In his latest book, Robert Wardy, a philosopher and classicist, turns his attention to the relation between language and thought. He explores this huge topic in an analysis of linguistic relativism, with specific reference to a reading of the ming li t’an (The Investigation of the Theory of Names), a seventeenth-century Chinese translation of Aristotle’s Categories. Throughout his investigation, Wardy addresses important questions. Do the basic structures of language shape the major thought-patterns of its native speakers? Could philosophy be guided and constrained by the language in which it is done? What factors, from grammar and logic to cultural and religious expectations, influence translation? And does Aristotle survive rendition into Chinese intact? His answers will fascinate philosophers, Sinologists, classicists, linguists and anthropologists, and promise to make a major contribution to the existing literature.

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1 Christopher Cullen, *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China: The ‘Zhou Bi Suan Jing’*. ISBN 0 521 55089 0
Aristotle in China

Language, Categories and Translation

Robert Wardy

University of Cambridge
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Preface

Aristotle in China is about the relation between language and thought. That is, of course, a topic of absurdly ambitious scope: it is only slightly less absurd to say that it concerns the particular question of the relation between language and philosophical thought, or even the relation between the Chinese language and Chinese logic. Perhaps readers will concede at the outset that my decision to explore these huge issues through reading Aristotle’s Categories in Chinese is mere wilful circuitousness, rather than outright absurdity; and I trust that, if they persevere, they will discover that indirection has its compensations.

Chapter 1 introduces, defines and dissects varieties of linguistic relativism, with specific reference to the China question. Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to a reading of the 名理探 (ming li t’an), ‘The Investigation of the Theory of Names’, a seventeenth-century translation of Aristotle’s Categories into Chinese; indeed, one of my goals is to reanimate an ancient tradition, both Chinese and Western, by producing a sort of meta-commentary. In principle, philosophers could read chapter 1 and dispense with chapter 2; and Sinologists could study chapter 2 and avoid philosophy: but of course my intention is to address philosophers, classicists, Sinologists, linguists, anthropologists and devotees of missionary studies throughout. The inevitable consequence of this interdisciplinary brief is that I am bound to be guilty of howlers philosophical, linguistic, historical and anthropological; I can only humbly confess my limitations and beg the indulgence of those willing to look further than their immediate academic horizons. I have taken measures to make it possible, I trust in more than principle, for scholars from diverse backgrounds to take advantage of my research. All Greek, Latin and Chinese is translated (although readers will have to cope with citations from the secondary literature in modern European languages; and both Japanese and modern Chinese are beyond me). In chapter 2 I err on the side of generous citation because copies of both the Latin original and its Chinese translation are extremely rare, even in major libraries. Since I quote extensively from the Chinese, I do not always transliterate; but I Romanise (using the Wade–Giles system) whenever a graph or set of graphs is discussed.
In chapter 1 I express fairly complete disagreement with the arguments of Angus Graham. Puzzled dissatisfaction with the Whorfian case presented in his *magnum opus*, *Disputers of the Tao*, planted the original seed of this study. I hope that the tribute the author of so splendidly disputative a book would best have appreciated is critical response. He was kind enough to accept my invitation to speak in Cambridge on this very question, and I suppose that this might have been his last public academic appearance. The argument initiated then must sadly proceed without his irreplaceable contributions, but I have tried to compose the right sort of disrespectful *hommage*. In attempting to articulate my dissatisfaction I have benefited substantially from the assistance of Myles Burnyeat, Roger Crisp, Christoph Harbsmeier, Geoffrey Horrocks, Cathérine Jami, Paul Sanford and – above all – from the detailed and astute comments of Richard Davies, Nicholas Denyer and Stephen Makin. When I presented an embryonic version of this material at the Needham Research Institute my audience’s reaction did much to reassure me that the topic was not without interest; and it would certainly have been impossible for me to complete so taxing a project without the luxury of a British Academy/Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship. I received additional friendly encouragement in Berlin from the participants in the conference Europe in China III, and profited especially from the advice of Nicholas Standaert. The Needham Institute’s librarian, John Moffett, was a model of amicable efficiency in tracking down rare research materials. The recommendations of Michael Lackner and David Sedley, readers for the monograph series, were most helpful in the revision stages. Catherine Atherton’s sustained and profound criticism has proved invaluable. David McMullen showed me what the true gentleman, the 君子, is by selflessly devoting too many hours to the correction of my gauche efforts at translation. Finally, I dedicate this book to Geoffrey Lloyd. Although he has no great interest in China after the era of the Han, I doubt that, without the example he set, I should ever have strayed so far from what I have come to regard as my native tongues.
EXPLANATIO CAPITIS PRIMI,
DE A E Q VI V O C I S, V N I V O-
cis, & Denominatiuis.

OCAPUT TRES CONTINENT DEFINITIONES, & TOTIDEM IN PARTES DIUIDEI POERT.
Prima

DEFINITIO ACQUIO.

DEFINITIO VNIuo.

DEFINITIO DENOMINAT.

COMENTARIVS.

a Equivoce dicuntur ea, & Quamvis haud primitis doctrinae existit, & nominatam intelligi-
tiam necessaria, quae ipso traducitur, instabili disputationis fere inter interpretium, idem
primis quaestor capitibus, quorum omnibus, velit pluribus Categories, partim equi-
gnantia, partim convenientia, ediderit habitat ratio, ut in hunc primo capitulo elici-
atur Alcestii Magni tractatu primo, capite 2. Aequivoce, & aliis conscribunt, quae

Yrifatam

conferunt

poetae

prae-
dicamenta.

PRO E M I V M.

Ad 1. 

Ad varia

interfecit
codices

ex ordine

haec

traditionis ad
carceres disciplinarum, quae de illo, quem ad
alia Logice Aristotelis partes obire; is erit
idem, qui in operationibus mentis
constitutum. Nam prima operatione, qui
simplicite apprehendatur, sepulchret hanc
praelocetorum doctrina, ubi simplicies
nomina in claves rediguntur. Secunda, quae
componuntur, & duimus, apud notis libri

de interpretatione, in quibus de enunia-
tione distinctur. Terce, quae ratione
matur, congruunt Analytica, & Topica, ubi
consequentia, argumentationes, & syllogis-
miquistur fabricatur.

Haec definitio commodissima, & utilissima
quam maxima ad omnem vsus dialecticum,
am ad disquisitiones, definitionesque con-
cludas expediet praebet mathematicam, Genera,
Species, Differentiaeque diligendo. Ad
argumentationem vero de qua cumque se in-
fiundam, omnem subiectur naturae, omnem
proprietatem distributio operis est in tres partes,
in a ante Pradiciamenta, in Pradiciamenta, & post
Pradiciamenta. Prima quatuor capitibus con-
tinentur. Secunda, quae praecipuus est, quin-
que sequentibus. Tertia, ut ordinem, ut
utilitate, & digustate vitam, totidem ex-
trens.

Cambridge University Press
0521771188 - Aristotle in China: Language, Categories and Translation
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Frontmatter
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Sample page of In Universam Dialecticam Aristotelis
Sample page of the 明理錄