *min* 民 as “few.” “[Virtue (*te*)] has been rare among the people for sometime.”

On p. 102 Harbsmeier cites Lao 41 (should be 44) to challenge the conventional “comparative” interpretation of *tuo* 多 in the phrase 身與貨孰多, suggesting that this passage should be translated: “As for your person and your goods, which (is the thing that is) worth much?” He goes on to criticize the English translator for ascribing “comparative” meaning to *tuo* in this construction, citing as an example D.C. Lau’s “Your person or your goods, which is worth more?” However there appears to be at best a confusion, and at worst a contradiction between this analysis and p. 204, where he cites Lau’s translation of this same passage and states: “As far as I know it has not been noticed so far, that *shu* in this latter pattern nearly *always* precedes a verb phrase that has to be interpreted in the comparative degree.”

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One can labor the poor editing of this book — it is indeed bad. But if this weakness should be underscored, it is simply because it detracts from an otherwise important contribution to our understanding of classical Chinese syntax. Having read Harbsmeier's work carefully, I have found his methodology to be exemplary and his syntactical insights sound and informative. Although Harbsmeier's scholarly book occasionally suffers in its presentation of the material, I am indeed grateful to this author for his close and penetrating evaluation of the texts and look forward to his future publications.

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