

Differentiation and Continuity in Classical Chinese Grammar— Apropos of Two Recent Works by Christoph Harbsmeier

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Christoph Harbsmeier, who teaches Chinese at the University of Oslo, Norway, has published two books in recent years which constitute an important contribution to the field of Chinese grammar. The first is a translation from French into German of Wilhelm von Humboldt's letter to Abel-Rémusat (which appeared in Paris in 1827 under the title *Lettre à M. Abel-Rémusat sur la nature des formes grammaticales en général et sur le génie de la langue chinoise*) entitled *Brief an M. Abel-Rémusat über die Natur grammatischer Formen im allgemeinen und über den Geist der chinesischen Sprache im besonderen*, as vol 17 of the series *Grammatica Universalis*, published 1979 in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt by Friedrich Frommann Verlag. In this volume is also included an original *Essay* by Harbsmeier: *Zur philosophischen Grammatik des Altchinesischen im Anschluss an Humboldts Brief an Abel-Rémusat* (On the philosophical grammar of Ancient Chinese as an appendix to Humboldt's letter to A-R, pp 91–277). The second book is entitled *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax*, and appeared 1981 in London and Malmö, Curzon Press, as No 45 of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph Series.

Humboldt's letter, which was an expanded letter of thanks he wrote receiving Rémusat's Chinese Grammar (*Elémens de la grammaire chinoise*, Paris 1822), exerted a considerable influence on Chinese grammatical studies and on general linguistics. It has probably been quoted in the literature more often than Rémusat's grammar. Humboldt's main tenets are the following: Chinese grammar is not based on grammatical categories, in contradistinction to other languages it has only syntax, no morphology. The grammatical category is left open. Chinese has verbal notions but no verbs: like Indo-European infinitives the Chinese words are

in an intermediary state between verb and noun, or in an absolute state like the roots of Sanskrit. Chinese particles do not indicate grammatical forms but serve to avoid ambiguity. Neither does the word order tell us which word is the verb, and all kinds of constructions can serve as subject. The word order can indicate the restriction of an idea, or its direction upon an object (i. e. subordination and transitivity) and this is in short the whole of the grammar. Chinese grammar is the least overt of grammars, it depends to a very large extent on context, and the meaning of a word is the dictionary meaning as modified by the context. A Chinese sentence can be broken up into a hierarchy of shorter and simpler sentences. Chinese should not be confused with the imperfect languages of the Barbarians, its purity of grammar is on the level of the classical Indo-European languages: Chinese rejects grammatical differentiation, Sanskrit emphasizes it, but Greek obtains the greatest precision. Grammatical categories exist in the speaker's mind, and their overt marking determines the development of grammar. The grammatical constructions give the thought width and color. Chinese has little imagination but much precision, as an organ of thinking it is not up to the classical languages, but it is not a childish or a primitive tongue. The Chinese write as they speak, isolating ideas and words into characters, which are not hieroglyphs but conventional signs. Because of its phonetic nature Chinese will never be written by means of an alphabet. Even though the absence of grammar is an imperfection, Chinese is an excellent philosophical language, because of the bold use of the means at hand. Classical and modern Chinese have the same grammatical structure. Humboldt adds a *caveat*: the linguist should try to avoid building up a new linguistic theory when investigating a new language.

In his *Essay* (which builds on his 1973 lectures in Oxford, England, On Classical Chinese and the Philosophy of Language) Harbsmeier by way of introduction treats three important modern contributions to the philosophy of language (Hacking 1968, Mei 1961, Quine 1960) but concludes that they contribute nothing that throws new light on Humboldt's claims. He then reinvestigates a number of themes from Humboldt's letter.

(a) *Semantics and pragmatics in Ancient Chinese*.¹ Several principles are established:

Principle of economy, not known from other languages. In AC the telegraphic style is not only grammatically correct, but good style, e. g. 至則行矣 ‘when A arrived, B had left’. Such possible constituents of the sentence as subject, object, and conjunctions, can be left out. There is no rule of completeness (as e. g. in written German), but on the contrary redundancy is stylistically bad. AC sentences are context-bound, therefore Chinese commentaries traditionally explain what a word means in a certain context – which has left its mark on glosses and dictionaries. This economy is not grammatically prescribed, but part of convention. Even particles like 者, 之, and 所 can be left out, although they are sometimes used where in telegraphic style they could be dispensed with. Grammaticality in Chinese can to a surprisingly large degree be defined in terms of intelligibility – so this far Humboldt was on the right track.

Principle of dispensibility: Everything pragmatically dispensable is grammatically optional. So Harman 1972 is wrong in claiming that the grammatical deep structure equals the logical form, since logically necessary forms may be irretrievable in AC.

The principle of vagueness: Vagueness is not the same as ambiguity. To be vague is to have no precise grammatical analysis, to be ambiguous is to have several semantically distinct grammatical analyses. German structure demands sentence boundaries, Chinese structure permits them. But Humboldt was wrong, acc. to Harbsmeier, when he claimed that Chinese has no clear notion of sentence boundaries, since these boundaries can be indicated where necessary. Only in exceptional cases do we find structural vagueness in AC, but we do find structural continua side by side with discrete grammatical structures. E. g. 知者不惑 (論語 9) can not only be translated as either “The clever one is not deluded” or “When somebody is clever he is not deluded”, but the Chinese

1. By Ancient Chinese (or AC) Harbsmeier understands Dobson’s Late Archaic Chinese, but with constant comparative references to Old Archaic Chinese and Han Chinese. See Dobson 1959, 1962, 1964.

grammar is vague (as opposed to ambiguous) on this point.

(b) *Morphology and syntax in Ancient Chinese.* Humboldt claimed that Chinese grammar consists of syntax only. Harbsmeier points to Karlgren's 1920 discovery of pronominal flexion (foreshadowed by Hu 1919) and to the morphological nature of much of what Karlgren called word families, where however the morphology is hidden in the characters and must be considered unwritten. Possible affixes are analyzed, and it is shown that affixation is at best incipient in AC (to this point the reader should be referred further to Harbsmeier 1980). In any case AC has some morphology. But it is significant that in AC there is no sharp boundary between compounding and idiomatic expressions. The deep structure homogeneity of morphology and syntax is clouded by surface phenomena in Western languages, we are told, and in a profound sense Humboldt was right when he saw the connection through the specific structure of Chinese.

(c) *Word class and word function in Ancient Chinese.* Harbsmeier demonstrates that Demiéville's 1948 view of Chinese word classes was *functionalistic*, Maspero's 1939 view was *relativistic* (i. e. the Westerner tends to find his own native word classes in Chinese), whereas Yang Bojun's 1956 view is *positivistic* (he simply takes for granted that Chinese has the traditional word classes). These three scholars all agree that in a language which has word classes all words belong to one and only one of them. Against this Harbsmeier claims with Humboldt that Chinese words belong to a *categorical continuum* and that each word has a *tendency* or *preference* for certain functions.

In the Chinese tradition full and empty words remind Harbsmeier of the Aristotelian categorematic and syncategorematic words. But the terms full and empty have also been used for nominal versus non-nominal (雨 'rain' being full, 雨 'to rain' being empty). So we have indications of a Chinese intuitive distinction of word classes. The terms 'dead' and 'live' have been used for adjectives versus verbs (but the same word could have both functions). According to Harbsmeier there are pure grammatical words like 也, and pure lexical words like 白, but the continuity between these poles is amazing. A

definition of grammatical particle is offered: A word in a given sentence under a given interpretation which cannot be used isolated in this same meaning.

On this basis it is shown that the functions of grammatical particle and verb constantly overlap, as in instrumental 以, instrumental 用, locative 於, locative 在, comparison words like 如 and 似, passivizers like 見, 受 and 被. It is remarked that 用 is more grammaticalized than 以 and that 見 is more grammaticalized than 受. Most memorably it is stated with reference to the functions of 以 (verbal, subordinated verbal, or prepositional) that Chinese possesses a *well-defined structural vagueness*.

Grammatical functions are defined through syntactic patterns. Verbals are negatable by 不 and occur in V 而 V. Nominals are negatable by 非 and occur in N 與 N. Adjectives are non-nominal noun modifiers, and adverbials are not otherwise assignable verb modifiers. Some words show little functional preference like relationship words (上, 下 etc), others show a functional preference like 大 which is primarily verbal, and 禮 which is more nominal than 仁. Names and titles have a strong functional preference (but 君子 is verbal in 不亦君子乎 from 論語 1). The functional flexibility belongs to the grammar, not to the lexicon. If assigned to the lexicon it would result in a very large and largely redundant number of vocabulary items. The flexibility can mostly but not always be derived from the basic meaning. (The reader should be warned that footnote 16 on p 189 argues against opinions ascribed to Egerod 1972a or b where such opinions are, however, not expressed or discussed!).

In connection with derivations through tone change the point is made that 去聲 derivations specialize functions which words without such derivation may also possess, and that 去聲 derivations are less flexible than other words. It is stated that we do not know whether 去聲 derivations are an innovation or a survival in Ancient Chinese.

(d) *Subject and predicate in Ancient Chinese*. Humboldt's idea that Chinese sentences represent an agglomeration of smaller sentences is acc. to Harbsmeier in general not tenable, but is valid in the special case where a Chinese sentence can be shown to contain a smaller hypotactic sentence without

a subject. This hypotactic connection is said to resemble a subject-predicate construction. It is remarked that in Chinese a subject-predicate construction is just a special case of the more general theme-rheme construction. We are told that the logical ambiguity in a sentence like "A socialist does not steal" can be removed in Western languages by rewriting it as "When one is a socialist, one does not steal", whereas in Chinese this is difficult for two reasons: (1) The preponderance of sentences without a subject; (2) The double function of certain particles as nominalizers and conjunctions.

Harbsmeier distinguishes several types of sentences without subject. (1) Intrinsically without subject, as when 有 indicates existence (but 有 indicating possession can have an implicit or an explicit subject). He raises the question of whether 春 is adverbial or subject in 春不雨. We shall revert to this question below. In 下雨 the word for 'rain' is called an inverted subject. It is hard to see why this should be so, since no reinversion is possible. (2) Sentences with indeterminate subject, where Western languages must supply words like 'somebody, something, you, we'. As example is used 老子 22: 曲則全, 枉則直 etc etc, where any German or English translation must make choices which narrow down the scope and the poetic force of the original, in other words to a certain degree falsifies the message, along the lines of "that which is crooked will be complete, that which is bent will be straight", or "he who is crooked will be complete, he who is bent will be straight". In another memorable dictum Harbsmeier states that *Chinese is unambiguously and precisely indeterminate*. (3) Sentences with omitted subject are sentences whose precise subject is evident from the context and therefore omitted. (4) Sentences with cancelled subject are those in which the subject for grammatical reasons must not be introduced because it is shared with a superior or closely coordinated sentence. (5) Sentences with no subject but place or time themes (cf. 春不雨 above), 非-negated themes or themes before 莫 (not subjects as acc. to Shadick 1968). (6) Sentences in which we cannot determine whether we have a subject or a theme. In principle Harbsmeier is inclined, as mentioned above, to consider subject a special kind of theme, and the boundary line is not sharp between subject themes

and non-subject themes, since subjects and themes if at all marked are marked the same way (by 者, 也 etc). We are told that it would be a perverse idea to deny that 子曰 is a subject-predicate construction, whereas 始作俑者其無後乎 (孟子 1A) “those who started making images are without descendants” is to be analyzed “as for those who..., they are without...”. (This is a bad example. Harbsmeier says that 其 is a subject pronoun, but seems unaware of the special force of 其 乎. Outside such a construction there is no reason for a possessive subject in a main clause in AC).

(e) *Syntactic connections of subject and predicate in Ancient Chinese*

In this chapter Harbsmeier gets on to controversial ground. He treats the following cases:

(1) Sentence conjunction between subject and predicate. Harbsmeier says that in 賢者而後樂此 (孟子 1A) the particle 者 must form a subordinated sentence “Only if somebody is wise will he enjoy this”, otherwise we cannot obtain a unit definition of 而後. But there is no reason to introduce a double definition of 者 (“he who” and “when somebody”) in order to save the single definition of 而後. And N 者 is in this respect no different from other nouns, e.g. 人而不仁 “If somebody is a human being but is not humane...” (論語 3 and 8) (see further Egerod 1971 pp 160 and 167; Egerod 1972a pp 104–105). In connection with 也 after the subject (e.g. 回也不愚 in 論語 2) Harbsmeier seems unaware of the treatment of this phenomenon in Karlgren 1951. 若 is said to show the close connection between subject or theme and short sentence, since it indicates the theme in 若禹臯陶則... “as for Yu and Gao Yao...” (presumably seen as a development from “if it is a case of Yu and Yao...”) (孟子 7B).

(2) Concessive 雖 can mark the subject rather than the sentence as in 雖聖人不能易也 “Even (if one is) a holy man, he cannot alter this”. This type of sentence is another argument in favor of Humboldt’s thesis that (some) parts of Chinese sentences (as e.g. the subject) are in themselves short sentences.

(3) Nominalization and subordination. Not only 者, but also 之 and 其 are said to mark *both* nominalization *and* subordination. It is stated that there is a profound connection between the two functions. 王之不王不爲也 “Your Majesty’s

non-royal state is a case of not doing it" (孟子 1A) can be translated as "The fact that Y. M. does not function as a king..." or "If Y. M. does not function as a king..." (German "*Wenn* Eure Majestät sich unköniglich verhält...") and *means* all of this. Harbsmeier also suspects that subordination and embedding are closely related phenomena. This suspicion is of course correct. The reason for introducing 之 between subject and predicate in AC is to make one sentence part of another (embedding it). So this *function* of embedding is expressed by *means* of nominalization. But this does not make the nominalized sentence into a subordinated sentence. On the contrary, that is what Late Archaic Chinese precisely does not do. Humboldt's good intuition has in this instance pulled Harbsmeier out where the thin ice begins to break.

The examples with 者 can all be commented on in the light of what we said regarding 賢者 above. One important statement is made in English (to underline its importance?): 者 *sets the semantic stage for a discourse*. The patient reader is asked to keep this in mind for the discussion of Harbsmeier's second book below. We are also told that 力不足者 is in an intermediary state (Zwitzerzustand) in the sentence 力不足者中道而廢 (論語 6) because it means *both* "The spineless fellow (der Schlappschwanz) would give up halfway" *and* "If your strength does not suffice you would give up halfway". But the two interpretations are in no way overlapping. One means "as for the case that somebody's strength does not suffice" with indeterminate subject, the other one "as for the case that your or his strength does not suffice" with omitted subject. If we need context to tell us which interpretation is correct it is ambiguity, not vagueness.²

In his final observations Harbsmeier discusses Uspenskij's 1965 universal roots and auxiliaries, but finds that Chinese exhibits a scale of grammaticalization and functional preferences rather than a dichotomy. He finds little of interest in Chomsky's search for support or disproof in other languages of features known from English, and tends to agree with Quine 1970 who wants to redefine

2. In *Aspects* p 214 Harbsmeier corrects the translations into "If your strength had been insufficient you would have given up mid-way", and suspects that the first translation (the general point) would have to be 其力不足者 ... in Chinese.

all grammatical categories for each language (cf Egerod 1956 pp 52-70 and Egerod 1972b pp 77-78). Harbsmeier refers with approval to Bolinger 1961 and Matisoff 1973 who favor the continuum in grammatical descriptions rather than the all-or-none model. Also Engels (quoted from Marx and Engels, *Gesammelte Werke*, Berlin 1962) is drawn into the discussion as a champion of the continuum approach. So not only is there no sharp line between subject and certain small sentences, but also the subject can be more or less predicative (cf. the non-stealing socialist above!). Chinese possesses both categorical continua (word classes overlap without clear boundaries) and structural continua (sentence constituents overlap).

Harbsmeier ends his essay with a few remarks on linguistic change on a profoundly Humboldtian note: *Die Sprachwandel repräsentiert dann in wichtiger Hinsicht die Bemühung des chinesischen Volkes, mit sozialen und kommunikativen Erfordernissen fertigzuwerden* ("The change of the Chinese language represents the endeavor of the Chinese people to overcome social and communicative demands").

The *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax* takes up some new themes and continues in greater detail some of the same themes treated in the *Essay*. Harbsmeier explains that he began his studies as a firm believer in the formalism of transformational generative grammar, but has come to believe that "the true art of writing the grammar of a language is the art of making one's own theoretical comments almost redundant through a skilful and systematic deployment of carefully interpreted examples from the language one is describing" (this is a nice formulation, echoing Humboldt's final *caveat*. Only I'm sorry it must make Egerod 1971 an example of the worst possible grammar one could undertake to write!). One of his models is Y. R. Chao "whose flair for unruly idiomatic detail and good-humoured way of doing linguistics" he admires. Another ideal of a linguist is Otto Jespersen "who had the knack of making his results perspicuous through the skillful use of examples" and his theory "almost redundant" this way. Harbsmeier defines his aim as *the linguist's virtue of 無爲*.

Chapter One treats *Negation*. We are reminded that 不 only negates verbs,

whereas 非 negates nouns, verbs or sentences. As a sentence negation 非 not only denies a claim, but *dismisses* it in order to get on to the main point, as in 古之善爲道者非以明民將以愚之 (“It wasn’t as if those who in ancient times were good at practising the Way, were using it to enlighten people. They used it to keep them stupid”. (老子 65). This point of view represents a real new insight into the nature of 非, so it is the more surprising that Harbsmeier remarks that before subordinate verbs, 非 can often replace 不 without a clear concomitant change of meaning, and introduces the examples:

(a) 吾非至於子之門則殆矣 (莊子 17)

vs. (b) 吾不至於子之門則殆矣

both translated “If I hadn’t come to your door, I would have been in danger”. It is true that the sentences may be translated alike, but they are *structurally* and *semantically* different. In (a) 吾 is a theme, in (b) 吾 is an agent, and the implication of (a) is “If I had not chosen the option I chose, but done something entirely different”, whereas (b) simply states what would have happened if he had done what he did. Harbsmeier is trying “not to impose any rigid formalism on the elusive subtleties of his material” which is an admirable goal. But anti-formalism can be carried too far. Sooner or later he will have to take a stand on certain structural choices, where he prefers to see only vagueness and continua. He notices (in connection with Graham 1967 p 9 “是, 非 and the particle 也 are also used in the verbal sentence to turn a descriptive or narrative statement into a judgement between implicit or explicit alternatives”) that 馬不進也 and 馬非進也 are both judgements between alternatives, but not synonymous, but his theoretical apparatus does not permit him to specify the exact difference. But with 不 the sentence means “The truth of the matter was that the horses would not proceed”, where 馬 is an agent, and the copula 也 establishes the whole sentence as a rheme to a covert theme. With 非 it means “The truth about the horses was not that they proceeded” with the double copula 非 ... 也 establishing 進 as the rheme of the theme 馬. So the first sentence is exothematic, the second is endothematic.

非 is common in proposed subordinate sentences with or without a verb, e. g.

非背法專制無以爲威 “If they do not go against the law and exercise autocratic control they have not the means to exercise authority” (韓非子 85), and 非聖人莫之能爲 “Only a sage can do this” (荀子 8). Harbsmeier paraphrases the last example “As for non-sages, none of them can do it”, where I should prefer “If not a sage, nobody can do it” or to make the point even clearer “If the potential subjects are not sages, none of them can do it”. Such a construction rarely involves 也, we are told. This should be discussed in connection with the role of *expectation fields* in Chinese in general (see Egerod 1972a). Just as e. g. in Modern Chinese the pretransitive 把 construction leaves an expectation field to be filled *minimally* by an aspect suffix (Chao 1958 p 346), and V 了 N creates an expectation field around the N (the object) to be filled either by a classifier before the N or the particle 了 after the N, in the same way the construction in question must minimally terminate in 也, but can be continued and terminated in other ways instead. Humboldt was not completely off the track when he maintained that Chinese particles are not grammatical, but are used to avoid ambiguity. We would rather say that they are not required when the expectation field is filled some other way. The combining form of a Chinese verb or sentence is negatively marked by its not being marked as conclusive.

Harbsmeier introduces many important examples of *Neg-raising* of the type 勿使四民雜處 “They ensured that the four kinds of people did not live together” (國語). The negative before the verb 雜 has been raised to a position before 使 ‘to cause’ as shown by the prohibitive form of the negation, and we do not have to assign a second meaning ‘allow’ to 使. This is very fine, but in addition we are told that this interpretation simplifies the dictionary entry for the verbs which permit neg-raising. This is however hardly so: the good dictionary will still have to specify which verbs permit this construction and under what conditions. Furthermore neg-raising typically over a period entails semantic change of the verb as in ‘il faut’ – ‘il ne faut pas’ and ‘you must’ – ‘you must not’ and we must consider each text and period separately. But these observations of course in no way invalidate Harbsmeier’s main point.

We are shown the existence of a “gnomic” 未, related to but not identical

with temporal 未. 未之聞也 “I have not heard of this yet”, but 未知 “I suspect that not”, and 未足 “not necessarily sufficient”, 未可 ... “not quite worthy of ...”. This correct and important, but unfortunately one of the key examples is doubtful. 論語 13: 子曰, 未可也 is translated here as “He is not necessarily commendable”. But immediately afterwards Confucius uses the same expression about hating somebody. The correct interpretation must in both cases be “That is not sufficient basis for a statement – no comment!”. Other examples show that in the positive we find a similar gnomic usage of 矣 in sentences introduced by 則 to indicate that the conditions mentioned in the protasis are completely sufficient to guarantee the truth of the apodosis. In other words whether in time or in logic 矣 indicates an achieved result, 未 indicates a non-achieved result.

Chapter Two of the *Aspects* treats *Quantification*. A fundamental distinction is introduced between subject quantifiers and object quantifiers. This is an important point of Chinese grammar which has never been adequately appreciated or treated in depth before. A simple example would be 上咸愛下 “All superiors love inferiors” vs. 上兼愛下 “Superiors love all their inferiors”; cf. the pair 上各愛其下 “Each superior loves his inferiors” vs. 上盡殺其下 “Superiors kill all their inferiors”.

We shall not here attempt to treat the whole impressive corpus of examples of quantification and the great number of important inferences drawn from them, with which we basically agree. We shall simply refer the reader to this gold mine of information. But let us mention that the semantic relationship of quantifier used as such and the same word used as “full word” is emphasized and adduced as yet another example of a semantic and grammatical continuum in LAC, as in 徧能 describing a “blanket coverage of abilities” vs. 兼能 implying a “combination of individual skills”. We should also notice that object quantifiers may occasionally quantify the subject of passivized verbs: 券遍合 “the tallies had all been matched”. Another interesting observation regards 盡 which is normally an object quantifier, but which quantifies the subject if the object is not quantifiable, e. g. 越國之寶盡在此 “The whole lot of Yue’s treasures are here” (墨子 15). A crucial distinction is that between 徧知 and 盡知 which

mean “knowing about all the objects” and “knowing all about the objects” respectively. The numeral 兩 is often used as an object quantifier as in 兩展其足 “He stretched out both his legs” (莊子 29). Among the subject quantifiers both 皆 and 各 can be raised. An example of 皆 - raising is 皆令諸大夫論己 “He ordered all the various grandees to discuss themselves” (呂氏春秋 24).

Among existential quantifiers 或 and 有 are used with indefinite reference, 有...者 with definite reference. 莫 ‘no one’ is considered a fusion of 無或. The offhand way in which this (in itself not implausible) etymology is presented is surprisingly amateurish in a book of such consistently high scholarly standards as the present work.

The notes on relative quantifiers and the comparative degree are pertinent, but one is surprised that the only other language which is drawn into the discussion should be modern Malay, where a few references to Semitic languages would have contributed much of interest; and it is rather astounding that Harbsmeier does not take into account the similar considerations for Modern Chinese in e.g. Rygaloff 1973 and Alleton 1973. The basic meaning of 多 is given as ‘be many or much (in comparison with something)’, but 多 is also defined as ‘have many’ and shown to function like a verb of the same type as 有 and 無. In 皆無祿而多馬 “They were all without official emoluments but had a lot of horses” (左傳, 襄 22) 多 contrasts with 無. The pertinent observation is made that one often feels uncertain as to whether an adverbial 多 means ‘often’ or ‘many objects’ and this is compared with English: Intelligent children are often difficult (which is ambiguous, either “Many intelligent children are difficult” or “All intelligent children tend to be difficult”). We are told that this ambiguity exists also in German, Danish, Russian and French. The first three examples are correct, but French...sont souvent des enfants difficiles is not the same as...sont souvent difficiles.

The restrictive quantifiers are divided into restrictive noun quantifiers and restrictive predicate quantifiers, as e.g. 女獨未及也 “Only *you* have not reached it” vs. 女徒未及也 “It is only that you *haven’t reached it*”. This distinction represents an important new insight, including such supplementary discoveries as

the usage of 無他 to reinforce restrictive noun (object) quantifiers and of 而已 to reinforce restrictive predicate quantifiers. The scope of the various restrictive quantifiers (獨, 專, 徒, 唯 etc) is treated in detail and it is made probable that the differences in scope disappear in negative contexts. A very interesting observation states that the reason for the restriction of adjectival 唯 (not a very happy terminology, what is meant is the usage in sentences as 唯神是守 "He kept only his spirit", 莊子 15) to the topic position is "because it retains something of its original copulative meaning" (as also in the fusions 雖 and 非 which can also function as "subordinate copulas"). This kind of unprejudiced investigation seems to us to represent the Humboldtian legacy at its best.

The particles 亦 and 又 are contrasted in a special chapter. 亦 refers to the theme, if this is expressed, otherwise, like 又, it is oriented towards the predicate. 亦 has an adversative connotation, 又 an additive connotation. 亦 can have a rhetorical or exclamatory force. Harbsmeier speculates that this rhetorical force is original, and that the other usages of 亦 have developed from it. It seems much more logical that the meaning of "also" has been used as an appeal to the listener "don't you also think so?" In any case one is surprised that Harbsmeier seems unaware of the treatment of 亦 in Waley 1949 and Schindler 1949 (and Egerod 1960 p 115).

The importance of Harbsmeier's findings concerning the "so-called adjectival quantifier 凡" lies not only in his own excellent results, but in his refutation of earlier treatments (such as Dobson 1959). 凡 is not typically adjectival, because its scope is never less than the complete topic of the sentence. 諸 'all the various' and 羣 'the whole crowd of' can be adjectival to any noun, including the object, but 凡 can never modify the object. 凡人之姓者 ... (荀子 23) means "Speaking of human nature in general...", and not "As for all human natures...", or "As for every person's nature...".

Harbsmeier is of the opinion that the quantifiers 諸, 羣 and 眾 have definite reference (in this connection he maintains that 諸 is a fusion containing 之 'this' as an element, which is unlikely; he has probably been confused by the etymology of the unrelated word 諸 from 之 plus 乎). So 王之諸臣皆足以供之

means “Your Majesty’s ministers are all able to supply these things” (孟子 1A) as opposed to 凡王之臣皆足以供之 “In general, ministers of kings are able to...”. There are a few exceptions to the definite reference, which Harbsmeier calls marginal idiomatic uses; we feel they may be due rather to conflicting rules concerning word order and definiteness (the last word has by no means been said yet as to the problem of *given* vs. *new* in Chinese in general!).

Chapter Three concerns *Pronominalization*. The treatment of the reflexive pronoun 己 is one of the most original in the book. There is a nominal and a pronominal usage of 己, and the pronominal 己 is found in independent and in embedded sentences. In independent sentences it is contrastive and means ‘one self’ as opposed to others. 己 is most common in embedded sentences, where it always refers back to the subject of the main clause (not just the next higher clause). A good example is from 韓非子 31: 夫人知王之不以己爲妒也 “The wife knew that the king did not think she was jealous”. With this rule in mind Harbsmeier (and we!) can now determine or correct previous translations depending on the role played by 己.

There are subject reflexives (e.g. 身勝 “He himself was victorious”) and object reflexives (e.g. 自勝 “He won over himself”). 自 is an object reflexive, except when the object is 之. 自 is pivotal in 自以爲不如 “He believed himself not to be as handsome” (戰國策) against Shadick 1968. It is especially useful to notice that 自 standing alone always refers to the object if this is modified by 其, but that it can combine with another word to form a subject reflexive, so that 自殺其父 means “He killed his own father”, whereas 身自殺其父 is “He himself killed his father”.

The interrogative subject pronouns are 誰 and 孰, the interrogative object pronouns are 奚 and 何. 誰 can refer to the object if the subject is non-generic, e.g. a pronoun. 孰 involves a comparison, so 弟子孰好學 (論語 6) means “Which of the disciples is the most ardent learner”, whereas with 誰 it would have meant “Who among the disciples likes to study”. Harbsmeier does not seem to be acquainted with Stimson 1971.

At this point Harbsmeier takes up the problem of nominalization and

subordination which we have discussed earlier in connection with Humboldt. The section is entitled: The so-called pronoun 者 and subordinating 所. His views call for quite some discussion and comments. In brief what he says is as follows: The English sentence "*His death* was a disaster" is equated with "The fact that he died was a disaster", and the English sentence "*His death* would be a disaster" with "If he died, that would be a disaster". In other words "His death has two different interpretations. Similarly in Chinese 曲士不可以語於道者束於教也 "The fact that the parochial scholars should not be talked to about the Way is because they are bound up by dogma" (莊子 17) is analyzed differently from 軍擾者將不重也 "If the army is restless, the general has slight authority" (孫子 9). So Harbsmeier thinks that the two 者 constructions look alike on the surface, the same as "His death" does in the two examples above, but that one is in fact nominalizing, the other is subordinating. If this is what he wants to prove, English makes a bad starting point, since both instances of "His death" have the same grammatical value (nominal). But as we know, in the last account Harbsmeier is more likely to find a continuum than two sharply defined categories.

He does, however, seem to have good evidence for his subordinating 者. Firstly 則 'then, in that case' often follows this 者. Secondly the 者 -phrase itself may be introduced by such words as 若 or 苟, usually translated 'if'. 莊子 18 reads 若不得者則憂以懼 "If they do not get these things they are greatly worried, and as a result, frightened". But the very fact that such words as 若, 苟, and 則 occur (and the last one with increasing frequency into the Han dynasty) in such constructions, seem to us to indicate that the marking of condition is not to be found in 者 itself but elsewhere in the sentence, just as is the case of the hypothesis in English ("His death *was*...", "His death *would be*..."). The particle 者 probably has no more to do with condition than does the category nominal in general. But here we approach a real problem in Chinese, since the distinction among *theme*, *subject* and *sentence adverb* seems fuzzy, to use Harbsmeier's terminology.

In evaluating the role of 者 we must determine two aspects of the matter,

viz the reference (or scope) of 者 and the syntactic value (or function) of the 者 -phrase.

者 can *refer* to a noun, a verb or a complete sentence. The noun may be implicit or explicit. The *function* of 者 is to establish an N-phrase which, of course, has to be used as part of a sentence for a complete utterance to be established (cf Egerod 1972a).

When 者 refers to an explicit noun it is possible to consider the noun a predicate of an implicit subject, as in 道者 '(that which is) the Tao'. This is also the scope with an intransitive verb, 病者 'those who are sick, the sick'. With some intransitive verbs the 者 -phrase may approach a more nominal meaning, 古者 'those who were ancient, the ancient' or '(that which was) the ancient times'. A reference to an implicit subject is common also with transitive verbs, 食肉者 'those who eat meat', but in this case the scope may also be the V-phrase itself 'the eating of meat'. If there is an explicit subject, only the whole sentence can be referred to, 王食肉者 'the fact that the king eats meat'.³ It is interesting to see how often an English -ing form can be used to cover the scope of 者: 食肉者 'the eating of meat' or 'the meateating people', 生者 'the living', 啟者 'the beginning'.

The N established by the 者 -phrase can function as subject, object, or theme. It is in the function as theme that the trouble begins. What does it mean that an N functions as theme?

A theme is a topic, which creates an expectation field to be filled by a comment, also known as the rheme. In many cases the theme is an exposure: a member of a sentence is extracted from that sentence and placed in front of it with the value 'as for, as concerns'. It must then be implicitly or explicitly present in the sentence itself (which become its comment or rheme). This is the typical way of forming sentences e.g. in French. A theme is not a sentence adverb, because it is not the theme that tells something about the comment, but the other way round. But a theme can be a topicalized circumstance (time,

3. The noun preceding the verb can, of course, also indicate a partitive relation "Among the kings, those who...", and a preverbal noun can indicate Place or Time.

place, manner, degree).⁴ In the *Essay* Harbsmeier asks the question whether it is relevant to discuss if 春 is subject (theme) or adverb in 春不雨 “In the spring it did not rain”. The question is relevant, because the sentence cannot simultaneously mean both “It did not rain in the spring” and “As for the spring, there was no rain”. It may perhaps sometimes mean one, sometime the other, but in an particular instance 春 must be either an adverb telling when it rained, or the given exposed theme about which a comment is made.⁵ Some languages make or can make the difference quite explicit, as in English minimally through the word order. In Danish the word order marks an adverb: Det regnede om foråret, or a theme: Om foråret regnede det, but in daily speech the theme is further marked off by *så*, about non-past and *da* about past events, as in, Om foråret *så* regner det “In spring it rains”, and, Om foråret *da* regnede det “In the spring it rained” (parallel to constructions where a subject or object exposure is resumed by means of a personal pronoun). In Japanese an adverb ending in *ni* can be exposed as a theme by means of *wa*.

In the concrete case (左傳, 僖 3) the full sentence concerning rain runs 三年春不雨, 夏六月雨, where the theme is 三年, the verbal messages 不雨 and 雨, with each an additional time phrase: “As for the third year, it did not rain in spring, but it did rain in the sixth month during summer”. It is possible, but not necessary, to take the second time phrases as second themes. Another example of a time phrase answering the question “when” is from the 莊子 24: 吾能冬爨鼎而夏造冰矣 “I can build a fire under the cauldron in winter and make ice in summer”. In this last case it seems strained to talk of a second theme. On the other hand because of the word order 春 and 秋 are probably themes in 莊

4. We have shown above in our discussion of Harbsmeier's *Essay* that the transformation which introduces 之 between subject and verb, 王不王 > 王之不王, nominalizes the sentence, but does not subordinate it. The same is true of the transformation which introduces 而 between subject and verb, 王而不王 “To be a king and yet not function as a king”. The first transformation introduces a fact, the second an assumption, but both must be assumed to have nominal value.

5. We can, however, never guarantee that speaker and listener (writer and reader) analyze a sentence the same way. Such discrepancies in analysis from one generation to the next can cause an overt change of grammar.

子 28: 春耕種形足以勞動, 秋收斂身足以休息 “In spring I plow and sow and I am in shape for the toil; in fall I harvest and store away and my body can afford to take a rest”.

So, theoretically, 者 -phrases could be expected sometimes to be adverbs. As mentioned above Harbsmeier sees instances of this when a circumstance, especially a condition is involved, as in 軍擾者將不重也 “If the army is restless, the general has slight authority”, 若不得者則憂以懼 “If they do not get these things they are greatly worried, and as a result, frightened” or 苟能禮者從之 “If somebody really understands ritual, he would follow him” (左傳, 昭 7). But calling such 者 -phrases subordinated presupposes that conditions are not themes but adverbs, that they are not the thing commented upon. Already English makes it likely that this is not so. In a sentence like: I'll tell him if I meet him, the if-clause is adverbial (subordinated), whereas in: If I meet him I'll tell him, the if-clause is, although *formally* subordinated, by word order exposed as the topic commented upon. Even if we still chose to call the latter construction a subordination and apply a feature such as ‘focus’ to account for the difference, it is a very different kind of subordination, which seems to be semantically above what it is grammatically supposed to be below. Danish again can make the relationship explicit: Hvis jeg møder ham så vil jeg fortælle ham det, where the *hvis*-clause (i.e. the *if*-clause) is a marked theme, very different from, Jeg vil fortælle ham det hvis jeg møder ham (the Danish sentences are simple translations, in opposite order, of the two preceding English examples).

Preposed 者 -phrases are typically themes, but may very well contain a condition: “As for the possible case that they do not get these things my comment is that they are (or would be) greatly worried...” and “As for the possible case that somebody really understood ritual my comment is that they would follow him”. If such 者 -phrases were adverbial (modifying, not commented upon), they would at least be *subordinated*, and 者 would not be *subordinating* because there is nothing in 者 that can subordinate more than in any other Noun. And 則, far from indicating subordination, appears to us as taking up the expectation field of a theme which contains a condition.

A theme which introduces a circumstance, I suggest calling a *scenario* or a *setting*. And read in this light Harbsmeier's treatment of 者 (and 所...者) adduces and analyzes a great number of examples of scenarios (settings) in a very fine way. He objects to the translation "Those who obeyed, he left alone" of 荀子 16: 順者錯之, and prefers a "literal translation", viz. "If anybody obeyed, he left them alone". The problem is simply whether the 者 -phrase supplies the object of 錯 (repeated as 之), or whether it is a *scenario* to the following drama "—then he left them alone". And 者 gives us no clue as to which construction is intended (had there been an overt marker like 則 we would know that a scenario is involved). By the way, in his discussion of temporal themes containing 者, Harbsmeier does not seem to know the important treatment of the same phenomenon in Simon 1948.

Let us analyze an especially tricky case. 荀子 21 says 故從山上望牛者若羊 "Thus when you look at an ox from a hill, that ox looks (small) like a sheep". Harbsmeier adds the following commentary: "I suppose those who wish to maintain the traditional view on 者 would have to translate, 'Those who look at a water buffalo from a hill are sheepish (resemble sheep)', and that would be an asinine mistake". The wrong (asinine!) translation is however grammatically possible and only contextually absurd, and 者 cannot make it invalid. There are two grammatically correct translations, one in which the implicit subject of the verb in the 者 -phrase is used as subject in the main clause, and one in which the whole 者 -phrase is a scenario to a drama, i.e. "In the case of a subject watching cows from above, the cows look like sheep" (the object of the 者 -phrase becomes the subject of the main clause). The second one is correct here, but 者 has performed no subordination, it has nominalized a clause and created an expectation field with several, but clearly describable solutions.

In his treatment of subordinating 所, Harbsmeier again ascribes functions to 所 which are in fact functions of the phrases in which 所 happens to occur, but which are not indicated or established by 所. He quotes the example 所愛其母者非愛其形愛使其形者 "If they loved their mothers it wasn't that they loved her shape, they loved that which governed her shape" (莊子 5) as if 所 had any—

thing to do with “if”, 所 means that the N to be lifted out of the 所 -phrase is not the agent of that phrase. This N is in this instance further thematized by means of the first 者. So what the sentence says is, “As for that in relation to which (on account of which) they loved their mothers, it was not her shape they loved, but that which governed her shape”. Harbsmeier goes as far as saying that the same 所 can at the same time both nominalize and subordinate (which is not *a priori* impossible, depending on how one further analyzes), or that 所 can be *almost* subordinating as in 一之所起, 有一而未形 “When the One comes into existence, there is the One, but it has no form” (莊子 12). The sentence means more precisely “At the point where the One comes into existence ...” and the 所 -phrase might perhaps be regarded as *subordinated*, if the context made it clear that it is not this point we are commenting upon; but 所 refers to a (potentially subordinated) place only in its own phrase; outside this phrase it produces a free N. More often 所 refers to an object in its own phrase, which can have any N-function in the main clause.

In connection with 左傳 宣17, 所不此報無能涉河 “If I do not avenge this, may I be unable to cross the river”, the observation is made that oaths and prayers often preserve old linguistic forms, *in casu* the previously more common use of 所 as subordinating particle. A grammatically closer translation would be something like “By the same token as...”. No doubt 所 is *subordinated* in its origin (“the place where”, “at the place where”) but this etymology does not make it *subordinating*.

We are shown that 者 -phrases and conditions in general have in common the fact that they are outside the scope of the negation of a sentence (the negation of “If I get rich I will buy a house” is not “If I do not get rich I will buy a house”), and this turns out to be true also of “those awkward idioms involving 者 that seem to be unconnected both with nominalization and with subordination”, such as 昔者 and 古者. We would rather say that the rule concerning the scope of a sentence negation applies also to scenarios and that scenarios can be very short: 古者 can mean “in ancient times”, but there is nothing in 者 to exclude the translation “the ancient”. In 古者人寡 “In ancient times men were few” (韓非子

47) it is the presence of the subject 人 which shows us that 古者 is a scenario, not 者.

The rule is established that a predicate nominalized by 者 indicates a typical example, the sort of person who..., etc. In 論語 14, 管仲非仁者與 means "Was Guan Zhong not really humane, a typical example of somebody humane?", not "Was Guan Zhong inhumane?", which would have to be 管仲不仁乎. It is important to notice that nominalization is used in forming a more general statement. This is the particular reason for such nominalizations whose semantic value would otherwise be *nil*.

The long and well documented Chapter Four, *Conditionals*, begins with a discussion of concessive clauses of the two types containing 縱 'although' and 雖 'even if (counterfactual)' respectively. Misunderstandings in previous grammars are corrected. We are then shown how specific conditions are formed with 若 ..., and general conditions with...則. Both 雖 and 若 precede the subject only if protasis and apodosis do not share the same subject. Specific conditions are common in historical works, whereas general conditions are more common in philosophical works. This is not a matter of grammar, Harbsmeier maintains, but of content and style. The conditional 苟 should always be conceived as "if really" (as expressed by the 誠 of the old commentaries). The counterfactual 使 is compared with the *irrealis* of Greek. 若 or 如 cannot be used in such sentences. 使 can also be used of very unlikely hypotheses and is therefore a useful device in politically sensitive speculations. Thoughts about eternal life seem to be within the realm of 使, whereas consciousness after death can be discussed by means of 若 or 如.

It is my hope to have shown that Harbsmeier's *Essay* and *Aspects* are books which ought to find their way to the desk of any seriously working grammarian in Sinology and related areas. By returning to the roots 反其本 and looking seriously again at Humboldt's insights and their implications we are forced to weed out a tremendous and unavoidable overgrowth of theory and praxis which has come to encumber progress in Chinese grammatical studies. The main virtue

of the two volumes⁶ is to uncover the essentials.

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6. A final warning is in place. Both books are marred by a great number of misprints. At least for the *Aspects* an Errata sheet is available from the publisher.

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