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Stylometrics and the Question of Interpolation in Paul



Graham and the Gūngsūn Lúngdǔ

Gūngsūn Lúngdǔ is supposed to have been a logician of Jàu, whose career spanned the first half of the 03c. There is very little contemporary documentation. From Hàn times on, there existed a few of his supposed essays on various sophisms, such as “Hard and White” (the problem of simultaneous and nonexclusive attributes of the same entity), prefaced in our received text by a long biographical sketch of Gūngsūn Lúngdǔ. Such biographical prefaces are often found with Hàn texts of Warring States thinkers; it is obvious that they are not themselves the work of those thinkers, but represent the contribution of a later editor. The six chapters of the received text are:

- 1. Biographical Introduction: Editorial
- 2. 白馬論 Essay on the White Horse
- 3. 指物論 Essay on Signifier and Object
- 4. 通變論 Essay on Understanding Change
- 5. 堅白論 Essay on Hard and White
- 6. 名實論 Essay on Name and Reality

On the remaining five essays, A C Graham (1957) gave this verdict:

- 1. Biographical Introduction: Editorial
- 2. 白馬論 Essay on the White Horse: “Reasoning often faulty, but one can see where it is at fault”
- 3. 指物論 Essay on Signifier and Object: [ditto]
- 4. 通變論 Essay on Understanding Change: “strung together haphazardly from the Mician Canons”
- 5. 堅白論 Essay on Hard and White: “No logical precision”
- 6. 名實論 Essay on Name and Reality: “No logical precision”

And in sum, Graham says “The difference in the quality of thought is accompanied by an equally marked difference in style. There is no part of the GSLZ which does not present difficulties for a modern reader. But the difficulty of ch2 and 3 is merely that of understanding a philosophical school for which this book is almost the only surviving source; the style is very simple and lucid, renouncing all rhetorical effect for the single aim of expressing the thought clearly. On the other hand, the obscurity of ch4-6 is inherent in the language, which is vague, grammatically loose, decorative, mannered, often using words eccentrically. In ch2 and 3 parallelism is used only to emphasize comparisons and contrasts in the argument. In ch4-6, . . . it is seldom suspended for more than a few sentences, and it is a stylistic frame into which the thought is forced.”

The question for any proposed test of stylistic differences is whether it detects the same contrast noted by Graham, or can suggest corrections or extensions of his observations.