A Chinese View on the Cultural Conditionality of Logic and Epistemology: Zhang Dongsun's Intercultural Methodology

Jana S. ROŠKER[*]

Abstract

Recognizing the fact that comprehension, analysis and transmission of reality are based on diversely structured socio-political contexts as well as on different categorical and essential postulates, offers a prospect of enrichment. Thus, this article presents an analysis and interpretation of one of the first Chinese theoreticians, working in the field of intercultural methodology. Although Zhang Dongsun (1886–1973) can be considered as one of the leading Chinese philosophers of the 20th Century, his criticism of Sinicized Marxist ideologies marked him as a political dissident and he was consequently consigned to oblivion for several decades; only recently has his work been rediscovered by a number of younger Chinese theorists, who have shown a growing interest in his ideas. Although he is still relatively unknown in the West, Zhang definitely deserves to be recognized for his contributions to Chinese and comparative philosophy. The present article focuses on his extraordinary ability to introduce Western thought in a way which was compatible with the specific methodology of traditional Chinese thought. According to such presumptions, culture is viewed as an entity composed of a number of specific discourses and relations. The article shows how the interweaving and interdependence of these discourses form different cultural backgrounds, which manifest themselves in the specific, culturally determined structures of language and logic. It also explains the role of traditional elements in his cultural epistemology.

Keywords: cultural epistemology, language, logic, Chinese philosophy, intercultural methodology

---

[*] Jana S. Rošker, Full professor of Sinology and head of the Department of Asian and African Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia. E-mail: jana.rosker@guest.arnes.si

1   On the Cultural Conditioning of Cognition

As an academic discipline, Chinese studies were established within the context of discussions on Orientalism, which laid the foundations of and conditioned the colonialist approach to the study of cultures which do not derive from the so-called Western tradition. This is why the criticism of elements of Orientalism in sinology is also the criticism of the violent nature of the classic relation between knowledge and authority. Within this framework, every comparison is also inevitably an interpretation based on a system of values, the contents of which are determined by the ideology of material progress, and whose methodology is that of European formal logic. The acritical use of a scientific analysis which is, in itself, a result of specific historical processes and their related social organizations and structures, can prove to be a perilous and misleading exercise.

Over the past few decades, the theoretical streams of contemporary Chinese studies and modern Chinese philosophy have devoted increasing attention to investigating and comparing the substantial and methodological assumptions of the so-called "Eastern" and "Western" traditions[1]. However, the comparison and understanding of so-called foreign cultures is always linked to the issue of differences in language, tradition, history and socialization processes. The interpretation of various aspects and elements of non-European cultures always involves the geographic, political and economic position of the interpreter, as well as that of the object being interpreted.

Irrespective of the question as to where the concern for the "clarification" and "determination" of similarities and differences of both epistemological systems arises[2], the search for a dialogue has always been determined by constant attempts to supersede and resume the limits of knowledge, and walks a fine line between

---

[1] In the present work, the terms "Eastern" and "Western" as categorically interpretative models are not used in a rigidly political or geographical sense, but as notions that stem from a reflection on the distinction between transcendental and immanent metaphysics. The concept "Western" means the area of culture and civilisation which has been defined by the three Abrahamic – Semitic religions, i.e. Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The most important characteristics which these religions have in common are: transcendentalism, monotheism (or the Trinity in Christianity), singularity (the monopoly of validity), universality (universality of validity), individuality (which has been constituted by a separate and independent existence of the Self, inhabited by the soul) and the idea of immortality. None of these elements can be found in discourses of immanent metaphysics, which are prevalent in so-called "Eastern" civilisations. (Galtung 1994: 7) When the term "Western" is applied to language, it indicates the languages of the Indo-European group.

[2] In European sinology, most researches are an attempt to seek for a solution to the "crisis of European philosophy". However, both "Western" and Chinese thinkers are motivated by the search for their own cultural identity through reflection of the "Other".

revelation and acceptance, narration and interpretation[3]. The constantly growing number of studies in this area is due to, among other things, the increasingly urgent need to clarify the methodological foundations of the modern theory of science, which must keep abreast of the technological and political developments of modern societies.

Over the past few decades, the previously[4] "absurd" assumption that the "Western" theory of knowledge does not constitute the sole, universally valid epistemological discourse, something which would have been unthinkable for the majority of "Western" theorists less than a century ago, has now become a generally recognized fact among most present-day cultural exponents and communities. It has become clear to most people that "Western epistemology" represents only one of many different forms of historically transmitted social models for the perception and interpretation of reality (Sloterdijk 1996: 89). However, despite the growing number of issues related to "Western" cultural identity, nearly every "Western" incursion into the field of Chinese studies remains essentially comparative, because virtually all intercultural research is based on a cognitive reflection on a subject which has been expressed in terms of its respective language and culture.

Failing to take into account the specific conditions determined by different historical, linguistic and cultural contexts inevitably leads to misinterpretations of the object being examined. Unfortunately, in current intercultural research, it is still common to project elements of the contents and forms of discourse which have been overshadowed by the dominant political (and thus also economic) power, upon the object being considered. This is true even in the case of investigations and interpretations of contents which arose in different circumstances and in differently structured social and cultural contexts. This danger has also been recognized by a number of modern and contemporary Chinese scholars, engaged in researching and re-examining traditional Chinese philosophical thought. In the foreword of his book on traditional Chinese logic, Prof. Cui Qingtian writes[5]:

---

[3] Although (not coincidentally) the present time is characterised by intense debates on intercultural hermeneutics, serious inquiries into this topic are still quite rare in the "Western" world (which is hardly accidental either).

[4] In the colonial and postcolonial period.

[5] All original quotations from Chinese texts have been translated into English by the author.

> To compare Chinese and Western logic means to look upon them as independent phenomena, each determined by its own culture. If we take into account their respective cultural backgrounds, we can still observe many of their congruities; but we must also pay attention to the large number of elements which constitute their decisive differences. Only on this basis will we be able to discern common features as well as the specific characteristics of particulary traditional forms of logic. Comparing means searching for common properties but, even more importantly, it means being able to distinguish the basic differences which underlie such conformities. Only by acknowledging differences can we comprehend the manifold nature of logic, its history and the laws of its development. (Cui 2001: 9)

Despite the tendency towards openness and interdisciplinary approach, the discourses of modern science and humanities are still predominantly determined by the paradigmatic network which serves the interests of the "New World". Cui therefore criticizes the paternalistic discourses which still represent the generally accepted valuation criterion not only in Western, but also in Chinese comparative research (the obligatory logical method for such evaluation is, of course, that of "Western" formal logic, although this is never explicitly stated by the author[6]) as follows:

> Viewing a certain type of logic primarily as something which should be similar to, or even identical with some other type of logic cannot be considered as comparative research, but merely as imitation. Such procedures are incapable of taking into account the enormous differences between the methods of Chinese and Western logic, as well as the specific features which condition these methods. While this approach makes extraordinary efforts to discover the common traits of both methods, it adheres to only one logical tradition with which all other forms of traditional logic, including the development of new methods, must concur. This form of comparative research in the field of logic is incapable of arriving at new recognitions or achieving a creative analysis of the manifold nature of different, culturally-bounded logical traditions. It can only produce plagiarisms and bad copies of already existing methods. (ibid.)

But the pioneer of such insights into the complexity of intercultural methodology was doubtless Zhang Dongsun, a Chinese philosopher from the first half of the previous century, who's greatest contribution was the creation and development of a modern theory of knowledge, based upon ancient Chinese and Chan – Buddhist epistemology. His plural epistemology represents a felicitous synthesis of modern

---

[6] The reason for such discretion is, of course, the paradigmatic Chinese politeness which prevents him from expressing his criticisms directly, but only indirectly and "between the lines".

science and traditional Chinese thought. Nevertheless, he also deserves our attention as one of the first Chinese intellectuals, who investigated questions on the cultural impacts upon cognition. His studies also provided many other valuable insights into the differences between Chinese and Western philosophy. Although his work is not well known in the Western countries, his investigations of the influence of Chinese language on the development of Chinese philosophy are very influential in contemporary China. Besides, he was the first philosopher who exposed correlative thinking as a main characteristic of Chinese philosophy and analogical argument as a specific Chinese mode of inference. Although he is still relatively unknown in the West, Zhang definitely deserves to be recognized for his contributions to Chinese and comparative philosophy (Jiang 2002: 78).

2   Zhang Dongsun, His Life and Work

While Zhang Dongsun can also be considered as one of the leading Chinese philosophers of the 20th cxentury, his criticism of Sinicized Marxist ideologies marked him as a political dissident and he was consequently consigned to oblivion for several decades; only recently has his work been rediscovered by a number of younger Chinese theorists, who have shown a growing interest in his ideas. During the first three decades of the 20th century, Zhang was one of the most influential thinkers of the Republic of China, a reputation which rested, in part, on his extraordinary ability to introduce Western thought in a way which was compatible with the spirit of Chinese tradition.

His work indicates not only a profound understanding of Western theories, but also a comprehension of the linguistic structures that condition them. At the same time, Zhang also remained rooted in his own, Chinese tradition of thought. As a youth, he benefited from a wide-ranging and exhaustive classical Chinese education, and he was one of the first philosophers who, as an alternative to Western Hegelian dialectic, developed and elaborated the traditional system of correlative thought, which was based upon Daoist philosophy, as well as upon certain theoretical paradigms of the *Book of Changes*.

The whole of his ontological and epistemological thought was also strongly influenced by the philosophy of Chan Buddhism, and his system represents one of the first coherent and complete synthesis of ancient Chinese and modern Western ideas. However, for most contemporary scholars his greatest contribution was in

his role as the first modern Chinese philosopher who created his own theoretical system, especially in the field of epistemology (Jiang 2002: 57).

In contrast to most of his contemporaries, whose work was characterized by a revisionism of traditional philosophy, Zhang's theory was a synthesis based on the assimilation of Western thought into the framework of traditional methodological and conceptual discourses.

> As Chang Wing-tsit has pointed out, Zhang indisputably assimilated the most Western thought, established the most comprehenshive and well-coordinated system, and exerted the greatest influence among the western-oriented Chinese philosophers'. Epistemology is the core of Zhang's philosophy, which began with a pluralistic epistemology and culminated in a cultural one. (ibid.: 66).

Zhang's pluralism was based upon a revision of Kant's philosophy, in which he followed his own system of so-called panstructuralist cosmology, which was to a certain extent also influenced by the Chan-Buddhist philosophy upon which his own worldview was based on. Zhang Dongsun's cultural epistemology was founded upon a "pluralistic theory of knowledge" (*duoyuan renshi lun*), and proceeded from the premise that knowledge was culturally determined and therefore essentially of a cultural nature, an aspect of his philosophy which still remains quite actual, especially in the field of intercultural research. His cultural-philosophical studies are based upon detailed comparative analyses of Chinese and European thought, with a special attention to the influence of linguistic structures upon various philosophical systems, and the connection between culturally determined differences and systems of logical reasoning in different traditions of thought.

> Although Zhang's comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy were written a half century ago, they remain of great value even today. They will continue to throw light on current debates on cultural issues and to inspire comparative philosophy in our own time. (ibid.: 58)

3 Language and Logic: Problems of Comprehension and Transmission

Linguistic analysis is an important part of Zhang's philosophy, and his logic is also closely connected to the logic of language. In his treatise *Knowledge and*

Culture (Zhishi yu wenhua), he argues that language can help us to form our reasoning. (Li 2001: 352)

> On the one hand, language creates thought, or opens new ways to it. But on the other, it also raises new problems by creating new expressions. In other words: through its expressions, language defines pathways of human thought, from which it is not easy to escape (Zhang 1995: 253).

In this respect, many interpreters of Zhang's thought believed him to be seconding Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis that language defined the mode of thought (Li 2001: 352), a concept which remains extremely problematic in academic circles today. However, Zhang distanced himself from such an interpretation, and to a Japanese critic who had accused him of advocating such a linguistic determination in his article "Differences between Chinese and Western philosophy from the viewpoint of linguistic structures" (*Cong yanyu gouzao shang kan Zhong Xi zhexuede chayi*) (ibid.), Zhang replied:

> It seems that this interpreter thinks that I advocated the view that language determines thought. This is completely wrong, and this critic seems to be trapped in some old frames of thought. The fact that language cannot be seen as cause, nor as a consequence of thought, already follows from the aspect of functional relations. The contrary view, which claims that thought is the cause, and language the consequence, is equally wrong. All I said in my article was, that language, logic and philosophical thought are interdependent and interconnected (Zhang 1995: 383).

This interdependence and reciprocal influence of language and thought was the basis of all Zhang's logical and philosophical approaches, and can also be seen in his emphasis on the close connection between language and the laws of logic.

> Logic was created because of linguistic problems. Therefore, logic does nothing other than try to regulate language. Why does language need regulation? Because of disputation. The beginnings of logic in ancient Greece can be found in rhetoric. Rhetoric was originally developed because of disputation; at that time, rhetoric was not yet a doctrine for beautiful speech and writing. The oldest Indian logic also arose from disputation in the sense of argumentation and counter-argumentation. In China, formal logic was never developed, but the art of disputation dates from the earliest times. Those who dealt with the art of disputation were called dialecticians. The demand for a regulation of language therefore arose from disputation (ibid: 240).

Zhang Dongsun argued that the logic of disputation (in the sense of arguments and counter-arguments, i.e. of thesis and antithesis) was also developed in ancient

49

Greece, and that this form of logical method was not elaborated later on because the European tradition focused on the development of formal logic instead. In the history of traditional European logic, even Aristotelian logic still implied two main methods: the method of evidences and the method of disputation; later developments, however, concentrated upon syllogisms, based upon the former method, while the latter was gradually forgotten (Li 2001: 353). A renewed research into the logic of argumentation by certain logicians[7] did not occur before the latter half of the 20th century:

> Zhang Dongsun had already stressed this aspect during the 1940's, arguing for a reexamination of the entire framework of Aristotelian logic. This was a very rare and valuable effort on his part (ibid.).

According to Zhang, the inextricably interwoven relationship between language and logic was already evident in the system of grammatical structures; in his view, the laws of logical methods also arose from the laws of linguistic structures.

> Therefore, the main function of such logic is to regulate language. Due to customary modes of expression, language does not always correspond to rational principles. Thus, it became a kind of necessity, and this method developed out of this necessity. It tried to re-establish a correspondence between language and rational principles, i.e. logic. This necessity is essentially a social one and does not arise from solely rational domains, as was thought by some later scholars (Zhang 1995: 388–389).

Here, we can see the influence of traditional Chinese epistemology which, on the basis of the relation between language and reality, tried to "rationally" (i.e. in accordance with the most appropriate structural regulation (*dao*) of language as an expression of all that exists) standardize (*chang*) linguistic structures in order to improve and harmonize political and social relations within society. However, his approach here can also be compared to some recent researches in linguistic logic, which focus upon linguistic pragmatism (Li 2001: 153–354): "In my opinion, traditional logic is a discipline which deals primarily with the intrinsic structures of human discourses" (Zhang 1995: 389).

In terms of the rules of logic, Zhang Dongsun appropriated Carnap's theory of linguistic games:

---

[7] One of the first pioneers in this field was the Belgian logician Ch. Perelman (1912–1984).

> Logic as such is a game. Its effectiveness is due to its ability to establish self-sufficient rules. The principles of symbolic logic, such as the so-called principles of permutation, addition, substitution, summation or association etc., resemble the rules of chess, where the knight can jump over the castle. The deductive system that was developed based upon these rules is essentially tautological and therefore, of course, self-sufficient and consistent. But we should realize that all such systems are essentially arbitrary. (Zhang 1995: 253)

For Zhang, the basic function of language is expressing and transmitting thought. For this reason, he established a new concept of the so-called "domain or discourse of logic (*mingli jie*)" which posited a sphere of structural principles that exist beyond the external (*waijie*) and the internal (*neijie*) worlds. This sphere was to be understood neither as some sort of formalized copy of external reality, nor as a psychological representation of the structure of consciousness. In Zhang's view, the domain of logic was an independent and inherently consistent, autonomous, "intrinsic" structure of rules (*benyoude guize*), which was also figured as the main subject of logical research.

4   The Universality and Cultural Conditionality of Epistemology

However, logic is not only a discourse of language, but also a metaphysical tool for ideologies which internally bind and knit societies and cultures together.

> From the viewpoint of culture, logic, metaphysics, morals, society and politics are a unity which came into being out of the same necessities. If we break down the wall which surrounds it, we can see that what we considered to be logic, is in fact, a kind of social theory. What we considered to be metaphysics, in fact is only a question of certain morals. And what we considered to be a moral theory, in fact is nothing but a kind of political movement. In other words: each political movement needs to be based upon a certain morality. Each moral system needs to be protected by a certain metaphysics, and metaphysics, in turn, requires logic as a tool. (ibid.: 419).

Culture was thus an entity composed of a number of specific discourses and relations. The interweavement and interdependence of these discourses form the specific cultural background, which is also expressed in the structures of language and logic:

> Logic arose from social needs and developed in parallel with philosophy. Therefore, logic is not universal and basic. In addition, there is no single "logic as such", since there are many different kinds of existing logics. Who

51

knows, perhaps this viewpoint represents a challenge to Chinese logicians? (Zhang 1995: 388).

Hence, Zhang argued that logic was culturally determined; like language, it had developed on the basis of cognitive patterns which, at the same time, were formed by logic. Zhang very schematically distinguished four elementary forms of existing logic: the first was Aristotelian, the second mathematical, the third was the Indian logic of double negation and the fourth he named social-political logic, which included Hegelian dialectics and Marxist dialectical materialism (ibid: 387–401).

In his view, the cultural determination of logic was, to some degree, connected with the cultural conditionality of comprehension. Based on this assumption, together with elements of his pluralistic epistemology, Zhang developed his (inter)cultural theory of knowledge:

> Pluralistic epistemology reveals that knowledge is not an objective reflection of external things; and pan-structuralism argues that there is no substance for us to know. Knowing does not mean representing what there is outside of us, but signifies the construction or recreation of the contents of knowledge in relation to the structures of the universe. For this reason, the need for objective elements in knowledge is obvious. How, then, are the subjective contents of knowledge decided? Zhang believed that, in addition to the common structure of human knowledge as described in his pluralistic epistemology, culture plays a significant role in forming our knowledge, and that knowledge is culturally and socially determined. Therefore, in order to discuss knowledge, we must also discuss culture. In this sense, the knowing mind is a collective mind. According to Zhang, epistemology in the past only talked about the solitary mind, but there is no solitary mind. (Jiang 2002: 68)

Based on the premise of the close connection between various languages and the cultural determination of coincidental specific modes of logical reasoning, Zhang proceeded to develop his thesis on the linguistic foundations of European and Chinese philosophy. In his view, a key factor determining the specificity of "Chinese" thought was the fact that the Chinese language (especially ancient Chinese) made no clear distinction between subject and predicate, while in morphological terms it did not add suffixes to express categories of time, gender or number) (Zhang 1995: 360). Zhang argued that this grammatical feature had greatly influenced Chinese thought. Since the subject is not distinguished in the Chinese language, the Chinese do not have the concept of a subject; because the

subject is not distinguished, the predicate is not distinguished either (Jiang 2002: 72).

In addition, the Chinese language generally does not use sentential subjects, as opposed to Indo-European languages which omitted sentential subjects only in exceptional cases.

> The Chinese language does not apply subjects and omits them quite often. Therefore, we generally conclude that the subject is not particularly necessary. (Zhang 1995: 363)

Another difference is that Chinese lacks the equivalent of the expression "it":

> Neither the colloquial *zhe*, nor the classical *ci* in the Chinese language is equivalent to the English word "it". The Chinese word *ci* merely means the same as the English word "this". This word has its contrary: the word *ci*/"this"/ is opposed to the word *bi*/"that"/, and therefore cannot be applied as the indefinite pronoun. (ibid.)

"It" is an indefinite pronoun, but "this" is not. Chinese lacks the form "it is". "It is" expresses only the existence of something and not its attributes, and this separation of existence from atributes is a basic condition for forming the concept of substance (Jiang 2002: 73). But the most important difference Zhang noted was that between the Indo-European expression "to be" and the Chinese word *shi*.

> The Chinese language does not have an equivalent to the Western word "to be". The colloquial *shi* does not express existence, while the ancient Chinese *wei* means the same as *cheng*, as in the English phrase "to become". However, in the English language, the words "becoming" and "being" are contradictory. (Zhang 1995: 363)

"To be" implies "to exist" and being in existence. *Shi* ("is") in spoken Chinese does not imply "to exist". Ancient Chinese had the expressions *you* ("to have") and *cheng* ("to become"), but not the equivalent of "to be". Since Chinese lacks an expression for "to be", it has difficulty in forming the subject-predicate propositions of standard logic (Jiang 2002: 73).

Due to the absence of the linguistic (and thus also cognitive) category "subject" (*zhuti*), and the absence of the expression "to be" in ancient as well as modern Chinese, traditional Chinese philosophy never established or developed the concept or discipline of "ontology" (*benti lun*). Therefore, classical Chinese philosophy also never developed formal logic based upon theorems (*mingti*), and

even the basic law of traditional European logic, i.e. the law of identity, (*tongyi lü*)[8], was alien to specific Chinese thought.

> The Chinese system of logic was not based upon the law of identity (logic without identity). Because the Western logical system of classifications is based upon the law of identity, it necessarily developed dichotomies. (Zhang 1995: 363)

However, this does not signify that traditional Chinese thought did not develop its own logic, which Zhang defined as "non-Aristotelian" logic:

> Chinese thought cannot be forced into the framework of Western logic; in fact, we must recognize that logic, as it developed in China, represents a completely different system. (ibid.: 365)

Therefore, the specificity of Chinese logic can not be found in the framework of Western cognitive patterns:

> If we search for contributions of Chinese logic in the framework of Aristotelian logic, we will necessarily conclude that there was no logic in ancient China (Zhang in Li 2001: 358).

Zhang Dongsun concluded that Aristotelian logic, based upon the law of identity, developed the structure of dichotomies rooted in contradictions of the type "A and not-A". Such relations were mutually exclusive (Zhang 1995: 364):

> But Chinese thought did not function in this way. Dual oppositions, such as big and small, above and below, good and evil, or presence and absence, were seen as mutually defining and interdependent. (ibid.)

The classification of the type "A and B", however, makes it possible for something not to be A or B; such non-exclusionary distinctions were quite common in Chinese logic. Logical definitions in the Aristotelian sense are equivalents, in which the symbol of identity connects the definiendum and the definiens (ibid.). Ancient Chinese logic lacked such definitions: according to this logic, the meaning of a word can be understood or clarified by looking at its opposite. For this reason, definitions found in Western logic do not exist in Chinese logic. The meaning of a word is not made clear by a definition, but by contrasting it with its opposite. For example, a "wife" is a "woman who has a husband", and a "husband" is a "man,

---

[8] Zhang considered the two remaining elementary laws, i.e. the law of contradiction (*maodun lü)* and the law of the excluded third (*pai zhong lü*), merely as variations of the law of identity.

who has a wife". This is not a strict definition but an explanation in terms of a relation (Jiang 2002: 75).

Zhang Dongsun is the first philosopher we know of, who defined the conceptual basis of specific traditional Chinese logic. Its foundations were relational propositions, just as Western logic was based upon the proposition of the subject-object structure. The correlation between dual, but complementary oppositions (such as above-below, before-behind, etc.) thus represented a specific approach of ancient Chinese logic.

Zhang named this specific logic, as it was formed and developed in ancient China, correlative logic (*xiangguan lü mingxue*) or the logic of correlative duality (*liangyuan xiangguan lü mingxue*) (Zhang 1995: 365). In contrast to the Hegelian method, which was based upon mutually exclusionary contradictions, the methods of ancient Chinese dialectical logic (*bianzheng mingxue*) represented a dynamic inter-relational process of inter-dependent and complementary poles, as could already be found in the theoretical approaches of the *Book of Changes* (ibid.). This was a very creative insight, since the logic of the *Book of Changes* was created much earlier than Moist or Dialectical Logic, which arose approximately in the 4th century BC.

Due to his ostracism during the Cultural Revolution, Zhang Dongsun's theories were consigned to oblivion for many years. Recently, however, a younger generation of theorists has begun to rediscover his work, though often expressing reservations as to its more problematical aspects: "Some of his conclusions are invalid from the viewpoint of contemporary theory" (Jiang 2002: 75).

However, most contemporary thinkers acknowledge his valuable and often innovative contributions to the development of Chinese philosophical thought, and especially his pioneering role in the discovery and interpretation of correlative dialectic, pointing out the important fact, that he was probably the first scholar to attribute correlative thinking to Chinese philosophy (ibid: 74). As already mentioned, Zhang Dongsun was also one of the founders of the relatively new fields of intercultural philosophy and methodologies of intercultural research. His recognition that ancient Indian logic was of a different kind than Aristotelian logic, and that ancient Chinese logic was in many respects quite different from both, is doubtlessly true. His most valuable contributions are also to be found in his endeavors to elaborate the dialectical aspect of Aristotelian logic, to connect logic, language and methods of disputation, and to discover principles and formal

elements of the logic of linguistic pragmatism. Recently, many Chinese and foreign theorists began to address these questions, and their research has already produced some important results. However, Zhang was the first to see the far-reaching significance of these problems, and can be considered something of a visionary in this respect (Li 2001: 358).

Despite the fact that certain aspects of his thought are incomplete and insufficiently systematic [9], Zhang Dongsun definitely deserves the attention currently being paid to his work by both Western and Chinese scholars.

Although Zhang's greatest contribution was most certainly the creation and development of a modern theory of knowledge, based upon ancient Chinese and Chan-Buddhist epistemology, and which in many respects represents a felicitous synthesis of modern science and traditional Chinese thought, we must not forget that his comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy helped to establish a new epistemology, according to which cognition is influenced by culture. His studies also contributed greatly to comparative philosophy itself and provided many valuable insights into the differences between Chinese and Western philosophy. Zhang's investigation of the influence of Chinese language on the development of Chinese philosophy is a very influential and pioneering work. His hypothesis that correlative thinking is a characteristic of Chinese philosophy and analogical argument is a Chinese mode of inference has been widely adopted by scholars in comparative philosophy.

5   Tradition in Modern Disguise

Zhang Dongsun's cultural epistemology has been strongly influenced by traditional Chinese theory of knowledge. For him, because the ideal foundations of epistemology have been culturally conditioned, they correspond to the specific structures and concrete conditions of the society from which they originate. In classical Chinese epistemologies, the relation between man, as an existential entity endowed with consciousness, and the world, viewed either as a labyrinthine external environment or the reflection of an equally unknown subjectivity which is immanent and unique to each individual, can be defined in many different ways.

---

[9] These deficiencies are mostly due to the fact that Zhang Dongsun was prohibited from writing and publishing during the last 25 years of his life, and therefore was unable to refine and perfect his theory in terms of style, terminology, system and essence.

Its basic structure, which is simultaneously reflected in the main postulates of several traditional theories of knowledge (Xia 1986: 67–82), has always been dependent on the motivation and purpose of the process of comprehension: in the Chinese philosophical tradition, knowledge is centered on the harmonization of Self and the world. Whereas in mainstream Western philosophy, knowledge is for overcoming the world; in the Buddhist philosophical tradition, knowledge is for overcoming the self (Cheng 1989: 207).

Of course, this kind of harmonization does not necessarily mean that all elements within the cosmic and social whole are equal. The main guide is regularity, which can be based either upon a conformity with the essential principles of the cosmic whole, or upon the hierarchically structured determination of existence, which is decisive in defining the concrete activities and the life of every single individual.

It is no accident that this postulate of harmonic regulation became the principal ideal guideline for philosophical discourses in ancient China. This basic revision of classical Chinese thought took place during a turbulent and critical period of economic and political transition, in which various local rulers of relatively small feudal and culturally, linguistically and economically diverse states were engaged in a power struggle. Classical Chinese philosophy was therefore established upon a narrow foundation, which combined the hegemonic tendencies of various local warlords on the one hand, with the conflicts between different, but parallel modes of production, on the other. Against a background of different value- and belief-systems, this motley conglomerate of agrarian, nomadic, artisan and semi-mercantile cultures also included a variety of languages and writings. It was only natural, therefore, that the hegemonic tendencies of the various holders of power would demand a unified ideology. The formation and preservation of this ideology was thus conditioned by a unified perception of reality. Because most members of society were in that critical period in whuch they were also victims of conflicts among opposing systems and social structures, this form of unification was also intended to provide a basic framework for social security.

Human reflection, as expressed within the most influential currents of classical Chinese thought, is therefore based upon the individual's awareness of their own position within the integrality of the world; no one has been thrust into it "from outside", for the birth and growth of each individual is part of the totality of being. The individual is conditioned by a specific human understanding, which is not

57

only defined at the level of sensory perception, but also includes cognitively, i.e. linguistically determined thought.

Here, we can sense the leitmotiv of Zhang's cultural epistemology. The basic difficulty with the ancient Chinese epistemological theories has namely been emerging precisely at this point, involving the interpretation and transmission of reality that served as the basis for social interactions. The harmonic regularity that represents the elementary postulate for a process of comprehension which is applicable a priori, has in this context naturally been linked to questions of language and its relation to reality.

References

Cheng, Chung-ying (1989) "Chinese Methaphysics as Non-metaphysics: Confucian and Daoist Insights into the Nature of Reality." In *Understanding the Chinese Mind – The Philosophical Roots*. R.E. Allinson, ed. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 167–208.

Cui, Qingtian 崔清田 (2001) "邏輯的共同性與特殊性 Luojide gongtongxing yu teshuxing (Universality and Particularity of Logic)." In *Zhongguo luoji shi jiaocheng*, Gongyi Wen and Qingtian Cui, eds. Tianjin: Nankai daxue chuban she. Pp. 1–9.

Galtung, Johan (1994) *Menschenrechte – anders gesehen*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Jiang, Xinyan (2002) "Zhang Dongsun: Pluralist Epistemology and Chinese Philosophy." In *Contemporary Chinese Philosophy*. N. Bunnin and Z.Y. Cheng, eds. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. Pp. 57–81.

Li, Xiankun 李賢昆 (2001) "近代邏輯科學的發展 (下) Jindai luoji kexuede fazhan (xia) – 西方現代邏輯轉入與中印邏輯探索 Xifang xiandai luoji zhuanru yu Zhong, Yin luoji tansuo (The Development of Modern Logical Science (Part 2) – The Impact of Modern Western Logic and Researches on Chinese and Indian Logic)." In 中國邏輯史教程 *Zhongguo luoji shi jiaocheng*. Gongyi Wen and Qingtian Cui, eds. Tianjin: Nankai daxue chuban she. Pp. 350–387.

Sloterdijk, Peter (1996) *Eurotaoismus – Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Xia, Zhentao 夏真陶 (1986) 認識論因論 *Renshi lun yinlun (An Excerpt of Epistemological Theories)*. Beijing: Renmin chuban she.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1924) 科學與哲學 *Kexue yu zhexue (Science and Philosophy)*. Shanghai: Shanghai shangwu yinshu guan.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1929a) 新哲學論業 *Xin zhexue lunye (An Anthology of New Philosophy)*. Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1929b) 哲學ABC. *Zhexue ABC (The Philosophical Alphabet)*. Shanghai: Shanghai shijie shuju.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1931) "我亦談談辯正的唯物論 Wo yi tantan bianzhengde weiwu lun (I Would Also Like to Speak about Dialectical Materialism)." 大公報 *Da gong bao* (現代思潮 Xiandai sichao) 18L: 22–45.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1933) "動的邏輯是可能的馬? Dongde luoji shi kenengde ma? (Is a Moving Logic Possible?)." 新中華 *Xin Zhonghua* 1(18): 1–11.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1934a) "思想戰線上幾個時髦的問題 Sixiang zhanxian shang jige shimaode wenti (Some Fashionable Questions from the Battle Lines of Thought)." 新中華 *Xin Zhonghua* 2(10): 41–47.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1934b) 認識論 *Renshi lun (Epistemology)*. Shanghai: Shanghai shijie shuju.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1937) "多元認識論重述 Duoyuan renshi lun chongshu (A New Formulation of Pluralistic Epistemology)." In 張君生先生七十生日紀念論文 *Zhang Junsheng xiansheng qishi shengri jinian lunwen ji*. Beijing daxue bianji bu, eds. Beijing: Beijing daxue chuban she. Pp. 19–33.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1946) 知識與文化 *Zhishi yu wenhua (Knowledge and Culture)*. Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chuban she.

Zhang, Dongsun 張東孫 (1995) 理性與良知 *Lixing yu liangzhi – Zhang Dongsun wenxuan (Reason and Innate Knowledge – A Selection of Zhang Dongsun's work)*. Zhang Rulun, ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Yuandong chuban she.

Zhang, Yaonan 張耀南 (2000) "從二十世紀中國哲學看張東孫之'架構論' Cong ershi shiji Zhongguo zhexue kan Zhang Dongsun zhi 'Jiagou lun' (Zhang Dunsun's 'Structural Theory' from the Viewpoint of Chinese Philosophy of the 20th Century)." *Xueshu jie* 81(2): 143–150.

Zhang, Yaonan 張耀南 (2002). "論知識解釋說在中西哲學史上之價直 Lun zhishi jieshi shuo zai Zhong Xi zhexue shi shang zhi jiazhi (On the Valuation of 'Epistemological Hermeneutics' in the Histories of Chinese and Western Philosophies)." *Beijing Xingzheng xueyuan xuebao* 2002(2): 73–79.

Zhang, Yaonan 張耀南 (2003) "知識論局先與本體論局先 – 中國現代哲學家對本體論與知識論之關係的兩種見結 Zhishi lun juxian yu benti lun juxian – Zhongguo xiandai zhexuejia dui benti lun yu zhishi lun zhi guanxide liangzhong jianjie (The Priority of Epistemology or the Priority of Ontology – Two Different Approaches of Modern Chinese Philosophers to the Relation of Epistemology and Ontology)." *Xin Shiye* 2003(2): 63–75.