

IS SINOLOGY A SCIENCE ?

(full text)

‘Certainly, it is,’ sinologists may indignantly respond to this rarely raised, though legitimate question. ‘For what other reason would academics treat us as their colleagues,’ they probably will add, as if good-fellowship were proof of scientific qualifications. Well, I am *not* so sure. Indeed, the thesis I wish to put forward is that sinology (Chin *Hanxue* or *Zhongguo yanjiu*, Jap *Shinagaku* or *Chugoku kenkyu*) is to be dismissed as pseudo-science, because its practitioners do not command a theory of *their own*.

I do not expect this Copernican proposition to draw down a storm of cheers everywhere. On the contrary, if booing and hissing are accorded to me, I will not be surprised. Yet, a statement saying that there is something fundamentally amiss in sinology should spark a lively debate among scholars. One can only speculate about the result of such a *choc des opinions*, but it is an unassailable fact that exploration of the base needs to be done *before* expansion of a building. If occupying oneself with things Chinese is important in this rapidly changing world, so is that second-order activity: scrutinising sinology itself.

To avoid misunderstanding, I request the reader to bear one thing in mind all the way through. ‘Students of China’ fall into two distinct categories: (a) graduates in sinology only, *i.e.*, those who learned (modern-standard as well as classical-literary) Chinese and have read all sorts of things about China, and (b) social or human scientists who, after receiving their academic degrees, have concentrated on aspects of China related to their expertise.¹ *My harsh words are exclusively addressed to group a*. I do not aim my arrows at those rare ‘birds’ who, having been drilled in the Chinese language, took pains to graduate in, *e.g.*, political science in order to study the *Chinese* polity; nor do I point my gun at those unusual ‘animals’ who, being, for example, historians, exerted themselves to learn Chinese in order to study (part of) the *Chinese* history (or the views of *Chinese* historians).

The structure of this article is as follows. First, an attempt is being made to define ‘science’. In order not to facilitate the execution of the job I allotted to myself, I take the *definiendum* to refer to both natural and cultural disciplines. Having set the stage, I present the villain to be exposed. This part constitutes the core of the paper. Finally, I show a way out of the awkward situation into which, as I see it, sinologists all over the world have got themselves. The piece is to be seen as a triptych, the central panel of which can not be assessed properly without a look at the two flanking panels.

SCIENCE DEFINED

Science permeates everyday life. Houses and hotels, offices and factories, theatres and department stores, schools and hospitals, roads and railways, harbours and airports, and all the equipment we operate are embodiments of science. Books, journals and databases are often depositories of science. And scientists are, by definition, carriers and purveyors of science. In its most general sense, ‘science’ could be defined as *a kind of knowledge*, but this definition is not very helpful. For, what is ‘to know’ (Fr *connaître/savoir*, Ger [*er*]kennen/wissen)? From Plato to Foucault many philosophers of repute went deeply into this matter. Attempts to weigh their words and analyse their arguments would lead me too far afield.² Moreover, knowledge has not been given attention by philosophers only. Since the forties, the problem has also occupied scientific minds. Indeed, through the joint efforts of American scientists from different fields to answer long-standing epistemological questions, nothing less than a

1 The daring assumption being made here is that every member of group *b* can speak, and read, Chinese.

2 Good introductions to epistemology are P.K. Moser *et al.* (eds.), *The Theory of Knowledge: A Thematic Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and J. Greco & E. Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). Outside Europe, the problem of ‘knowledge’, for which the Sanskrit language has many words, has particularly engaged the attention of Indians, ever since the time of the *Rigveda* (c. 1200 B.C.). See J. Prasad, *History of Indian Epistemology* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987); K.H. Potter (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II: *Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); S.C. Chatterjee, *Nyaya Theory of Knowledge* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1978); B.K. Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); and J.N. Mohanty, *Gangesa’s Theory of Truth* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1989).

'cognitive revolution' has taken place, this being causally connected with the post-war revolution in 'information and communication technology' (ICT).³ The current definition of 'knowledge' states that propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge that *p* (where some declarative sentence is instantiable for *p*) has three individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions requiring (a) that anyone who knows that *p* believes that *p*; (b) that any known proposition be true; and (c) that any known proposition be adequately justified, warranted or evidentially supported.⁴ Giving here no thought to the difficult question of whether/how knowledge (*ratio*) and belief (*fides*) are interrelated, I simply consider knowledge to be a particular state of the mind.

Inasmuch as the issue of knowledge has not been settled yet, a hard definition of 'science' can not be given. Being a *kind* of knowledge, however, scientific knowledge distinguishes itself from *unscientific* knowledge. To give an example of the latter, housewives chatting about changes in retail prices *know* to some degree what is happening in neighbouring shops, but their small talk is a far cry from the systematic account of market movements and consumer demand given by economists. Similarly, the winner of a quiz show may awe his audience with a display of knowledge, but no man in his right mind could call him scientist. The search for, or disposal of, a multitude of things worth knowing does not make a scientist. 'Walking newspaper', or 'encyclopaedia-on-legs', is the highest title that can be granted to him.

I take 'science' to mean (the search for) *systematised* knowledge, that is to say, knowledge organised in conformity with generally accepted principles and methods.⁵ A scientist seeks, in a disciplined way, orderliness in the object of his study. He has a theory: not a doctrine but an imaginative construction suggested by the results of critical and exhaustive investigation, devised to guide, or direct, his research and understanding. A theory, rather than being a dispensable luxury or unnecessary encumbrance to empirical research, provides a way of seeing and a tool for investigation; it is a communicable mental model, an ideational structure of broad scope, a coherent and deeply thought-out but ever evolving scheme according to which the scientist expounds a subject or covers a field; it is also an important source of conjectures. A scientist adduces evidence and makes inferences. He progresses from one statement, or judgement, considered as true⁶ to another by deduction (drawing out propositions implicit in their premises), induction (arguing from many instances to a general statement) or abduction (forming and accepting, on probation, an obvious hypothesis to explain surprising facts). He presents his material in a coherent manner, knowing how to tell logic (the art of thinking correctly), grammar (the art of speaking and writing correctly) and rhetoric (the art of communicating persuasively) apart. Ideally, for the sake of preciseness and unambiguity, he looks for the formalisation of his argumentation. Both science and religion have their postulates, but what distinguishes the man of science is his abhorrence of any dogmatic statement. Science would be sterilised if their practitioners were not prepared to advance (bold) hypotheses. However, these are propositions tentatively assumed, not articles of faith. A scientist knows how to state problems or to

3 The literature in this field is overwhelming. See R. Wilson & F. Keil (eds.), *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

4 This tripartite definition of knowledge was seriously challenged by Edmund Gettier in 'Is justified true belief knowledge?', *Analysis*, vol. 23, 1963, pp. 121-123.

5 Here, I enter the great deep called 'philosophy of science', a branch of learning that cuts across the core areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, logic and axiology), considering in each case both how that area's questions apply to science in general, to a group of sciences or to individual sciences, and how (a) science(s) might be applied to answering those questions. It arose as a discipline separate from the more general theory of knowledge (see footnote 2) in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the 1950s the literature in this domain has increased explosively. See L. Sklar (ed.), *Philosophy of Science* (New York: Garland, 1999); and W.H. Newton-Smith (ed.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). See also *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956 ff.); and *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1970 ff.). The leading journals are *Philosophy of Science*, *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, *Fundamenta Scientiae*, *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie* and *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of Sciences and Humanities*. Important papers and book reviews on this subject appear regularly in *Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophical Review*, *Mind* and *Synthese*.

6 'Truth', like 'knowledge' and 'time', is one of the most enigmatic of notions. See P.G. Horwich, *Truth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); W.V.O. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); R. Rorty, *Truth and Progress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and S. Soames, *Understanding Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

frame questions. He is organised and focused. *A scientist's hallmark is his command of a refutable theory.* No matter how high the degree of his specialisation is, *he always investigates a totality*; his comprehension essentially is: seeing unity in diversity, sameness in otherness, the whole in the parts, the constant in the change, and *vice versa*. The goals of science, philosophy and religion are, remarkably, the same: perfect knowledge.

Within the broad confines of science there are many constituent sciences. The expansion of each of them is bewildering, and the relations between them are a matter of growing concern. Most disturbing, however, is the great divide between natural and cultural disciplines: between physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology and biology on the one side, and social sciences and human sciences, or humanities, on the other. This watershed has given rise to a good deal of controversy,⁷ and finds vivid expression in the big, burning question of how, and why, *anima* (mind) evolved out of *atoms* (matter).

Together, natural scientists have extensive systematised knowledge: of things that can be directly perceived, events that happened in the past (for example, the extinction of dinosaurs) or have not yet occurred (for example, a solar eclipse), or objects that are only perceivable through the use of such instruments as microscopes and telescopes, or whose existence and properties can only be inferred (for example, quarks and anti-quarks).⁸

Natural scientists seek to explain *non-human* phenomena. However, there is a variety of views on the nature of the explaining. Beginning in the thirties, it became the 'received view' that to give a scientific explanation of any natural phenomenon was to show that it could be subsumed under a law of nature, the argument being deductive or inductive; the *explanandum* had to occur given, or was to be expected by virtue of, the *explanans*. This view, developed by Karl Popper, Carl Hempel and others, has been subjected to strenuous criticism.⁹ Matters of fact, even though directly observable, are never to be taken simply. A *datum* is not something 'given', because the senses *per se* grasp no facts: percepts without concepts do not constitute any form of knowledge, Immanuel Kant taught us. The mind is not passive in receiving sense impressions, and though errors of perception may be detected and corrected, to purify it of all subjective contamination or distortion would be an arduous task only *gurus* and *swamis* are apparently able to accomplish. 'The innocent eye is a myth', Ernst Gombrich rightly said. All observation is 'theory-laden'.¹⁰

Objects studied by cultural scientists are very special. Humans are not billiard balls hitting each other but highly sentient, motile beings endowed with intellectual, emotional and volitional faculties. They have physicochemical, biological and psychosocial properties. Man is an organism, a system of, and among, systems, a physical entity. But he is also a creative, *metaphysical* being, because he 'stretches', transcends himself. He generalises beyond the obvious, rises above the immediate and sees the universal in the particular. He can imagine things he has never perceived and may never be able to. He believes in miracles, 'communicates' with the *supernatural* and hopes for the hereafter. Man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic, 'walks up the stairs of his concepts, and emerges ahead of his accomplishments' (Steinbeck). He is, no doubt, driven in many ways, but he is also a mover himself. He can reason *counterfactually*,¹¹ think out of the box, and decide, rationally, what (not) to do. He is a prison-breaker, not a falling star, or a rolling stone; he can act, do something *his way*. *Boire, bouffer* and *baiser* are, admittedly, his regular habits, and *homo homini lupus* is a truism, indeed. But he can also be 'a great man' (Mencius). There is a *nisus* in him towards 'the life divine' (Aurobindo). He is endowed with *seelische Kräfte* (Scheler). He can be impassioned, inspired. And 'whenever Zeus-given brightness comes, a shining light rests upon men' (Pindar). We have a sense of rightness, goodness and beauty, of humour, compassion and dignity, of faith, hope and - above all -

7 See O. Bird, *Cultures in Conflict* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), pp. 63-132; and Anthony O'Hear, 'Two Cultures Revisited', in *id.* (ed.), *Verstehen and Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1-16.

8 This poses the knotty problem of scientific ontology. See J. Hilgevoord (ed.), *Physics and Our View of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 4-15; and J. Worrall (ed.), *The Ontology of Science* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994), pp. XI-XXX.

9 See W. Salmon, *Four Decades of Scientific Explanation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1990).

10 See Bas van Fraassen, 'Interpretation of Science: Science as Interpretation', in Hilgevoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-187.

11 We distinguish how things actually were, are or will be from how things would have been or would be in this or that eventuality. See D. Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973); and F. Jackson (ed.), *Conditionals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

love, ‘the consolation in the desolation’ (Unamuno). Man, ‘the cosmic orphan’ (Eiseley), who walks through ‘forests of symbols’ (Baudelaire), whose home is ‘the kingdom of signs’ (Lotman), who lives ‘by metaphors’ (Lakoff) and whose reality is ‘the ubiquitous image’ (Boorstin), is ‘an ambiguous being’ (de Beauvoir). His nature is two-sided. He is both a part of nature and apart from it. He can look at his *Umwelt* and *Mitwelt*, even at himself, with detachment. His position is ‘ex-centric’ (Plessner), because he lives in two worlds: a natural one and a spiritual one, the world without and the world within; the former full of events, the latter rich in meanings and values. Molecules *and* mind, genes *and* memes¹² contour man’s condition. He is a thinking thing, an active being in a passive nature. Being ‘outside of ourselves’ (Ricoeur), we are caught in a ‘hermeneutic circle’ (Gadamer), or ‘semiotic web’ (Sebeok), with no access to an uninterpreted given.

Cultural scientists seek to explain *human* phenomena. However, there is sharp disagreement on the nature of the explaining.¹³ Being congenial with the objects of their inquiry, it is said, cultural scientists do not explain by subsumption under a law of nature or by identifying causes. Their *modus operandi* has no echo in physical theory. They rather proceed by providing a contextual ‘reading’. They exercise their imagination and offer reasons, grounds or rationales,¹⁴ bearing in mind that ‘the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of’ (Pascal). They attempt to ascertain the nature, the course and the importance of individual, or collective, actions that somewhere, sometime and somehow take/took place. They try to make these actions understandable, not only by identifying and analysing external factors, related to nature or society, but also by determining and dissecting factors *within* human beings that arouse and direct their behaviour, move and induce them to act (for example, fear, desire, sorrow, delight, anger, or disgust). They have a keen interest in emotions and their organising and motivational influence on cognition and action. Usually the work of cultural scientists bases on critically investigated, *casu quo* sedulously translated, words of interpreting actors, witnesses or narrators.

In this way the reading may become inexhaustible and indeterminate. No matter how deconstructive the interpretation is, however, it should be a coherent one and reasonably well founded. Every self-respecting cultural scientist is explicit about the assumptions on which his reading is based, and he does not take the liberty to ignore the rules of inferential procedures. The description of an action or some social structure feature may be ‘thin’ or ‘thick’ (Geerts); the account should be a reasoned one and the interpretation should be plausible, or ‘interesting’, nonetheless. *Wahrheit* and *λογος* should prevail over *Dichtung* and *μυθος*. The availability of different readings of the same happening does not imply that each one of them is entirely satisfactory and tenable. A cultural scientist, like a natural scientist, wants the pieces to fall into place; he wants a fit between hypothesis and evidence; that is, he is out for *Einordnung*, for *organised* knowledge!

It is also said that human actions are unique. But so are natural events.¹⁵ There cannot be two events (e.g., two rain showers, or two thunderclaps) exactly alike. Any two events are similar in some respects and different in others. Laws do not require complete similarity. This is also true of actions. Cultural scientists are able to translate from the qualitative into the quantitative, and to formulate laws describing regularities in human behaviour, the more so as they have powerful mathematical and statistical tools at their disposal. Government policies are often based on numbers obtained from series of observations taken at ‘different’ units. The much-emphasised contrast between ‘nomothetic’ and ‘idiographic’ (Windelband), or ‘generalisation’ and ‘individualisation’ (Rickert), is a seeming one.

Epistemologically and methodologically, then, the gulf between natural and cultural sciences is not so wide as it appears at first sight. The long-standing debate about *erklären* (causal explanation) versus

12 For this term, first coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 at the end of his book *The Selfish Gene*, see Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

13 See D. Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 181-238; M. Hollis, *The Philosophy of Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 142-182; and D. Henderson (ed.), ‘Explanation in the Human Sciences’, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 34, supplement, 1995.

14 ‘Reason’ is not to be confused with ‘cause’. See F. Dretske, *Explaining Behavior: Reasons in the World of Causes* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988); and K. Lennon, *Explaining Human Action* (London: Duckworth, 1990).

15 Actions (for example, writing an article, or setting a man on the moon) are to be distinguished from events (for example, snoring, or an earthquake). Many animals can walk, but humans alone go for a walk; we can have a reason for jumping, but not for falling. See S. Guttenplan (ed.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 3-107.

verstehen (interpretive understanding) (Dilthey) may have been even ‘a waste of time’.¹⁶ Scientists, natural or cultural, seek to ‘uncover’ and understand orderliness in the objects of their inquiries. Their aim is to create order where previously chaos seemed to reign, to extract structure and invariance from the midst of disarray and turmoil. They try to make things plain and understandable, in a systematic manner.

Ontologically, however, the gap is unfathomably deep. To see this yawning, silent chasm, one should first open a book on the anatomy and physiology of the human eye, and then read the compelling pages Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas wrote on ‘looking’. Ultimately, man’s incomparable mind is, even more than matter, a great mystery.¹⁷

THE STATUS OF SINOLOGY

Having defined ‘science’ as broadly as possible, I suggest to measure sinology against it. Before doing so, however, I must clearly indicate what I mean by ‘country’, for the ‘birds’ I am aiming my arrows at are allegedly students of *China*, a particular country.

Most generally, I understand ‘country’ to mean an expanse of geographically differentiated land and its politically organised and historically individualised populace, hence to be comprehended (‘read’) spatially, temporally *and* spiritually. A country has a geographic frame, a historical perspective and a semiotic field.¹⁸ As there is continuous interference between them, one component of the triplet cannot be described or analysed without taking the other two into full consideration. A country is a tripartite mixture, implicate in the language(s) of its inhabitants; it involves a triad, and can only and truly be grasped as a chord played in *arpeggio*. A one-dimensional approach is fundamentally misguided.

An alternative, but essentially similar, definition of ‘country’ is a big bundle, or mozaic, of behaving systems held together by bonds and forces, performing as a unit, and therefore to be distinguished (not separated!) from its environment — the rest of the world.

By ‘system’ I mean a set whose elements hang, by nature or by art, structurally together; It is a whole, the parts of which are, to some degree, interdependent, directly or indirectly. The earth, an organism, the weather, a rain forest, a computer(network), a language, a car, a company (and the economic sector it belongs to), an airport, a university, a library, a hospital, a human settlement (from hamlet to megalopolis), a religious community, a political party, a club, an army, a court, and an economic order exemplify a system.¹⁹ By ‘behaving’ I mean the functioning, in a particular way, of a

16 Lars Bergström, ‘Explanation and Interpretation of Action’, *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1990, pp. 3-15. James Bohman reinvigorated this debate in *New Philosophy of Social Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), reviewed in *Human Studies*, Vol. 20, 1997, pp. 413-58.

17 Starting from the profound insights of Kurt Gödel, Roger Penrose argues in *The Emperor’s New Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) that the physics of the human brain involves ‘an essentially non-algorithmic element’ (p. 431), and that this brain can execute processes no possible Turing-type computer could carry out, implying that the future is not computable from the past. See also R. Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 351-53. The view that the mind is, in some sense, physical is subjected to an intense reevaluation in R. Warner & T. Szubka (eds.), *The Mind-Body Problem; A Guide to the Current Debate* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 274-388. More recent books arguing against ‘the astonishing hypothesis’ that ‘we are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules’ (Francis Crick) are Steven Rose, *From Brains to Consciousness? Essays on the New Sciences of the Mind* (Penguin, 1998); and Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999). The ideas unfolded in all these books may not be as new as proclaimed. The identification of *atman* (the self), and its relationship to *manas* (the mind), has been a perennial problem in Indian philosophy, as attested by the Yogâcâra and Vedânta schools of thought. See T.E. Wood, *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñânâvâda* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); and P.T. Raju, *Structural Depths of Indian Thought* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1985), ch. X-XIV.

18 Semiotics, ‘the science of signs’, that interlocks with the sciences of information and communication, has increasingly become an area of intellectual inquiry. The net it casts is wider than that of linguistics. A good introduction is Thomas A. Sebeok, *A Sign is Just a Sign* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). See also Th. Sebeok (ed.), *Approaches to Semiotics* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1969 ff.); *id.* (ed.), *Advances in Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980 ff.); and Achim Eschbach (ed.), *Foundations of Semiotics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1983 ff.).

19 James Miller distinguishes seven levels of living systems; see his *Living Systems* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 1034. Kenneth Boulding perceives mechanical, cybernetic, creodic, reproductive, demographic, ecological, evolutionary, human, and social systems; see his *The World as a Total System* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985), pp. 9-30. For the portrayal of, say, a social system, see Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1969), and its complement E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Saint-Simon ou le système de*

system, the sequences of its states, the process. The evolution, a chemical reaction, ageing, healing, weathering, farming, desertification, urbanisation, modernisation, education, secularisation, playing a game, ruling, warfare, the recovery of an economy, the democratisation of a polity, or the disintegration of a society is a process. System/structure and process/change are reciprocally related; in fact, they interfuse, as more and more scientists come to realize.²⁰ Besides the four fundamental forces of nature, 'bonds and forces' also comprise political, military, economic and 'ideological' ties, the interconnected networks of which are subject to variation in both extensiveness and intensiveness.²¹

The point I am trying to make is that sinologists are to be dismissed as pseudo-scientists, because they do not command a *sinological* theory, a fact they religiously keep from outsiders.²² 'The study of China' is wrongly defined: by the object of inquiry, not by the *optique* on this object; sinology is not a *systematic* study. Sinologists, as such, deal with, and share a common interest in, China, but sorrowfully lack a scientific view of the country. They have no communicable mental model, that nicely fits into a general country-theory. They do not see the nexus, or *Gestalt* (configuration), of the object of their study (China), the relationships between, or specific combination of, its elements or subsystems, the whole that is different from the sum of its numerous parts. They cannot show the multicoloured Chinese 'carpet', *in toto* or *in parte*; to say nothing of presenting an explication of the intricacies of the events and actions leading up to it at any point in time. On close inspection, 'China-experts' do not think of the mass (*Menge*, or *Vielheit*) of things Chinese as belonging together; constituting *one* thing, that is. They do not know how China, as an extremely complex *unity*, works; they do not comprehend its wiring, its deep structure and dynamics. Not seeking to 'uncover' and understand the orderliness of China *qua* China, they disqualify as scientists. Indeed, the emperor is wearing no clothes.

The surest way to embarrass a sinologist is to inquire what variables, constants and parameters *he* uses, and how (strongly) they are interrelated; what postulates, or assumptions, *his* readings are built upon; how he operates to derive *his* conclusions; where his pen-products progress from meticulous description to *analysis*, that is to say, *sinological* analysis; what classification rules he follows regarding the objects within *his* domain; or what problem(s) he considers to be fundamental in *his* profession. The foundations and philosophy of sinology have not been written yet; it would even appear that sinologists, much to their disadvantage, are not interested in the foundations and philosophy of science at all.²³ We are still waiting for the *Principia Sinologica*.

Sinologists have a keen eye for details, but do not let them speak as parts of a whole, as, for example, biologists do when they place the rice, the bamboo, the pakchoi, the soya, the garlic, the

la cour (Paris: Fayard, 1997). For an instructive diagram of the complex network of relationships in, and between, eco- and social systems, see *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 25, 1991, p. 672.

20 See Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-88; T.J. Fararo, *The Meaning of General Theoretical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 62-152; and Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). *The System Dynamics Review* presents leading and authoritative papers that clarify changes in structures (*Strukturwandlungen*) and patterns of processes. See also journals like *Continuity and Change*, *Journal of Historical Sociology* and *Cultural Dynamics*. For a modern-mathematical view of dynamic systems, see W. Lawvere & S. Schanuel, *Conceptual Mathematics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 161-65, 175-86.

21 See Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 4. For *microsocial* bonds and forces I may refer to the extensive literature in such fields as rational choice theory, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and to the countless literary works minutely probing individual psychologies. For attempts at micro-macro integration, see George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), pp. 537-66

22 *Mutatis mutandis*, the same might be said about Egyptologists, Turcologists, Iranologists, Indologists, Tibetologists, Mongologists, Koreanologists, Japanologists or - even more amusing - orientalists. Be it noted in passing that nobody takes it into his head to talk about 'Eurologists', 'Amerologists' or 'occidentalists'!

23 If 'philosophy of science without history of science is empty, and history of science without philosophy of science is blind' (Imre Lakatos), if sociology of science must be *der Dritte im Bunde*, and if science is to be demarcated from technology and other 'forms of culture', it would not be unjustified to maintain that Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954 ff.) is, let us say, not well-balanced. Even the title of this broadly acclaimed work is questionable.

jasmine, the litchi, the peony and the mulberry in the category of angiosperms. Differently put, sinologists do not change from arithmetic to algebra. They take keenness wrongly for profundity. There is multitude, no plenitude, in their writings. What we have is *multa, non multum*, a heap of (fine) bricks, a few segments at most, but not a house.²⁴ Ironically, 'China-specialists' do not provide us with insight into the coherence and depth of China in itself; they afford us no view of its architecture, or style. The 'beat', the barcode, the idiom of the country is not given. *Ben bu guan yu mo; yi bu xian yu duo* (the root is not connected with the twigs; the one is not shown in the many). Indeed, the *plures* presented are, in a fundamental manner, insignificant so long as the *unum* is elusive, for it is only against the background of the general that the specific acquires any meaning. Their approach being from nowhere, that is, having no exclusive point of view, or *θεωρία* (vision) of their own, and mistaking the cramming of facts for taste and discernment in selecting the important ones, sinologists do not deserve their intellectual status; they are not entitled to wear the sacred mantle of science.

Terminology betrays a science. *Syncline, outcrop, uplift, crust, shearing, fault, slump, isostasy, subduction, cyclothem, varve, cuesta, guyot* and *hot spot* are terms peculiar to the geologist; economists give preference to expressions like *opportunity costs, indifference curve, managed float, crowding out, externalities, returns to scale, invisible hand, adjusted present value, dumping, versioning* and *purchasing power parity*; and *phoneme, syllable, discourse, syntax, lexicon, turn, copula, performative, segment, morpheme, subjunctive, clause, triphthong* and *glottal stop* are terms frequently used by the linguist. In stark contrast, sinologists, in and of themselves, do not have a determinate set of theoretically interrelated terms, designations of classes (of categories) of Chinese particulars resembling each other.

To be sure, and this is not contradictory to the foregoing paragraph, 'China-experts' do use such special terms as *dao, de, fa, gong, jing, li, ming, qi, quan, ren, shen, shi, shu, ti, tian, wen, wu, xin, xing, xuan, yang, yi, yin, yuan, zhi* and *zhong*, even lavishly. By proffering different translations for the same term, however, they come under the suspicion of simply not knowing what they are talking about.

Ti, for instance, is confusingly rendered into 'substance', 'body', 'model', 'style', 'principle', 'method', 'genre', 'essence', 'form', 'trend', 'nature', 'unity', 'vigour', and 'reality'. To translate (the term for) that concept into, say, 'substance' is to overlook a fundamental difference between Western and Chinese thinking. Western philosophy (see footnote 5) has been biased, from the time of Aristotle, in favour of 'substance' (fr. L *substantia*, trans. Gk *ουσια*): what a thing really, or essentially, *is*, without its accidental properties. On the other hand, Chinese educated in the wisdom of the *Yi jing* and the *Daode jing*, or steeped in Buddhist philosophy, conceive of everything, and everybody, as a *becoming* rather than a *being*, their view of things being more diachronic than synchronic, considering phenomena as changing *over time* rather than existing *at some time*.²⁵ Therefore, they are basically alien to the concept 'ontology' (the study of being as this is shared in common by all entities); they feel difficulty in translating Plato, who in the *Phaedrus* (247C7) writes, without fatuous redundancy, of the superlative reality of the 'Ideas', or 'Forms', as *ουσια οντως ουσα* (really real reality);²⁶ and the central Christian notions 'consubstantial' and 'transubstantiation', over which so much blood was spilt, are completely beyond them.

24 Whoever looks at Piet Mondrian's marvellous, though unfinished, *Victory Boogie Woogie* attentively will see what I mean: *E Pluribus Unum* (The One Out of the Many). The establishment of a relationship between seemingly diverse objects is also beautifully illustrated by the formula of Leonhard Euler (eighteenth century), which unifies trigonometric with exponential functions, and links the five most important constants in analysis, the sequence of mathematical developments that have flowed out of the discovery of the differential and integral calculus: 0, 1, *e*, π , and *i*. See P. Davis & R. Hersh, *The Mathematical Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), pp. 198-200. Thales of Miletus (*fl.* sixth century B.C.) is credited with discovering the paramount importance of discerning unity in diversity; he thereby set the ball called 'Western philosophy and science' rolling.

25 Heraclitus, Leibniz, Bergson, Peirce, William James and Whitehead represent an undercurrent in Western philosophy.

26 Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 254-55. For the fundamental changes with respect to the concept 'reality' that have taken place in the quantum theory, see Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958). The 'reality' of novelists differs from what journalists give an account of.

Inasmuch as concepts constitute the building blocks of all our thinking, and galvanize us into acting,²⁷ the importance of clarifying their character and interconnectedness should be emphasised. The studious mind is, by its very nature, bent on order, and its clarity, that is, clearness of ideas, is a prerequisite for comprehending. This rule obtains universally. Consequently, so long as some important Chinese notions, and their cognates, remain vague, others must share this defect, and the rationality of Chinese behaviour through the centuries will escape us. It is thus remarkable that no sinologist seems to bother about historical, comparative and – above all – consistent analyses of the concepts enumerated.²⁸

Grave, indeed, are the consequences. Having no *optique* of their own, not imbued with a deep sense of the value of making abstractions, and being fuzzy as to concepts that have been most potent and persistent in Chinese thought, sinologists are *quintessentially* disorganised and muddleheaded. They do ‘research’ in a dabbling, *undisciplined* manner, nosing around professional fields. As a result, their books and articles contain copious footnotes, but a rigorous, sustained and substantive argument is difficult to be found; the terms and expressions borrowed from sundry sciences are not seldom more concealing than revealing; the style is often characterised by haziness and lack of sharp definitions; and the manner in which individual authors dovetail their investigations into a *sinological* framework is far from clear. Working through these publications one feels like looking at the stars in company with an amateur astronomer who keeps on pointing out things in the sky — without powerful telescopes and, most importantly, without any attempt to reduce the incomprehensible multiplicity of the universe to a comprehensible simplicity; to design a theory, that is. To be convinced of this, the reader is invited to open any volume of *Sinologica*, *Monumenta Serica*, *Asia Major*, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, or ‘the foremost journal on Sinology, covering history, literature, art, history of science, in fact, almost anything that concerns China’, as *T’oung Pao* has the bravery to advertise itself.

The change from ‘China-study’ to ‘Chinese studies’ has not improved the situation. ‘Rectification of names is what we need’ (*bi ye zhengming hu*). For ‘if names are incorrect...affairs cannot be carried on to success’ (*Analects*, bk. XIII, ch. III). ‘Professor of Chinese’ does not make sense, anymore than ‘professor of animate being, or life’ does, or ‘professor of society’ (or ‘professor of China’), unless the title is shorthand for professor of linguistics, with principal research interest in the *Chinese* language. However, it is highly doubtful whether every professor of, say, Chinese literature, even at first-rate universities in America, can be safely assumed that he/she ever received an academic degree in literary science. ‘Lecturer in Chinese economics’ (as distinct from: Chinese economy!) will not do either, unless the meaning of this appellation of honour and distinction is to be taken as lecturer in economics, whose main research interest lies in the ideas of *Chinese* economists.²⁹

27 See P. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 17-28. For the perplexing concept ‘concept’, that bears upon ‘knowledge’, ‘meaning’, ‘mind’ and the problem of universals, see U. Neisser (ed.), *Concepts and Conceptual Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); C. Peacocke, *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); J. Fodor, *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); and S. Laurence & E. Margolis (eds.), *Concepts: Core Readings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

28 Tang Junyi (1909-78), who is probably the greatest Chinese philosopher since Zhu Xi (1130-1200), undertook a systematic study of some of the most important basic concepts of traditional Chinese philosophy in his *Zhongguo zhexue yuanlun*. Unfortunately, this monumental work has not been translated, and annotated, yet. We will wait and see how critical the assessments of the over 100 contributors to Antonio Cua *et al.* (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Garland, forthcoming) are with regard to the Chinese terms and phrases they use, and how consistently they proceed to elucidate them, in historical perspective and in carefully chosen, that is, analysed Western terms. Their, and the editors’, task is a formidable one! For a ready access to the set of ideas fundamental to our ‘Great Conversation’ across the ages, see Mortimer Adler (ed.), *Great Books of the Western World: The Syntopicon* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1990). See also André Jacob (ed.), *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, Vol. II, Part 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990); and Edward Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998), in particular the entries ‘action’, ‘art’, ‘being’, ‘belief’, ‘change’, ‘concepts’, ‘culture’, ‘democracy’, ‘existence’, ‘freedom’, ‘god’, ‘heaven’, ‘human nature’, ‘justice’, ‘knowledge’, ‘law’, ‘matter’, ‘meaning’, ‘mind’, ‘morality’, ‘power’, ‘privacy’, ‘religion’, ‘soul’, ‘space’, ‘state’, ‘substance’, ‘time’, ‘truth’, ‘universals’, and ‘values’. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, edited by Joachim Ritter† and Karlfried Gründer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971 ff.), is unsurpassed. Finally, sinologists may learn something from America’s chief historian of ideas, Arthur O. Lovejoy, whose *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) is ‘a study of the empire of an idea over human minds throughout many centuries’. After his retirement, in 1938, he founded the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Cp. *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (1955 ff.).

To cover up his inability, a sinologist has the bad habit of putting on the ‘hat’ of a scientist. Not graduated in the discipline concerned, he then leaves it at delivering separate, and often disparate, elements relating to a subject in respect of China, the strikingly out of the ordinary country that so many people know so little about. In other words, he does not competently arrange them in a meaningful combination; nor does he assemble them into a scientifically well-founded discourse. Occasionally, he even makes no bones about changing bonnets, thereby exposing himself as *un touche-à-tout sans profondeur*, a jack-of-all-trades but a master of none. To give a lecture on, say, the Chinese language, literature, legal system, polity, economy, or society without being a specialist in linguistics, literary science, jurisprudence, political science, economics, and sociology respectively is, of course, an act to be condemned severely. But to mount the pulpit, or to make one’s appearance on the television, and to draw a picture of China *tout court*, to masquerade as connoisseur of the country without holding a degree in any of the fields stepped on is downright unforgivable. Alexander Pope’s epigram is here relevant: ‘Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’

‘China-students’ (category *a!*) are not only pseudo-scientists, because they have, after more than 400 years of Western studies concerned with the country,³⁰ not yet developed a scheme of concepts and generalisations relating to China *qua* China; they come dangerously close to being mystifiers as well. Wearing no *sinological* hat, they easily fall victim to their propensity to awe readers and listeners who neither speak nor read Chinese. By larding their lectures with obfuscatory jargon, by mesmerising their audience with recondite subjects, or the use of Chinese characters, they tend to forget all about transparency of exposition, a goal toward which the real scientist always perseveringly strives.

To substantiate my charge, no sinologist has written a text- or handbook comparable to, say, Paul Samuelson, *Economics*; Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*; Hilgard’s *Introduction to Psychology*; David Olson, *Handbook of Education and Human Development*; Robert Goodin, *New Handbook of Political Science*; Roger Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology*; Robert Robins, *General Linguistics*; David Cooper, *Companion to Aesthetics*; Michael Stanford, *Companion to the Study of History*; Peter Haggett, *Geography*; or Peter Cox, *Demography*.

A mature science is characterised by subdisciplines focusing on a part but not losing sight of the whole. Biology, for example, is an area of learning that deals with systems and processes in respect of living things at different levels in the biosphere, as opposed to the geosphere, or nonliving world, and the noosphere, or realm of mind. The growth of the discipline was triggered by a division of labour.³¹ Zoologists study animals; botanists investigate plants; mycologists are interested in fungi; phycologists concentrate on algae; and microbiologists deal with bacteria and viruses. Here the ramification does not stop: entomologists are concerned with insects, ornithologists with birds, ichthyologists with fishes, and herpetologists with reptiles and amphibians. It would not be difficult to find even a sub-sub-subdiscipline. Ed Wilson is an entomologist acknowledged to be the world’s leading authority on ants. The crux, however, is that despite apparent differences all the subdivisions are interrelated by basic principles; ‘grandmother’, ‘mothers’, ‘daughters’ and ‘granddaughters’ are akin.

Anthropology is another example of division of labour. Though it is a holistic, cross-disciplinary science, exploring the entire spectrum of *human* life, it trifurcated into three subfields:³² physical anthropologists occupy themselves with the origin and evolution of man, the upright-walking ape, and

share common ground with biologists and geologists; social anthropologists examine the various aspects of the relationships and processes in social life, and associate closely with sociologists,

29 ‘History’ is a deceptively ambiguous term. The same word is used both for the continuous series of events and actions that (have) happened and for the understanding, and account, of these happenings. To mark the distinction, I use ‘history(1)’ and ‘history(2)’, with (1) and (2) referring to what may be regarded as first and second levels of reality. There can be, and actually is, discussion of the scientific status of history(2), but not of history(1). Accordingly, ‘reader in Chinese history’ does not make sense, unless this title is the abbreviated notation of reader in history(2), whose research is devoted either to the *Chinese* history(1) or to the views of *Chinese* historians. ‘Law’ is an analogous case.

30 The origin of sinology is to be found in the late 16th century, when missionaries from Portugal, Spain and Italy began to preach ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom’ in China. See José Frèches, *La sinologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975); and D. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origin of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

31 The Scottish economist Adam Smith (1723-90) first recognised the towering importance of division of labour; see his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, bk. I, ch. 1-3.

32 See T. Ingold (ed.), *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. XIII-XXII.

economists, political scientists, law specialists and demographers; and cultural anthropologists undertake systematic study of the varieties, structures and transmissions of culture, and rub shoulders with students of language, literature, art, religion and technics. Again, physical, social and cultural anthropologists may use different scientific dialects; they speak the same language nonetheless: the language of anthropologists.

Unless he favours the writing of a history of mankind, the historian limits himself to a more or less coherent account of what (has) happened, within, *e.g.*, the political, legal, military, social, religious, economic, literary, artistic, scientific, technological or philosophical realm, in a period and/or area (country). Irrespective of the intradisciplinary speciality he may have chosen, however, he attends to the *course* of interrelated actions and events, to the *change* in their structure, and to the pattern of this *process*.

Now, sinologists are unnatural beings. They have no 'mother', for there is, remarkably, no general country-science, analogous to, say, biology, anthropology or history;³³ nor do they speak a dialect being a variety of the language peculiar to that science. Granted, they do cut their object of inquiry into pieces: pre-Qin period; Qin and Han empires; era of disunity; Sui and Tang China; Song, Yuan, Ming or Qing dynasty; late Qing period (1800-1912); 'Republican China' (1912-49); and 'Communist China' (1949 onwards). By any stretch of the imagination, however, I can not see how the subgroups of sinologists concerned with these parts form a family: they have absolutely nothing in common; in a distinctly scientific manner, that is. Though the label 'sinology' suggests the opposite, 'China' – by sharp contrast with 'the earth'(geology), 'the biosphere'(biology), 'man'(anthropology) or 'society'(sociology) – does not constitute an object being studied from a particular point of view. Sinologists, and, to be sure, 'country-experts' in general, do not distinguish themselves *scientifically*.

This view can be corroborated by referring to the developments of schools, another feature of a discipline's growing. The family tree of economics, for example, has many ramifying branches: neo-Keynesians, post-Keynesians, monetarists, neo-Marxists, neo-Ricardians, institutionalists, evolutionists, and radical political economists; the public choice, supply side, rational expectations, industrial organisation, regulation, Austrian and human capital school. While their theoretical bickering continues, it advances the ripening of the fruits. By contrast, sinologists shun the debate on theory. They prefer hard-boiled examination of things Chinese to 'navel-staring', and think no useful purpose to be served by measuring themselves in terms of scientific discipline. *Second-order* activity, that is, carefully and persistently scrutinising sinology itself is not on the agenda, a saddening fact, of which leading journals on sinology (and Asian studies) are giving ample evidence. Sinologists seem to be forgetful of the words of the Master: *Xue er bu si ze wang* (learning without thinking is labour lost); they seem to be apprehensive of scientific soul-searching. One wonders if it is because their prestige, or bowl of rice, is at stake.

Finally, scientific progress usually occurs at the interface or intersection of two disciplines. Vigorous hybrids are: mathematical physics, astro- and geophysics, biochemistry, -geography and -geology, neuro-, psycho- and sociolinguistics, historical sociology and geography, geopolitics, mathematical and social economics, sociobiology, social psychology, bio- and psychophysics, and economic, historical, biological, medical, psychological, linguistic, legal and political anthropology. Sinology, in turn, is strange to cross-breeding; 'the science of China' has been, and *rebus sic stantibus* will always remain, a wallflower.

The defendant's response to all this might be: 'China is *sui generis*; notions having their origin in the West do not apply to it.' I would reply by asking: 'If that is the case, then from what, in what respect(s) and to what extent is China different? How do you know that China constitutes a class alone? What is the good of talking about differences if one does not understand the 'thing' from which China is supposed to differ? If the country were unique, as you say, how then could one possibly speak, or write, about it, *without* making use of Western terms?'

The rejoinder might be: 'China is an object too complex and too big to be studied by one group of scientists only; various scientists (should) throw their light upon it, thereby illuminating the whole. Sinology is on a par with the study of ancient Greece and Rome (*Altertumswissenschaft*), or the Middle Ages.' I would surrejoinder by inquiring: 'What is (to be) the theoretical stance of *sinologists* if China is (to be) pictured by more than one group of scientists; what is (to be) *their* orbital plane, in

relation to others? Was the *Night Watch* painted by more than one Dutchman? Is *War and Peace* the work of several Russian authors?' Complexity or size can not be the excuse for not commanding a

33 Needless to repeat: the research of biologists, anthropologists and historians could be devoted to China.

theory. Linguistics is the science of language (of which there are about 6,000 instances, *each* of them having great complexity of expression) — child's play? Literary scientists occupy themselves primarily with the systematic study of literature (not *a* literature) — a simple undertaking? And what about being concerned with the origin, evolution, structure, composition, properties, surface features and envelopes of the earth — a small object?

'Multidisciplinary study of China' sounds good, but not when the whole business boils down to the disharmonic performance of ill-trained musicians. Studying a country from different angles makes sense only if it concerns a truly *concerted* effort of *scientists*, who follow the indications of a mastermind, not those of a man of omnivorous curiosity. The cathedral at Chartres was built by different craftsmen, but owes its splendour to the conception of *one* architect.

Whereas, over the past century, the amount of information about China has vastly increased, one can not avoid being struck by the relative poorness of its quality. In sinological circles one looks in vain for the peer of Max Weber, Herbert Simon, Jan Tinbergen, Alfred Sauvy, Paul Vidal de la Blache, Fernand Braudel, Herbert Hart, John Rawls, Jean Piaget, Noam Chomsky, Roman Ingarden, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mircea Eliade, or Hans-Georg Gadamer.³⁴ Sinology, in short, is a scientific jumble, a patchwork affair. Paraphrasing a famous passage at the end of Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1758), I suggest that we run through the libraries of the world (the ones in Japan not being excluded!) and, taking into our hand any volume about China, ask ourselves the question: 'Does this book contain any *sinological* theory?' I am afraid the sad answer will be: 'No, it doesn't'.

A WAY OUT

Chto delat (what is to be done)? Shall we advise all sinologists to go home and to look for another job? To my way of thinking we should strongly *dissuade* them from doing so, apart from the fact that probably none of them would act upon such an advice, even if he/she could not counter my argument. We shall not throw out the baby with the bath-water. Sinologists are (supposed to be) fluent in classical and modern Chinese, so why not let them exploit their distinctive talent. There are plenty of important Chinese books eagerly awaiting translation, many of them not only available in print but also on CD-ROM.

Only a tiny fraction of the rich Chinese literature, for example, has found its way to the famous *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* (Gallimard), currently running to over 450 magnificent volumes. Nearly all the *Zhengshi* (Standard Histories), the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated, are still untranslated. Sima Guang's great work, *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government) (and its most important continuations), the *Shitong* (Ten Encyclopedic Histories of Institutions), the huge *Daozang* (Daoist Canon), and thousands of *Fangzhi* (Local Gazetteers) are waiting to be opened up by sinologists for scientists unable to read Chinese. And high on the list of modern philosophical books to be translated are: Xiong Shili, *Xin weishi lun* (Chongqing, 1944), Feng Youlan, *Xin lixue* (Changsha, 1939), Liang Shuming, *Renxin yu rensheng* (Shanghai, 1984), Tang Junyi, *Shengming cunzai yu xinling jingjie* (Taipei, 1977), Xu Fuguan, *Zhongguo yishu jingshen* (Taipei, 1966) and Mou Zongsan, *Yuanshan lun* (Taipei, 1985).³⁵ Indeed, it may be wondered if sinologists have been sitting still since the days of James Legge and Édouard Chavannes.

Yet, one should not overlook the crucial fact that fluency in a foreign language, however impressive, is just a skill, a knowing *how*; it does not qualify a person for making *scientific* statements about that

34 Is it by sheer accident that even such sinological 'heavyweights' as Paul Pelliot, Henri Maspero, Vasily Alexeyev, Étienne Balazs, Paul Demiéville, Richard and Hellmut Wilhelm, Wolfram Eberhard, Alfred Forke, Otto and Herbert Franke, Anthony Hulsey, Erik Zürcher, Kristofer Schipper, Bernhard Karlgren, Homer Dubs, Herrlee Creel, Michael Loewe, Arthur Wright, Charles Hucker, Benjamin Schwartz, Derk Bodde and John King Fairbank do *not* have an entry in *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*?

35 Xiong, Feng and Liang belong to the first, Tang, Xu and Mou to the second, and Liu Shuxian, Du Weiming and Chen Lai to the third generation of twentieth-century *xin rujia* (neo-confucianists), whose unceasing efforts to bridge the gap between Chinese and Western philosophy, or - using a favorite expression of Tang Junyi - 'to philosophise together' (*συμφιλοσοφειν*), should be more appreciated and induce us to follow. See Mou Zongsan, Zhou Qunzhen and Liu Shuxian (eds.), *Dangdai xinjuxue lunwenji* (Taipei: *Wenjin chubanshe*, 1991), 3 vols.; and Song Dexuan, *Xin rujia* (Taipei: *Yangzhi wenhua*, 1994). A comparison between these neo-confucianists and the so-called 'Kyôto-school' (Japanese philosophers, like Nishida Kitarô, Tanabe Hajime, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, Nishitani Keiji, Abe Masao and Ueda Shizuteru, who were, or have been, attempting to arrive at a fruitful dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity) forces itself.

very language (its grammar, semantics, use, development, variants, and transmitting media), or the literature written in it,³⁶ not to mention other facets of the diamantine culture of the country concerned.

It would be a mark of gross pretentiousness if someone having learned (American) English held out the appearance of possessing thorough knowledge of, and hence being able to offer an authoritative opinion about, the presidential elections, trade unions, financial markets, Indians, immigration, environmental degradation, educational system, legal system, religious movements, race relations, art and industry of motion pictures, pop music, literature, way of life or foreign relations of/in the USA. In my view, it is precisely this kind of assuming attitude that sinologists are to be blamed for. As long as the inquiry is about, say, the causes of seismic activity in China, the increase of local crop production, the behaviour and habitat of giant pandas, the treatment of the remainder problem in Qin Jiushao's *Shushu jiu zhang* (1247), or the effectiveness of acupuncture, they may wisely refer to geologists, agronomists, biologists, number theorists and medical scientists respectively. As soon as the interviewer shift his focus of interest to areas outside the territories of natural or medical scientists or mathematicians, however, sinologists give the impression of fancying themselves to be all-rounders, 'universal men'. At all event, difficult to be found is the one among them who, being asked about whatever Chinese topic, honestly and modestly answers: 'Look, I am not proficient in this field: you better consult x' (x being a social, or human, scientist who, after graduating, has concentrated on an aspect of China related to his/her expertise).

I would like to counsel sinologists to be a bit less pretending and to spend considerably more time on translating — that humble, yet so important, activity. If they set value upon intellectual integrity, they should step down from the scientific pedestal immediately, and, following the shoemaker, stick to their last. If, for whatever reason, they still want to embark on the study of a Chinese subject, they should look around for scientists to cooperate with, and not venture forth on too vast a sea. But first and foremost, I advise them to take off the unfitting 'hats', and to get down to the business they are good at. An example may clarify this point.

Over the past twenty years, hundred of books and thousands of articles have been published outside China on China's economic reforms. Many, if not most, of them have been written by sinologists, quick to seize an opportunity to become a known 'authority' in that matter, and playing fast and loose with scientific qualifications. From this, and from the coverage on radio and TV, it may appear that our knowledge of the subject is up-to-date and up-to-standard. Unfortunately, nothing is further from the truth. Our information with respect to the Chinese economy is, given its importance, and in spite of regular reports from the World Bank, utterly insufficient and often a matter of parrot-prate. In fact, our knowledge of the subject, so close to the heart of many a politician and businessman, is flimsy and patchy, macro-, meso- as well as micro-economically.

It would not be justified to impute this deplorable situation exclusively to the nature of the economic and political system in China, where *glasnost* is a rare commodity. There are two other important reasons. In the first place, though prominent Chinese economists, like Yu Guangyuan, Dong Fureng, Liu Guoguang, Wu shuqing, Li Yining, Wu Jinglian, Zhou Shulian, Zhang Zhuoyuan, Hua Sheng, Zhou Xiaochuan, Chen Yizi, Wang Xiaoqiang, Tang Zongkun, Chen Jiyuan, Shi Yonghai, Wu Xiaoqiu, Huang Fanzhang, Fan Gang, Zhao Lükuan, Gui Shiyong and Li Guangan, have expounded their views of China's *gaige yu kaifang* (reform and opening) in numerous writings, only a handful has been made 'accessible' to economists abroad.³⁷ In the second place, sinologists persist in doing

'research' on their own hook. If they could deign to seek assistance of economists, who are trained to be cautious and critical in their domain, their efforts would bear much better fruits.

36 Elements, or dimensions, of a literature are its themes and types, techniques, genres, imageries, styles, movements, audience, environment, history, cultural significance, and social and regional diversity.

37 *The Chinese Economy* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe) is a bimonthly containing translations of Chinese articles, or reports, on China's economic reforms. Regrettably, the introductions, much needed in order to put a subject matter in perspective, are rather brief; the translations are somewhat wooden; and the critical or explanatory notes are meagre and sporadic, if not conspicuous by their absence. Perusal of Xiao Liang *et al.* (eds.), *Zhongguo jingji kexue nianjian* (Shijiazhuang: *Renmin chubanshe*, 1983 ff.) will convince the skeptic that many important economic publications are being left untouched by sinologists. For example, they have succeeded in preventing He Wei & Wei Jie (eds.), *Zhongguo zhuming jingjixuejia lun gaige* (Beijing: *Beijing chubanshe*, 1992), the informative first volume in the series *Zhongguo jingji gaige wenku*, from being cognised and commented by economists who do not read Chinese. The same goes for the important series *Zhongguo dangdai jingjixuejia wencong*, in which forty volumes have been published already by *Shanxi jingji chubanshe* in Taiyuan.

China's economic reforms are to be explained, which implies a *theoretical* framework. Therefore, sinologists wanting to write in a *professional* way on this 'revolution' should be well-informed of:

- 1) the so-called 'socialist calculation debate', that has occupied critical minds ever since Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital*,³⁸ and is an inextricable part of the wider, *n'en déplaie à* Francis Fukuyama ongoing discussion about comparative economic systems, including 'the socialist [as distinct from: social] market economy', or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (*juyouzhongguotesede shehuizhuyi*), and 'the third way';
- 2) developments in 'the new welfare economics' and the economic theories of justice, as the problem of the relationship between *efficiency* and *equity*, and the related problem of the reach of the state, actually constitute the gist of the matter hotly debated in China over the past *fifty* years;³⁹
- 3) the literature on business (over against public) administration, particularly on planning, organisation, marketing, logistics, technology, human resources management, cost calculation and finance, in order to be able to form an authoritative opinion about Chinese companies currently 'in transition';
- 4) the leading issues in developmental economics, in view of the fact that China simultaneously passes from command to market economy and from traditional to (post)modern society;
- 5) the state of the art in international economics and marketing, as the country that was proudly calling itself 'the Middle Kingdom' is now about to become a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO); and
- 6) the intensifying debates on 'the new economy' and the nature of the trade-offs between industrial development, environment and community.

Let there be no misunderstanding: I am not contending that economic reforms are the hunting ground of economists only. Other approaches are, of course, possible: a political, legal, ecological, demographic, geographic, historic, or technological one, for example. What I do assert, however, is that *economic* reforms are primarily the concern of economists, and that sinologists, if they want to say something meaningful about *China's* economic reforms, would do right to contact economists in the first place, instead of rummaging among economic papers. Generally, if sinologists could think it appropriate to their dignity to accept the guidance of real scientists, who have a trained mind, proceed methodically and have modern research techniques at their disposal, the result of such cooperation would be an increase of *systematised* knowledge.

Conversely, interaction with scientists⁴⁰ may well lead to a Kuhnian 'shift of paradigm', inasmuch as the bulk of knowledge of cultural scientists is parochial, *i.e.*, based on the investigation of *Western*

things only, a fact we conveniently tend to forget. *Comparing manifestly plays a crucial role in science*, so by looking past the end of their nose scientists will widen their horizon; by distancing

38 See Peter J. Boettke (ed.), *Socialism and the Market: the Socialist Calculation Debate Revisited* (London: Routledge, 2000), 9 vols.

39 See *Jingji Yanjiu* (ed.), *Jianguo yilai shehuizhuyi jingji lilun wenti zhengming* (Beijing: Zhongguo caizheng jingji chubanshe, 1985) and the sequels to this, as yet untranslated, selection of important articles. It should be noted that the role of the government, now said to be destined to diminish, was already a bone of contention in the famous debate between 'confucianists' (*jujia*) and 'legalists' (*fajia*) that took place in 81 B.C., and of which Huan Kuan's *Yan-tie lun* is the supposedly *verbatim* record. It may be regarded as an omission in 'the study of China' that this work of great density in sixty chapters has neither been translated and annotated integrally nor assessed and compared critically. It was, and is, highly valued by the maoists.

40 The first step for (a group of) sinologists in that direction could be to contact, electronically or otherwise, *associations* of scientists, such as the International Sociological Association (ISA), the International Economic Association (IEA), the American Economic Association (AEA), the International Political Science Association (IPSA), the International Association of Legal Science (IALS), the European Law Students' Association (ELSA), the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) or the International Geographic Union (IGU), in order to find the right (*groups* of) persons to cooperate with. In the domain of philosophy, they could approach the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP), an organization indirectly affiliated with the UNESCO in Paris, and holding, since 1948, quinquennial congresses in a host-country. The Union of International Associations (UIA) in Brussels, editor of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, would be delighted to advise sinologists in search of alliances with scientific institutions. A point perhaps to be put on the agenda of the next International Sinological Conference. Maybe a point of consideration also for the European Science Foundation Asia Committee, or the Association for Asian Studies in America, and Japan.

themselves, in a joint (ad)venture with ‘sinologists’ (or ‘indologists’ for that matter), from their own familiar world they will realise the relativity of the ball-game they were used to for so long. Briefly, *a scientific China-connection may revolutionise our academic world*, and perhaps even more than that. It may lead to reassessment of the assumptions upon which the ideologies and policies we fiercely defend are being built. For, although China, strikingly, did not produce a Homer, Plato, Euclid, Paul, Augustine, Dante, Copernicus, Luther, Shakespeare, Descartes, Locke, Newton, Hume, Smith, Kant, Hegel, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Einstein, Bohr, or Wittgenstein, its *grands esprits*, giving credence to *their* vision of order, have something invaluable to tell us. Eventually, the-West-in-the-making-of-China will then have its correlate in China-in-the-making-of-the-West, the one (*yin*) being indispensable for the other (*yang*).

Sinologists are counseled to leave the playground, and to upgrade themselves by forming strategic alliances with as many scientists as possible. Translating is their strength, doing research their weakness. Accordingly, they should concentrate on the former, and link up with true specialists for the latter. ‘Only connect’ should be their parole, as networking is the key to their future. The unlimited opportunities for this offered by the Internet are to be taken without delay, for there are many research projects itching to be launched.⁴¹ Suffice it to give a few suggestions:

- 1) A study of ‘State Power in China’ by scientists plainly schooled in the political thought of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, *The Federalist* authors, J.S. Mill, Robert Michels, James Buchanan, Charles Merriam, John Rawls, Nicos Poulantzas, Robert Dahl, John Dunn, Marcel Gauchet, Claude Lefort, John Gray, Quentin Skinner and many others; or a study of (attempted) ‘Radical Changes in the Form of Chinese Government in the Past’ by scientists who clearly soaked themselves in the theories of revolution enunciated by John Milton, Gerrard Winstanley, John Lilburne, Kant, Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Jefferson, Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville, Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Hannah Arendt, Crane Brinton, Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol, Jack Goldstone and Charles Tilly, amongst others.
- 2) A study of ‘The Chinese Concept of Law’,⁴² intimately related to the previous one, by scientists obviously well-informed of the profound legal understandings of Cicero, Philo, Aquinas, Grotius, Montesquieu, Henry Maine, Hans Kelsen, Herman Dooyeweerd, Evgeny Pashukanis, Maurice Hauriou, François Gény, Patric Devlin, Herbert Hart, Ronald Dworkin, Lon Fuller, Richard Posner, Roberto Unger, Joel Feinberg, Harold Berman and many others.
- 3) A study of ‘The Chinese Concept of Morality’, in tandem with point 2, by scientists well-versed in the ethical writings of Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Aquinas, Spinoza, Kant, Sidgwick, Nietzsche, George Moore, Charles Stevenson, Stephan Toulmin, Richard Hare, Bernard Williams, David Gauthier, Alisdair Macintyre, André Comte-Sponville, Matt Ridley, Peter Singer, Martha Nussbaum and many others.
- 4) A study of ‘Religion(s) in China’, undetached from point 1 and related to point 3, by scientists deeply conversant in the religious ideas of Hume, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, William James, Émile Durkheim, James Frazer, Henri Bergson, Max Weber, Nathan Söderblom, Rudolf Otto, Carl Jung, Georges Dumézil, Joachim Wach, Mircea Eliade, Kitagawa Mitsuo, Nishitani Keiji, Joseph Campbell, Ninian Smart, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and many others.
- 5) A study of ‘Confucianism’, in conjunction with points 1 and 4, that rivals Norbert Brox *et al.*, *Die Geschichte des Christentums: Religion - Politik - Kultur* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1991), a

fourteen-volume landmark in Western cultural history.⁴³ (By taking in Daoism, Buddhism and other schools of thought, part of the Confucianism-project could develop into ‘A Critical History of Chinese Philosophy’, which (a) clearly shows that - in view of Buddhism - due notice has been

41 Here, I should like to invite the reader’s attention to NETMAP, a powerful software package that analyzes complex networks of relationships, presenting the result in a circular graphic form (‘map’). Users can interact with the colour coded, unconventional and elegant display on screen to obtain more or less detail, or derive new displays based on other criteria. The programme permits unsuspected (embedded) patterns of relationship to be discovered between organizations, persons, problems, subject categories or concepts.

42 The history of China since the Opium War (1839-42) could be succinctly summarized as a clashing between imperial (indigenous), common, civil and socialist law systems.

43 Another benchmark might be the eighteen-volume *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, a megaproject on which over 1,000 distinguished scholars are currently working and to which Indian Heritage Research Foundation and University of South Carolina Press have committed themselves.

taken of the history of *Indian* philosophy [characterized by a continuous nourishment of arguments between ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’ traditions], (b) makes evident that the widely praised ‘Blackwell Companions to Philosophy’, ‘International Research Library of Philosophy’ [edited by John Skorupski], ‘Cambridge Companions to Major Philosophers’, and ‘Routledge Critical Assessment Series’ also have been heavily drawn upon, and (c) can bear comparison with the best of histories of *Western* philosophy [marked by a constant reverting to the double-barrelled problem of the relation between the one and the many and of thought and reality, and adequate coverage of the impact that contacts of Europe with the Middle East, India and China have had on its mind], in short, a history that, by incorporating the latest research,⁴⁴ and being both ‘history’ and ‘philosophy’, goes far beyond the one written by Feng Youlan,⁴⁵ taking pride in ‘the philosophical universe’.)

- 6) A study, aligned with point 5, of ‘The Marxist Conquest of China’, within the context of Western, East European, Soviet and Japanese Marxism, and taking into account the critical evaluations of these variants from different quarters; or, on a smaller scale, a study of ‘The Reception of Marx’s Capital in China’, in the light of important appraisals of its pivotal ‘labour theory of value’ by scientists like Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz, Isaak Rubin, Vitaly Vygotsky, Maurice Dobb, Ronald Meek, Piero Sraffa, Paul Samuelson, Ian Steedman, Meghnad Desai, Anwar Shaikh, Samuel Bowles, Murray Wolfson, Pierangelo Garegnani, John Roemer, Duncan Foley, Pierre Salama, Horie Tadao, Itoh Makoto, Morishima Michio and Lee Chai-On.⁴⁶
- 7) A study, in step with point 1, of ‘Chinese Economic Thought in Retrospect’ that matches – in scale, grasp, and penetration – the works of Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Ekelund & Robert Hébert, and Mark Blaug on the history of *Western* economic thinking, and may finally solve the age-old problem of ‘the just price’ (*iustum pretium*) of goods and services.⁴⁷
- 8) A study of ‘The Chinese Concept of Art’, parallel to point 3 and integral with point 5, by scientists thoroughly acquainted with the aesthetic views of Plato, Alberti, Kant, Lessing, Nietzsche, Santayana, Wölfflin, Croce, Coomaraswamy, Erwin Panofsky, Susanne Langer, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Theodor Adorno, Nelson Goodman, Ernst Gombrich, Mikel Dufrenne, Monroe Beardsley, Joseph Margolis, Clement Greenberg, Arthur Danto and many others.
- 9) A study of ‘Chinese Literature’, closely allied to the previous one, by scientists manifestly knowledgeable about the literary theories of Aristotle, Longinus, Johnson, Coleridge, Sainte-Beuve, Belinsky, György Lukács, T.S. Eliot, Walter Benjamin, Erich Auerbach, Roman Ingarden, Kenneth Burke, Northrop Frye, Jacques Derrida, Harold Bloom, Lionel Trilling, Tzvetan Todorov and many others; or a study of ‘Chinese Drama’ by scientists evidently familiar with the (major works on the) works of Greek, and Roman, dramatists, medieval playwrights, Lope de Vega, Shakespeare, Molière, Racine, Goethe, Schiller, Ibsen, Shaw, Chekhov, Hauptmann, Yeats, Pirandello, O’Neill, Brecht, Sartre and Beckett, amongst others; or a study of ‘The Chinese Novel’ by scientists clearly well-read in the (major studies on the) narratives of Chrétien de Troyes,

Chaucer, Cervantes, Rousseau, Jane Austen, Balzac, Dickens, Melville, Tolstoy, Henry James, Proust, Thomas Mann, Joyce, Kafka, Graham Greene and Nathalie Sarraute, amongst others.⁴⁸

44 For example, the research done by Hou Wailu, Ren Jiyu, Li Zehou, Zhang Dainian, Huang Nansen, Cai Shangsi, Ji Zhenfu, Lu Xichen, Feng Qi, Li Xi, Luo Guang, Huang Gongwei, Tao Jianguo, Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, Kamata Shigeo and Tsukamoto Zenryu. See also footnote 35.

45 His *Zhongguo zhexue shi* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1934) was translated, without *critical* notes, by the non-philosopher Derk Bodde in 1953, and is still – for want of something better – regarded as being standard.

46 See Giovanni Caravale (ed.), *Marx and Modern Economic Analysis* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd., 1991), 2 vols. ‘Well-known’ Chinese *Capital*-students were/are Wang Yanan, Guo Dali, Xu Dixin, Guan Mengjue, Wang Xuewen, Shen Zhiyuan, Luo Gengmo, Wang Sihua and Qi Qisheng. Wounded though it may be, I follow Horie in not believing that Marxism, ‘the sign of the oppressed’, is dead — safely forgotten.

47 Important preparatory work in this field was done by Hu Jichuang in his *magnum opus*, *Zhongguo jingji sixiang shi* (Shanghai: *Renmin chubanshe*, 1983), 3 vols. Hu, who recently passed away, was honorary president of the Society for Study of the History of Chinese Economic Thought, one of the many scientific institutions in China groups of sinologists could/should establish a relationship with. See footnote 40.

48 A comprehensive and critical ‘History of Chinese Literature’, exhibiting a well-organised structure, is also a *desideratum*. It should not be much of a problem to find a publisher ready to support such a big project

- 10) A study of ‘Education in China’, combined with points 5 and 9, by scientists who unmistakably steeped themselves in the writings, on *Bildung und Erziehung*, of Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian, Aquinas, Erasmus, Vives, Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Horace Mann, John Newman, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Martin Buber, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Ivan Illich, Mortimer Adler and many others.
- 11) A study of ‘China’s Modernisation’, related to points 1-10, by scientists strenuously engaged with the work of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Pitirim Sorokin, Norbert Elias, Karl Polanyi, Lewis Mumford, Shmuel Eisenstadt, Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Michael Mann, Anthony Giddens, Randall Collins, Charles Tilly, Emmanuel Todd, Manuel Castells, Eric Jones, Nathan Rosenberg, David Landes and Douglass North, amongst others.

The respected reader of these lines would be so kind as not to blame me for name-dropping (Russian, Indian and Japanese scholars may come out with other, or additional, names!). What I care only to do is to impress on him/her that much more interesting things could be written on, for example, the Chinese state if the authors were *also* well up in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, etc.⁴⁹ To give yet another example: there is no denying that meritorious works have been composed on Chinese views of *renxing* (human nature), but we are still waiting for an annotated translation of Xu Fuguan’s *Zhongguo renxing lun shi: xianqin pian* (Taipei, 1963) and Tang Junyi’s *Zhongguo zhexue yuan lun: yuanxing pian* (Hong Kong, 1968) by sinologists who do not fight shy of scientists, and for a thorough study of ‘The Chinese Concept of Man’ by people that are, at any rate, intimate with the writings of philosophical anthropologists ranging from Protagoras to Pico della Mirandola, from Hobbes to Heidegger, from Gehlen to Gusdorf, and from Ludwig Feuerbach to Luc Ferry.

The in-depth studies that I suggest⁵⁰ will ‘make new things familiar, and familiar things new’ (Pope). Yet, no one should infer from this that China can be grasped, reductionistically, by a range of *separate* sciences. China, I maintain, is a dynamic system closely intertwined with the rest of the world. It is a big ‘family of sets of elements’ *and* the particular way they affect each other. It is more than the sum total of its parts, and has come about through a long (r)evolutionary process. It consists of many embedded or imbricating subsystems that contribute to the reproduction or transformation of their supersystem. It is a whole that stands interrelated with its innermost core, or deepest foundation. To cut China, that astounding and fascinating country, into morsels for single sciences to handle would mean destroying a system — to *comprehend* it.

But, *can* China be explained, in a *non-destructive* manner? Is it possible to organise the mass of data pertinent to it into a single, coherent structure? Is a *Zusammenschau*, or encompassing ‘overview’, of the country (the blind men’s elephant) possible? Can China, as a ferociously complex *unity*, be portrayed, not ‘flatly’, not ‘curvedly’, but in a ‘fully rounded’ (Forster) way, in a synoptic *and* articulate manner? Is it possible to evoke its *rasa* (flavour), to reveal its *yi benxing* (very nature)? Is there a mountain top where the whole of the landscape comes into view?

Bold as the statement may sound, I for one do think that China (or any other country) is capable of being theorised. Its DNA can be sequenced; its ‘cultural code’ can be cracked; its *daoli*⁵¹ can be

financially. Something for Harvard University Press, Cambridge University Press, Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, or E.J. Brill?

49 The study of the state, a form of human association, is not the prerogative of political philosophers or scientists. Sociologists, economists, legal scientists, anthropologists, historians, and geographers also are concerned with this subject matter, in respect of which dozens of academic journals are being published. S.E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) impressively illustrates what a meeting of two disciplines in one person can generate. A very good source for bibliographic information about the *Chinese* state is Zhang Weiren *et al.* (eds.), *Zhongguo fazhi shi shumu* (Taipei: Academia Sinica Press, 1976), 3 volumes containing 2352 titles and, *inter alia*, tables of contents.

50 In this context it would be most useful to visit the website of the main publishers of scientific books and journals in Europe, the USA, and elsewhere.

51 For a conceptual history of *dao* (path), and its twin *li* (pattern), see Zhang Liwen (ed.), *Zhongguo zhexue fanchou jingxuan congshu*, Vol. I and II (Taipei: Hanxing shuju, 1994). See also footnote 28. A state, or society, stretches ‘across space and time’ (Giddens). Each of its constituent members is ‘a point on the move’ (Hägerstrand), drawing a line in time while it draws one in space, and *vice versa*: following, in each period of his little life, a different path every man – as a person, as something over and above a material body – delineates a ‘unique’ pattern (see footnote 20). It is tempting to compare *dao* and *li* - the interrelatedness of which might be the key to the *Book of Changes* – with the Indian core concepts *rta* (order) and *dharma* (what holds together). See M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949), pp. 12-13, 37; and Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969), pp. 99-105.

identified, in principle at least. Elaborating on this point, though, would require room for another long article. My hunch is that China's face, reflecting its history and soul, is to be seen and painted from different angles, in the way Braque and Picasso operated — cubistically.

CONCLUSION

'The study of China' has a long history, and obtained for itself academic status in many countries. Therefore, to demand of sinologists to produce certificates of legitimacy is almost *lèse-majesté*, a crime being liable to capital punishment. Yet, with the number of books about China increasing exponentially, nobody could reasonably object to assuming a vantage-point one step removed from where the authors of these publications usually stand, and having a critical look at how they operate. *Nourri dans le sérail*, the Sinological Institute in Leiden, I did have a look, and what I found was rather surprising: the emperor is wearing no clothes; sinologists, in and of themselves, have no *optique* on the object of their inquiries.

Do I make a caricature of every 'China-student'? Not at all! I draw a distinction between two categories, and try to unmask one of them, thus sifting the grain from the chaff. Do I have a low opinion of all sinologists, and do I maintain that their writings are nothing but rubbish? By no means! I acknowledge, and wish to repeat, that the sinological output exhibits varying degrees of quality. Many a book or article deserves to be qualified as 'excellent'. But the simple and radical thesis I advance is: having no theory of their own, sinologists are to be dismissed as pseudo-scientists. Differently put: being able to read (modern-standard as well as classical-literary) Chinese, and having read a great many books on the country and its history, does not make yet a scientist, whose hallmark is command of a theory, or model, in this case: of China. Is that a preposterous, nonsensical statement? I do not think so, because of the fact that the non-existence of a *sinological* point of view can be checked and controlled. This being the case, I am the one whose head is on the chopping block, for whoever can show, or prove, my argument to be false and erroneous, will make *me* ridiculous. Is the thesis challenging enough to arouse debate among many scholars? Certainly, it is. For every 'country-expert' can see for himself whether my words concern him or not. The excitement will be great, but I am also sure of something else: pure gold does not fear the melting-pot.

This article is an exercise in 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter); it is meant to be a double stimulation of the mind of sinologists. There is a stinging element in it, but there is, I confidently believe, also energising honey to be found.

On the one side, the argument is iconoclastic, opening fire upon the sinological establishment. I am under no illusion as to the reaction, and expect dogged resistance. Far from being afraid of it, I welcome any counterstatement that is sound and to the point. If you, honourable reader, can produce just one book, or article, not written by a political scientist, economist, law specialist, psychologist, sociologist, linguist, educationist, anthropologist, demographer, geographer, historian,⁵² or human scientist,⁵³ but by a *sinologist* who pairs up with anyone of them in theorising, I will immediately admit defeat, my thesis being refuted.

On the other hand, the article is an invitation, nay exhortation, to take the study of China to a higher level by change of method. It argues for close cooperation between 'sinologists' and scientists, and for ample application of scientific insights to 'sinological' studies. The result of it can only be substantial increase of *systematised* knowledge.

This, being a major achievement already, would not be enough. What is required if one is to have a better understanding of the country with which the West seems to be on collision course is a genuinely orchestric-scientific approach on the basis of many more translations.⁵⁴ A multi- or polydisciplinary study - apparently the credo of the editors of *The Cambridge History of China* and journals like *The*

52 Considerable controversy has surrounded the issue of the scientific status of history(2) and its ancillary fields. See Rex Martin, 'The Essential Difference between History and Science', *History & Theory*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1997, pp. 1-14; and B. Fay *et al.* (eds.), *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), a collection of essays which have, over the last twenty-five years or so, revolutionised our understanding, and account, of history(1). In my view, history(2) is a synthesizing 'discipline', that underlies, and is applicable to, all sciences.

53 I take the humanities, on the scientific status of which, again, there is no consensus, to include, besides philosophy, the 'sciences' of literature, art, and religion.

China Quarterly, *Modern China*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *China Aktuell*, *Perspectives Chinoises*, *China Information*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, *The Journal of Asian Studies* or *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* – is deceptive; it will miss its mark (of illuminating the whole of China) because it is bound to result in sterile juxtaposition of accounts that, scientific though they may be separately, form together a picture of incompatible colors. Partition walls must be lowered (not removed). What we need is detribalisation, *collaborative* scholarship, a truly integrative *inter-* or *transdisciplinary* approach that facilitates the cross-fertilisation and recombination of scientific knowledge.

Cognitive science, a composite discipline still in its infancy, may serve as example.⁵⁵ The component parts, being sciences in their own right, such as psychology, biology, sociology, linguistics, and physics, increasingly integrate as to the great study of the human mind, even if there is as yet no agreed-upon research paradigm, and the waiting is for a Newton or Darwin to rise, and to bring order into the field.⁵⁶

The call is for sinologists who think it appropriate to their dignity to accept the guidance of China-oriented, interacting scientists in search of ‘consilience’,⁵⁷ the joyful jumping together of knowledge across disciplines. What we urgently need is not *multa*, but *multum*.

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54 The idea of the musical metaphor is to express the requirement of ‘playing’ in time and in harmony, ‘point counter point’ (Huxley).

55 Another example is cosmology, a field of study that brings together astronomy, physics and chemistry, in a joint effort to understand the universe as a unified whole.

56 See Howard Gardner, *The Mind’s New Science* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Daniel Osherson (ed.), *An Invitation to Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); and William Bechtel & George Graham (eds.), *A Companion to Cognitive Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). See also footnote 3.

57 See E.O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).