

# South Has (No) Limits: Relative and Absolute Meaning in Hui Shih's Ten Points

*Frank W. Stevenson*

## ABSTRACT

In order to make the case that the logician Hui Shih is (like Kung sun-Lung) more subtle and complex than the role he plays in the *Chuang-tzu* would suggest, I argue here that the spatio-temporal paradoxes of this "sceptical relativist" measure indeterminacy against absolute logical forms. This argument is based on a close reading of Hui Shih's ten paradoxes as we get them at the end of the *Chuang-tzu*. My conclusion is that the logician's double view of reality is in fact a double view of the contingent and formal sides of human language. Thus while the Taoist's mystical flights would transcend "words" in order to get "meaning," the logician recognizes that this is not possible: his deepest probings cannot escape the trap of signification, but rather lay bare language's own self-difference.

## KEY WORDS

spatio-temporal  
relativity  
flux  
analytic  
paradox

logical forms  
frame of reference  
(in)exhaustibility  
difference

Perhaps the most famous exchange between Chuang Tzu and his good friend Hui Shih occurs at the end of the "Autumn Floods" chapter of that rambling and playful text of many discourses, the *Chuang-tzu*:

Chuang Tzu and Hui Shih were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Chuang Tzu said, "See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That's what fish really enjoy!"

Hui Shih said, "You're not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?"

Chuang Tzu said, "You're not I, so how do you know I don't know what fish enjoy?"

Hui Shih said, "I'm not you, so I certainly don't know what you know. On the other hand, you're certainly not a fish—so that still proves you don't know what fish enjoy!"

Chuang Tzu said, "Let's go back to your original question, please. You asked me *how* I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao."<sup>1</sup>

The traditional reading of this passage gives priority to the Taoist Chuang Tzu: while the logician is too narrowly "logical," trapped by reason and language, the Taoist cuts through these limits with his flash of intuition. This Taoist insight is grounded in "heart" rather than "mouth"—the logicians can "persuade men's mouths but not their hearts"—or perhaps in the ineffable Tao.<sup>2</sup> Naturally the Taoist's discourse is given priority, superior power, within the Taoist's own text, but in fact we *could* just as easily read this passage in a way that favors Hui Shih and his "you're not a fish." This is a sceptic's position that emphasizes the limits of human knowledge (often upheld by the Taoist as well), and Chuang Tzu's final response is more sophisticated than Hui Shih's own discourse (the question *ru an chih* 女安知 . . . , "How do you know. . . ?" did not really embody the presupposition that Chuang Tzu knew), or more mystical. For here the priority goes, on the "Taoist reading," either to the Taoist's flash of mystical insight that transcends logic—"I just *knew* it by/while standing here, that's all"—or to his clever sophistry that splits hairs on the use of the *an*, "how," and so outplays the logician at his own game of "persuading men's mouths.

The former interpretation is reinforced by Chuang Tzu's frequent falling back from the language of contingency and relativism into a language of *ming*

明-illumination, *t'ien* 天-heaven and Tao, from the immanent flux of reality/language to something that transcends it. We might then see the Taoist as logocentric—he would “throw away the trap of words” once he got the meaning, the transcendental signified from *within* them—and the logician as explorer of the indeterminate, de-centered world of logic and language from which there is no escape.<sup>3</sup> This could suggest *another* reading of the Taoist author’s words at the very end of the *Chuang-tzu*: “Hui Shih had many formulae, his writings filled five carts, but his Way was eccentric, his words were off center.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the logician eschews the Taoist’s “straight” Way and inward-centered (heart-centered) words, sensing that these, in their escape from the trap of language (= reality), fail to express it.

But this is arguably only idle speculation so long as we are reading Hui Shih’s words as they are presented by/within the Taoist text/discourse. And the only place we seem to get Hui Shih’s *own* words is here at the end of the *Chuang-tzu*. After his remark about the logician’s “off-centered” language the Taoist author proceeds to list Hui Shih’s ten paradoxes dealing with the relativity of things/events in the spatio-temporal world, and adds the comment: “Hui Shih thought of these as opening up a comprehensive view of the world and a new dawn for disputation; and the sophists below in the empire shared his joy in them.”<sup>5</sup> We tend to take this account of the logician’s optimism ironically, but perhaps Chuang-tzu himself would feel it to be to some degree justified. Fung Yu-lan claims that “it was left to the Taoists fully to apply the discovery made by the School of Names of what lies beyond shapes and features. The Taoists were the opponents of this school, but they were also its true inheritors.”<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps Hui Shih’s fellow Sophists “shared his joy” in his ten points by formulating the twenty-one paradoxes which follow them here. The Taoist author again has a gently mocking comment: “The Sophists used these in debate with Hui Shih, and never for the rest of their lives got to the end of them.”<sup>7</sup> Some in this second series are taken to be the sophisms of that other great logician of the School of Names, Kung-sun Lung-tzu, a thinker traditionally seen as being mainly concerned with showing the permanence and logical certainty of names (*ming* 名) rather than, like Hui Shih, the relativity and flux of things (*shih* 實).<sup>8</sup> And the number eleven dilemma here indeed invites our endless reflection if not *débat*e, like a mirror or bottomless abyss: “The pointing of the finger does not reach (a thing); the reaching never ends” (*chih pu chih, chih pu chueh* 指不至,至不絕).<sup>9</sup>

According to the traditional (Taoist) view of the logicians, they are

indeed engaged in endless disputation to "no end," that is, with no practical result or effect on the world. They are aloof academics, splitting hairs in their ivory tower, tediously rationalistic from the perspective of the Taoists who see their own mystical thinking of transcendence and inward peace as (paradoxically) more pragmatic, more efficacious. But again we must remember that the logicians' *appearance* in the text of *Chuang-tzu* may not be their *reality*, since in this text they are used as playthings, as Chuang-tzu's foils in mock-debate, the targets of his irony. I tend to question the traditional view that (1) the picture we get in the *Chuang-tzu* of two overly serious and narrowly "logical" logicians is accurate, (2) Hui Shih is only a "relativist" and Kung-sun Lung only an "absolutiest," and (3) with his rational "limitations" neither logician is any match for the Taoist game-master Chuang-tzu.

In an essay recently published in *Tamkang Review*, "Meaning is not Meaning: World, Thing and Difference in Kung-sun Lung's *Chih Wu Lun* 指物論," by suggesting the indeterminacy of this sophistical "Discourse" which states that "Meaning is not meaning" I try to show that Kung-sun Lung is more subtle and complex than he at first appears. He is concerned not just with giving a logical ground to meaning-thing relationships but with questioning the logical foundation of meaning, with the "self-difference" of meaning. Here I want to make the same sort of case for Hui Shih—to show that this "sceptical relativist" is concerned as much with logical absolutes, or the *possibility* of such absolutes, as with the relativity of things—by looking closely at the "text" of his ten points as we find it embedded in the *Chuang-tzu*.

For perhaps after all both logicians take like Chuang-tzu the *liang chien* 兩見, "double view" of things, and walk the *liang hsing* 兩行, "double path."<sup>10</sup> Or perhaps the logicians' double view is indeed "narrower" and thus truer than the Taoist's, more "eccentric" and less logocentric; perhaps it is a perspective which sees language/reality not as grounded in something transcendent to it but as indefinitely extended and so *ungrounded*, split with an inner difference, the self-difference of the sign, of signification, of meaning itself.

### Points One, Two and Six

Hui Shih's points two through nine, it is true, present us with that spatio-temporal relativity whose demonstration this logician is famous for. For instance, we get space in point two, "The dimensionless (Ware: 'what lacks

thickness') cannot be accumulated, yet its girth is 1,000 miles," and in point six, "The south has no limit yet does have a limit," and time in the rather Heraclitean point four, "Simultaneously with being at noon the sun declines, simultaneously with being alive a thing dies," and in point seven, "I go to Yueh today yet arrived yesterday." However, the first point clearly stresses absolutes, not relatives: *chih ta wu wai, wei chih ta i; chih hsiau wu nei, wei chih hsiau i* 至大無外，謂之大一；至小無內，謂之小一，"extreme big nothing (not having) outside, (is) called big one; extreme small nothing inside, (is) called small one," or "The ultimately great has nothing outside it, call it 'the greatest One.' The ultimately small has nothing inside it, call it 'the smallest one.'" <sup>11</sup> Fung Yu-lan comments:

These two statements constitute what are called analytical propositions. They make no assertions in regard to the actual, for they say nothing about what, in the actual world, is the greatest thing and the smallest thing. They only touch upon the abstract concepts or names: "greatest" and "smallest." . . . . Thus by analyzing the names, "Great One" and "Small One," Hui Shih reached the concept of what is absolute and unchanging. From the point of view of this. . . he realized that the qualities and differences of actual concrete things are all relative and liable to change. <sup>12</sup>

But then what does it mean to claim (with Fung) that Hui Shih is strictly ("absolutely") a relativist—or that anyone could be? If his "great One" and "small one" are *a priori* analytic judgments in a Kantian sense, tautologies, then he may be measuring the "qualities and differences of actual concrete things" against these absolute concepts, these pure logical forms, and thus revealing the flux and relativity of the former with respect to the latter. In a spatio-temporal paradox such as "I go to Yueh today yet arrive(d) yesterday" or "The south has no limit yet does have a limit" the crux would seem to be that we have no fixed frame of reference or point of view: thus from time-frame A (yesterday) I go there "today" but from time-frame B (today) I go there "yesterday," and from space-frame A (staring at the southern horizon?) the south is limitless but from space-frame B (differentiating the south from the north, west and east?) it is "limited." Hui Shih's paradoxes then show the relativity of "qualities and differences of actual things" with respect to some formal concept—absolute limit or limitlessness, absolute duration or eternity. Or is Hui Shih also questioning, in

his spatio-temporal dilemmas, the possibility of a fixed ground, a fixed meaning for even these "formal" concepts ("greatest," "limit")?

Of course we can see "Biggest One has nothing outside" as an analytic proposition, a tautology true merely by definition of the subject term (like "red is a color"), but perhaps we can also see it as a dilemma or paradox: "Biggest One is both limited (being One and also a particular One, the biggest One) and limitless (having nothing beyond it, thus extending indefinitely or infinitely). As such we could compare it to "South is limited and limitless"—the term "south" is finally (like One or "biggest One") indeterminate in meaning, as are the terms "limit" and "limitless." Can both of these sophisms be seen as dilemmas and also as tautologies?

Clearly "South is limited/limitless" is explicitly (in outward form) a dilemma—unlike "The Biggest One has nothing outside it" (in form a tautology)—and might be taken as a kind of antinomy of pure reason, grounded on opposite ways of seeing/defining the (formal?) subject term "south" (and also the formal predicates, "limit" and "unlimited"), mutually contradictory ways in which (as in Kant) the human mind (reason) naturally "thinks" when it ventures beyond reference to the spatio-temporal world. But I have already suggested that this dilemma—south is limited/limitless—is in fact based upon human perception (of the southern horizon) and *use* of ordinary language (distinguishing south from north), that is, upon difference—perhaps *incommensurability*—between/among language games that we play. However, while clearly "south" is a word whose meaning will emerge only in relation to the meaning of other words coordinated within the same nexus like "north" and "down," is "limit" also such a word? Or is it a formal term whose meaning—like that of "greatest One" and "smallest One" (or "God" or "Being")—is indeterminate since it can refer to/be used in relation to *anything* in the world? I think Hui Shih is here suggesting the lack of an absolute ground of meaning for both relative (synthetic, in-the-world) terms like "south" and absolute (analytic, beyond-the-world, formal) terms like "limit" . . . and perhaps the impossibility of distinguishing between them.

Thus Hui Shih's second point: "The dimensionless (*wu ho* 無厚, 'what lacks thickness') cannot be piled up, yet it is very thick."<sup>13</sup> Fung's reading—"the ideal plane of geometry, though without thickness, may at the same time be very long and wide"<sup>14</sup>—sees the crux of the dilemma in the double sense (viewpoint, reference frame) of "dimension(al)" as two-dimensional and three-dimensional, which comes to the same thing as an equivocation on "thickness" as (three-dimensional) thickness or (two-dimen-

sional) width. But surely there is a more “naive” and fully paradoxical interpretation which does not equivocate—or rather does so in a more subtle way—on the meaning of “thickness.” Thinking of two-dimensional “thickness” we can picture a very thin, or infinitesimally thin, space—for instance a straight line—in two ways: as having/being thickness (in “absolute” terms or in the measurements of physical science) and as not having/being thickness (to the human eye and thus in the ordinary *use* of the term “thick”). While there *might* be a meaningful distinction in English between “being” and “having” here—is “space” something besides its attributes?—in Chinese it’s hard to distinguish them since both are translations of *yu* 有; thus my tendency to use both terms.<sup>15</sup>

Consider the form of this dilemma: “What has no thickness (*wu ho*, the dimensionless) cannot be piled up (*ji* 積), accumulated, multiplied, increased in time as well as in space)<sup>16</sup> yet is very thick.” There are two interwoven statements here: “What lacks thickness cannot be increased” (arguably not a paradox but a mathematical fact analogous to “zero multiplied by any number is still zero”), and “What lacks thickness also is very thick” (clearly a paradox). Perhaps we can think of the combined sense in this way: “X has no thickness/has thickness” (a paradox), and it “has thickness” not by gradual increase (the “logical” way of gaining thickness) but rather “simultaneously” (and thus paradoxically) in the very moment that it has no thickness. Here the “cannot be increased” emphasizes the absolute polarity (incommensurability, difference) of having thickness/not having thickness, a simultaneous Being-and-Non-being and not a process of change, of coming-into-being.<sup>17</sup>

Hui Shih in this dilemma is showing us the relativity of greatness and smallness: X can be very small and very large at the same time, since (a) the terms “great” and “small” are equivocal, indeterminate in meaning, and/or (b) there is no absolute standard by which to judge greatness and smallness. But given the relativity exhibited by/within (the terms of) the dilemma itself, do we say this is a relativity with respect to (i.e. measured against) the fixed and absolute standard of (the terms) “greatest One” and “smallest one” established in the first point? That is, is the “dimensionless” an indeterminate smallness that has not reached the “limit” (and so determinate meaning) of absolute smallness, and similarly with the “very thick” in relation to “absolute thickness”? Or are these terms (“lacking thickness,” “very thick”) indeterminately relative-and-absolute within the framework of the second point itself, like “limit” and “unlimited” within the framework of

the sixth point ("South is unlimited yet limited"), independently of any reference back to the first point? (Another way to put it perhaps: are absolute greatness and smallness already *implicit* within, implied by, the sixth point?)

Indeed we notice that the excerpted dilemma "X has thickness/has no thickness" ("X is dimensionless/dimensional") is of the same form as "South is both limited and limitless," though the subject of the former is explicitly non-determinate. Thus the same considerations already discussed with respect to "South. . ." again are relevant. What is the relationship here between the (absolute or ambiguously relative-and-absolute?) terms "limit" and "dimension" on the one hand and "limitless" and "dimensionless" on the other? Is the meaning-range of "dimension(less)" a subset of that of "limit(less)"? (Or: is "limit" a more formal, more absolute term than "dimension"?) "Limit" here is *ch'ung* 窮, which also means "exhausted." This could suggest then a dynamic sense of limit as "movement-toward-a-limit," as an active "completion" or "exhaustion" rather than a static (formal, absolute) "limit." Perhaps the *ch'ung* is "limit" as "change," as *coming-to-be* exhausted (or *passing-away into* completion), and thus as a *relative* state-of-being.<sup>18</sup> It might help to reflect on this in the context of the "pointing cannot reach, reaching never ends" paradox.<sup>19</sup>

A more radical view of Hui Shih—putting him more clearly in Chuang-tzu's camp—might see him as cutting away the ground of meaning of words independently of any appeal to absolute, formal standards. That is, we could see his paradoxes (and/or the vision of spatio-temporal relativity expressed by/contained within them) as undermining language itself, as questioning not only the relation of words to things and to one another but the possible meanings of words themselves taken as self-contained entities, as signifier-signified (sound-image/concept) dyads. Taoist "deconstruction," in Graham's interpretation of Chuang-tzu, has the ironic force, the playfulness and theater-of-the-absurd quality of Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty: "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean." Thus a "no-dimension" could just as well be a dimension, "limit" a "limitlessness," "nothing" "being." But here we are still limiting ourselves to the meaning-range of antonyms, to the polarity of the paradox. (Is Hui-shih thus limiting himself?) Chuang-tzu's point in his second chapter, according to Graham, is (like Humpty Dumpty's) still more radical: "What you call 'horse' I call something else; I can mean anything I want (e.g. 'chair' or 'dimension') by 'horse.'" <sup>20</sup>

### Points Five and Ten

It would seem then that while Hui Shih's first point is an analytic definition of logical absolutes, most of his other paradoxes express the spatio-temporal relativity of things/events as measured against such fixed logical forms. His fifth and tenth points can be read as expressing physical contingency *or* logical permanence, or perhaps their combination, their paradoxical identity-and-difference. The fifth point reads: "A great similarity differs from a little similarity. This is called the little similarity-and-difference (*hsiao t'ung i* 小同異). All things are in one way all similar, in another way all different. This is called the great similarity-and-difference (*ta t'ung i* 大同異)." <sup>21</sup> Fung comments:

If we regard things in the universe as similar, there are points of similarity in all of them, and we can say that from one aspect they are all similar; but if we regard them as different. . . . we can say that from another aspect they are all different. This is what is called great similarity-and-difference. As to what ordinary people call similarity and difference, this is simply similarity and difference between one particular object and another particular object. Such is the little similarity-and-difference. . . . <sup>22</sup>

Fung also compares Hui Shih's point here to Chuang-tzu's in chapter 5: "If we see things from the point of view of their difference, even liver and gall are as far from each other as the states of Ch'u and Yueh. If we see things from the point of view of their similarity, all things are one." <sup>23</sup> Is the standard by which to judge the "similarity" and "difference" of things to be then, for Hui Shih as well as Chuang-tzu, a purely subjective one—suggesting the contingency of flux—or a formal, logical one? I see Hui Shih here as concerned (unlike Chuang Tzu?) with the interplay of a similarity-and-difference measured by sense perception (subjective, relative) and a similarity/difference defined by human language and logic. Perhaps we could also interpret Hui Shih's "little similarity and difference" as the difference(s) between words (or meanings) *within language*: all meanings are different (having different signifiers-signifieds, or different references *outside of language*) and yet also the same (as linguistic signs, combinations of signifier-and-signified). Then the big similarity-and-difference could be the inner split *of language* itself, of "meaning," of the sign; or perhaps (what may

or may not be the same thing) the identity-and-difference of language with a referential world that lies *beyond* it.

In the "Autumn Floods" chapter of the *Chuang-tzu*, Jo of the North Sea speaks to the Spirit of the River about the relativity of frame(s) of reference, claiming it is merely "convenient. . . a matter of circumstance" to distinguish the "smallest of the small" (we think of Hui Shih's "smallest one") from the "largest of the large" ("greatest One"). Thus for Chuang-tzu even the absolute limiting-concepts "largest and smallest" are ultimately (in absolute terms) interchangeable: we distinguish them for the sake of convenience and everyday usage. Does this mean absolute sameness/relative difference? But Hui Shih combines absolute ("great") sameness-and-difference with relative ("little") sameness-and-difference. Is his point then more subtle?

Jo of the North Sea goes on to distinguish the world of sense perception from a world lying beyond physical things/qualities:

Before we can speak of the coarse or fine, however, there must be some form (*hsing* 形, shape). If a thing has no form, then numbers cannot express its dimensions (*pu neng fen yeh* 不能分也, 'cannot *divide* or analyze it'), and if it cannot be encompassed, then numbers cannot express its dimensions (*pu neng fen yeh* 不能窮也, 'cannot *limit/exhaust* it'). We can use words to talk about the coarseness of things and we can use our minds (*i* 意, 'meaning,' 'sense') to visualize the fineness of things. But what words cannot describe and the mind cannot succeed in visualizing—this has nothing to do with coarseness and fineness.<sup>24</sup>

We notice that Chuang-tzu claims on the one hand that the (absolutely) greatest and smallest are different only relatively (not absolutely), and on the other that "what words cannot describe and the mind cannot picture" (and also "numbers cannot limit or divide") has "nothing to do with"—is completely different from—the things/qualities of the world of sense perception. This last distinction, which recalls Lao-Tzu's "Way that cannot be spoken of," is striking when we consider that Hui Shih, though he may be distinguishing the perceptual from the conceptual (logical) worlds, does *not* make a distinction between these two worlds on the one hand and some "transcendent" world on the other—that is, he never speaks of this kind of transcendence. Is this a sign of Chuang-tzu's greater subtlety and sophistication or, as I suspect, his stronger tendency toward idealism, transcendentalism,

logocentric thinking as compared with Hui Shih's (more modern) concern with the strictly human world of perception, cognition and language?

Perhaps this separation of an ineffable Tao from the flux of reality which identifies all opposites (including opposite moral terms) underlies the Taoist sage's "ethics" as we get it in the next lines of "Autumn Floods": "Therefore the great man in his actions will not harm others, but he makes no show of benevolence. . . . He knows that right and wrong (*shih fei* 是非, 'true and false') are indistinguishable (*pu ke wei fen* 不可爲分) and that no line divides (*pu ke wei ni* 不可爲倪) the big and the small." This may be a kind of ethical "double view" which could be distinguished from the logician's (Mohist) ethics. The Taoist sage possesses this kind of equanimity, making no show of being either selfish or selfless, "good" or "bad," because "he knows right and wrong are indistinguishable," that there is no ethical absolute that underlies the flux of relativity. Yet the sense of an ineffable reality (Tao) in whose serenity the sage can dwell beyond the immanent flux may be the secret of his calmness. This self-and world-transcending state is in fact a purely metaphysical state which transcends ethics, human passion and love.

In contrast, the "equal love" of Hui Shih's tenth point is grounded in the chaotic oneness of the humanly knowable and expressible totality; in its *limitation* it is arguably more *humane* than the Taoist's self-effacing benevolence. The tenth point says: "Love all things equally (*fan ai wan wu* 汎愛萬物); Heaven and Earth are one body (*t'ien ti i ti yeh* 天地一體也, Graham takes *ti* as 'unit')." Here the *fan ai* reminds us of Mo-tzu's *chian ai* 簡愛, "universal love," though it might not be exactly the same thing.<sup>25</sup> This *fan ai*, "vast" or "spreading" or "overflowing love" is dynamic, indiscriminate, all-engulfing, compassionate (thus not "equal" in a formal, logical sense). "Heaven-Earth" presents(s) a special problem since the *t'ien ti* in classical Chinese texts tend(s) already to have a single or unified sense, sometimes getting translated as "Nature" (or even "Universe"). Chuang-tzu says in Chapter 2 (mocking Kung-sun Lung), "Heaven and earth are one meaning (*i chih* 一指, one "pointing");" and also "Heaven and earth were born together with me, and the myriad things and I are one."

These statements of Chuang-tzu raise the further problem (really a deepening of the original heaven-earth duality/unity problem) that while "heaven-earth" as "nature" or "totality" can mean "totality of all things"—and Fung takes it this way in his interpretation below—we must sometimes distinguish a more metaphysical heaven-earth from a more immanent and physical "ten thousand things," especially in crucial metaphysical texts like

Lao-Tzu's chapter 1 and Chuang-tzu's chapter 2. Hui Shih's use of *ti* 體, "body" ("thing," "unit") here—"heaven-earth is/are one body"—is striking for its suggestion of physicality, immanence and perhaps indeterminacy, fitting a love that is "vast," that "spreads". (How do we compare this "one *ti*-body" with Chuang-tzu's "one *chih*-meaning/pointing"?) Perhaps then this *ti*-body suggests an immanent heaven-earth as totality of things rather than a "metaphysical" heaven-earth as formal or transcendent unity, and we are to take Hui Shih's tenth point as the expression of an indeterminate "totality of flux" rather than a formal, logical "oneness" or totality. Thus Fung's interpretation:

In the preceding propositions, Hui Shih argues that all things are relative and in a state of flux. There is no absolute difference, or absolute separation among them. Everything is constantly changing into something else. It is a logical conclusion, therefore, that all things are one, and hence that we should love all things equally without discrimination.<sup>26</sup>

Fung sees Hui Shih as having a clear logical argument here, of the form "A therefore B, B therefore C"—although the "A therefore B" is actually a reconstruction from the earlier points. Let's allow for the moment the claim, though it seems to contain a kind of metaphysical/ethical discontinuity or "leap," that "since all things are one, we should love all things equally"—which is all Hui Shih is ostensibly claiming in the tenth point (unless he's arguing that "since we love all things equally, all things must be one")—and focus on (Fung's and perhaps Hui Shih's) prior premise and conclusion. If "everything is constantly changing into something else," is it really a "logical conclusion" that "all things are one"? If "everything is changing. . ." means (as Fung seems to think) that there was never a real "difference" between things (only the flux of totality, never individual essences), then doesn't it *presuppose* the oneness of the totality? And if, as also seems possible, "everything is changing" means that each thing becomes another thing, doesn't this presuppose a finite number of things (for complete "exchange" to take place) and thus also a *limit*, a bounded totality (i.e. oneness) of all things? That is, Hui Shih may be stating a tautology here, an analytic proposition as in his first point: "All is flux means by definition that all is one." Or rather, he may be thinking of this as a tautology, since the "all is flux" is a conclusion from earlier points, the "all is one" stated in the tenth.

But if things are really all changing, couldn't we also picture an expanding (or contracting) totality—where each thing becomes two or more new things (or *vice versa*) rather than one of the other things within a limited set? Then, though we might still think of it as a “one” in the sense that there is no essential difference between/among things, in another sense it would no longer be a One but an indefinite/unlimited Something, an expanding/contracting chaos (possibly not unlike the cosmos in which we actually live). Would we then call this a “heaven-earth” in the formal or metaphysical sense (“one being”), or just a “totality of things” (the total number of which keeps changing)?

In his first point Hui Shih states the tautology that the “greatest One has nothing outside it;” thus he *is* aware of the possibility of an absolute “One.” But we wonder: does even such a One preclude the possibility of its own expansion/contraction? And assuming it does, is Hui Shih presupposing this *limited* absolute One in his tenth point? (Also: is Fung assuming the logical absolute here, the *definite* totality, in order to argue finally for flux and relativity?) It's possible after all to argue (against both Hui Shih and Fung?) that if the totality of things keeps expanding it won't be a limited “one” and yet you can still “love all things equally”—indeed, then your love will be more clearly a *fan ai*, “spreading love.”

But now we have stepped across the line into ethics, or rather forward in the deductive chain (on Fung's view) to the metaphysical-ethical claim: “since all is one, we should love all things equally.” And our old questions are again the crucial ones. First, is Hui-Shih stating (what he thinks is) a tautology here, or making a logical deduction? It's harder to see the tautology here due to the metaphysical/ethical break. (“All is one” means *by definition* that we love all things equally? How can the ethical appeal for equal love be analytically contained *within* the metaphysical claim of oneness?) But: can we really apply this kind of Western logic in trying to understand ancient Chinese thinking in which ethics and metaphysics were arguably never separated (think of Confucius) in the way they were in the West, and/or in which ethics has always taken priority (versus the opposite situation in the West)? Also, is Hui Shih thinking of a logical oneness and so of a logical (or “just,” indiscriminate in the sense of equally divided) “equal love,” or of relative (chaotic) oneness and a free and compassionate (“chaotic”) love? If “all is one, so love all equally” is a deduction, can only a “logical” love follow from a logical unity and a relative (chaotic, emotional) love from a relative unity, but not one type of love from the other type of

unity?

Perhaps this is a kind of logical conclusion, but when I reflect on Hui Shih's tenth point I somehow feel it is *intuitively* (rather than logically) right that we would, or should, "love all things indiscriminately" if everything were changing. Because if all is changing there is no absolute, no certain foundation or meaning of things, so we *may as well* love all things equally. But what kind of *ethics* is this? Is it finally a positive or negative ethics? (We might ask the same question of the Mohist ethics of "universal love" and of "Stoic" ethics.<sup>27</sup>) If we only say we "may as well" love all things equally (since all is changing and thus nothing matters anyway, it's all nothingness or illusion, in their essential emptiness things really *are* equal), this seems a rather negative ethics, an ethics by default, ethics of loss—which might be seen as a Buddhist or existentialist ethics. If on the other hand we want a *positive* ethics, if we want the solid, indubitable claim that we *should* love all equally, must this claim then be based on logic (as for the Mohists and Stoics) rather than on intuition? Clearly ethics can never be based on logic as metaphysics and epistemology can be; perhaps what we perceive as a more "positive" appeal for love would simply be based on another (more optimistic) kind of intuition.

I suspect then that Hui Shih's double view is a way of seeing this (meta-physical-ethical) "One" as *both* relative (indeterminate totality of flux) and absolute. If we see Hui Shih's One as a constant flux which nonetheless is balanced and ordered by a kind of limit—the identity of opposites in a paradox, perhaps—we might think of Heraclitus' *logos*, the "constant measure of change." While Lao-tzu says "The way that can be spoken of is not the *ch'ang* 常—constant (or common) way," Heraclitus says man needs to *listen* not to "me" (to himself, to man) but to the *logos*, which is *zuno*, "common" (to all men). This Heraclitean metaphysics seems not quite to be an ethics—the Greek says "it is *sophon* ('wise,' not 'good') to agree (*homologein*) that 'All is One'"—yet it might help us to see the ethical side of Hui Shih. Understanding "All is One" is true wisdom since it is not only a meta-physical truth about ultimate reality but also a human truth about humanity, human commonality (solidarity).

But coming back to the strictly metaphysical problem of the relativist/absolutist double view, we remember Heraclitus' "change" is grounded in paradoxical identity of opposites though he also says each opposite "comes round to" the other in the great cycle. Do we assume from his space-time paradoxes that Hui Shih's flux of totality in the 10th point is also grounded

in paradox? But even if so, doesn't the dynamic, relativistic character of the Chinese terms for "limit" (*ch'iuung*-exhaustion), "dimension" (*ho*-thickness) and "equal" (*fan*-spreading) suggest that opposite terms/ideas in a paradox are still "coming round to" one another? (Do opposite names/terms "contain" one another or change into one another?) Perhaps then we can see Hui-Shih's double view even at the deepest level of his reflection on language, on words in their connection (or disconnection) with things and the (im)-possibility of a fixed ground of/for meaning. And this double view of words/things is the logician's encompassing paradox, or its center (if there could be a center), its heart, so deep and subtle that he plays the game as Chuang-tzu's equal.

### The Limit is Unlimited

At the beginning of this essay I quoted the Taoist author's mocking comment in the last chapter of *Chuang-tzu*: "The Sophists used these (paradoxes) in debate with Hui Shih, and never for the rest of their lives got to the end of them." I also mentioned the eleventh in the series of sophisms referred to here, often attributed to Kung-sun Lung: "pointing (*chih*) cannot reach, reaching never ends." This "reaching never ends" has been tied to one of Kung-sun Lung's dilemmas in the *Lieh-tzu*: "'Things never come to naught" (*yu wu pu chin* 有物不盡, "things have no limit," "things are never exhausted").<sup>28</sup> As I've argued in my Kung-sun Lung essay, this pointing paradox can suggest that meaning is *chin* 盡 -"inexhaustible" in the sense of "filling-and-emptying": words (signifiers) are always meaning things/concepts (signifieds) in their always *pointing toward* (but not reaching) them (emptying out of meaning) and simultaneously in their always *arriving at* them (and so filling out/up their meaning).<sup>29</sup>

One way to look at Hui Shih's "chaotic oneness of flux" in the tenth point—and its relationship to the first, fifth and other points—is by comparing it with the sort of picture this "inexhaustible meaning" interpretation of the pointing paradox gives us, and with the sort of picture Graham gives us in his "nominalist" reading of Kung-sun Lung's *Chih Wu Lun*.<sup>30</sup> The picture I have in mind is something like this: the world of things is indeterminate, undefined, with no clear (absolute) limit demarcating it—since it never reaches that limit (*chin, ch'iuung* 盡窮) or is always already going beyond it. The totality (chaotic oneness of things) is perhaps, like any particular thing in its true "thingness," a *mass* noun, a whole of discontinuous parts which

is thus *different* from (greater or less than) the mere (logical) sum of its parts.<sup>31</sup> We cannot name/mean this kind of world-thing-being, because to name/mean things presupposes a clear break between them (or between the One and what lies beyond it); it presupposes logically *de-fined* or *limited* beings, "absolute" beings, surrounded by non-being. I suspect that Hui Shih's and Chuang-tzu's sceptical relativism undercuts the absolute without fully abandoning it (for that would be impossible): a single thing is a chaotic totality, the universe is a single thing.

But while the Taoist finally gives priority to an absolute *beyond* language and meaning, the logician sees the absolute as a logical form *within* language, against which the contingencies of meaning may be measured. Thus Hui Shih's sixth point, "South is limited/limitless," is a dilemma of human perception and cognition and thus ultimately of human language. The measure or standard of meaning for "limit(less)" here is not something that "words cannot describe and the mind cannot visualize"—rather it is a form (*hsing* 形) and this *form*, even if "logical," is finally to be found within the signifying structure of human language. This would still be true even if, like Wittgenstein's "thought," it were the "logical picture of a fact."<sup>32</sup> Graham claims that Hsia Chi's unfathomable response to T'ang in the *Lieh-tzu*, in a passage very likely lifted from chapter one of the *Chuang-tzu*, is a lost proof of Hui Shih's sixth point.<sup>33</sup> Here Hsia Chih upholds a sceptical relativist's position on spatio-temporal limits:

"There is no ultimate (*wu chi* 無極, no limit) in the beginning or end of things . . . . The beginning may be the end and the end may be the beginning. Who knows their order (*chi* 紀, periodicity, narration)? As to what exists outside of things or before the beginning of events, I do not know. "Is there any limit (*chi chin* 極盡, limit/exhaustibility, outer/inner limit) to the above, the below, or the eight directions?" asked T'ang. Hsia Chi answered, "I don't know."<sup>34</sup>

We note here a distinction between two sorts of indefiniteness. First Chi refers to the indeterminacy of temporal order (*chi*) within a closed or immanent world of things: we cannot distinguish the beginning of things/events from the end, there is rather just an ongoing (perhaps cyclical and repeating) series whose time order is ultimately undecidable. Then he refers to another kind of limit, ostensibly spatial though it could also be temporal:

the question is whether this whole closed system or world is itself limited—so that there would be something (or nothing) *beyond* it—or whether it is interminable and/or indeterminate, going on and on with no beyond, no transcendent. And while Chi holds for the sceptic's relativism on the first point—there is no *chi*-definition or decidability between beginning and end *within* the world of things/events—on the question of whether this world is itself a limited totality he claims ignorance or undecidability, thus asserting the sceptic's indefiniteness (his ungrounding of limits) on another level of discourse.

But T'ang is not satisfied with Chi's plea of ignorance on this second point, and presses him to give an account of his *not knowing* if the world is limited. Chi's response, which begins by assuming that there is either nothing or being, takes the dialectical form of Mohist disputation. Thus it can be seen as a paradox stating the world is both limited and unlimited—perhaps a dilemma of the logic of infinity, antinomy of pure reason—or as the assertion of an epistemological position on what can be known.

What is nothing is limitless, what is something is inexhaustible. How do I know? But beyond the limitless there is no more limitless and within the inexhaustible there is no more inexhaustible. Beside the limitless nothing else is limitless, beside the inexhaustible nothing else is inexhaustible. From this I know that they are (or there are) the limitless and inexhaustible, without knowing that they (there) are the limited and exhaustible.<sup>35</sup>

Graham interprets this “no more unlimited beyond the unlimited” as a dilemma in the logic of infinity. On the one hand there must be an infinite number of infinities, but then “each” infinity will be bounded; on the other hand there need be only “one” infinity, but then it will be bounded in another sense as a finite, formal unity. Thus he takes Chi's point to be that “there both is and is not infinity”—since if there is there isn't and *vice versa*—and sees this, again, as a proof or perhaps fuller elaboration of Hui Shih's paradox, “South is limited/unlimited.” But I feel Graham's reading here is too narrowly logical, too “sophistical” in a way that the logicians were supposed by the Taoists to have been—though I am arguing that they were not really that way. I think there's a way of interpreting this passage which foregrounds, as I've suggested above, the distinction in levels of discourse:

the logical-metaphysical dilemma of infinity is on the first level, while the second level embodies a dilemma concerning the (un-)limits of our *knowledge* of the question of limits, of undecidability (itself both limited and unlimited).

Suppose we take seriously the notion that this passage from the *Lieh-tzu* (and really from the *Chuang-tzu*) is a sample of Hui Shih's own reasoning or something very close to it—and not just a Taoist parody of it. Then we might see the point to be that finally there is no certain truth or knowledge (sceptical relativism), only “unlimitedness” in the sense of undecidability of the question on a higher level of discourse, or openness of “knowing” (and thinking) the question. Thus “what I know is unlimited” can also mean “my own knowing is unlimited” in the sense of open—to a higher level of reflection on undecidability (of the question of limits), and thus (paradoxically) on the limits of my knowing. With this sort of model in mind consider again Hui Shih's ten points. I'm suggesting this logician takes the relativist/ absolutist double view of meaning *within* the indefinitely extending (inexhaustible) bounds of language because he sees that language itself, as a signifying structure, is split (signifier/signified), and/or that language is an *open-ended series of discourses*, an ever-widening or opening regress of (higher-order) discourses whose *difference* we can never surmount. And this *difference* of language with itself is simultaneously the “unlimited limit” of human perception and thinking—that is, of human language, in which thinking and perception are grounded.

When T'ang asks Chi why/how it is he doesn't know if the spatial directions (*pa fang* 八方, universe, world) have limits, Chi responds, “What is nothing is limitless, what is something is inexhaustible”—so in either case he couldn't know about limits. But T'ang's question here may remind us of Hui Shih's question to Chuang Tzu in “Autumn Floods:” “You're not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?” This question is also that of a sceptical relativist, one well aware of the limits of the human self and of knowledge. Perhaps if Chuang-tzu had here responded by asking his logician friend, “How is it that I don't know about this kind of limit?” then Hui Shih might have responded as did Chi in response to T'ang.

But instead Chuang-tzu plays a Sophist's game: “You asked me *how* I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao.” The Taoist playfully deconstructs the meaning of *an. . .*, “How?” when in fact it's obvious that Hui Shih's question did not at all mean to imply that Hui Shih “already

knew" that Chuang-tzu knew. Here the Taoist, by neglecting the plain sense of the logician's words (or perhaps intentionally "misreading" them?) seems to win the argument (or game) within *his text* and his privileged mode of discourse. But in another context—a "logician's" context, perhaps a scenario closer to that of Chi and T'ang's dialogue with Hui Shih playing Chi to Chuang-tzu's T'ang—I can easily picture the logician coming out on top: not "winning" but cutting away the ground from beneath his opponent with his opening of (the possibility of) an indefinite, regressive series of logical-epistemological discourses.<sup>36</sup>

Finally then I am suggesting an interpretation of the logician Hui Shih as he "appears" within the text of the *Chuang-tzu*: his relative-absolute view of reality is a double view of language grounded in language's own self-difference. We could call this a view of the *relative/absolute* levels of meaning within language (and thus the world, which is encompassed by language), or perhaps also a view of the *limited/unlimited* levels of meaning. For if language (like knowledge and perception) is *self-different* its difference is also its sameness, and its confinement within the inescapable trap of its own limits is also its very opening out, its unlimitedness. Must the logician be limited in the *Chuang-tzu* text to a role in which he calls the Taoist's words *wu yung* 無用, "useless" because they are too big, or deep, for him to understand? Or may we not see the logician as the Taoist's equal, and take seriously his charge that "words" which transcend human language are indeed empty and useless?<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

1. Burton Watson's translation in *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings* (N.Y.: Columbia UP, 1964), "Autumn Floods" 110. I think Hui Shih should have responded at this point: "No, I asked you *Hao* you knew, and don't see how you knew it by standing beside the *how*."
2. A.C. Graham's translation in *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) VI 5 284: "that they were able to make men submit from the mouth but not from the heart was the limitation of the sophists."
3. "External Things" (Watson 140): "The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can throw away the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?"

4. Graham VI 5 283.
5. Graham VI 5 284.
6. Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (MacMillan, 1948) 8, 92.
7. Graham *ibid.*
8. Fung Yu-lan 8, 83.
9. Chan Wing-tsit's translation in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: UP, 1963) 10, 235. Graham *ibid.* has: "What we point out we fail to arrive at, what we arrive at we do not detach."
10. The *liang chien* is in *Chuang-tzu* 25; Graham (II 8, 111) has "double view." The *liang hsing* in *Chuang-tzu* 2 is Watson's (2, 36) "walking two roads" and Graham's (II 2, 54) "Letting both alternatives proceed."
11. Graham VI 5, 283.
12. Fung Yu-lan 8, 83-85.
13. My translation, combining those of Graham *ibid.* Fung 8, 85 and Ware, *The Sayings of Chuang Tzu* (Taipei: Confucius Pub. Co., 1971) 33, 432.
14. Fung Yu-lan 8, 85.
15. Graham in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Taipei: 1986) 343-344: "In Chinese. . . one approaches the thing from outside, from the world which "has" it, in which "there is" it. . . the word *yu* is used primarily of concrete things. So is the word *shih*, 'solid,' 'real' . . . *yu* and *wu* when nominalised become 'what has/that in which there is' and 'what does not have/that in which there is not' . . ." Thus Chinese concepts of "world" and "totality" are perhaps "ontological."
16. Since *ji* can mean temporal as well as spatial increase, why do none of the translators/commentators think Hui Shih might have meant both? The added temporal (4th ?) dimension makes a richer relativistic "frame" or model here. "Thickness in time" . . . . ?
17. Parmenides has the One Being that excludes Non-being; he accuses Heraclitus, whose essential insight is that "All flows" but that the change itself is constant, of the "coming-to-be," though Heraclitus' Logos can also be seen as the simultaneity of Being and Non-being. (Anaximander already had "coming-to-be.")
18. *Ch'ung* and *chin* both mean "limit" in the sense of "exhaustibility" (or paradoxically "filling-and-emptying") rather than in the sense of a formal-logical "line" or "division." See my essay, "Limit and Exhaustibility in the *Questions of T'ang*," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, June 1992. Also see the last section of this essay. I suspect the difference between the Chinese relativistic, *dynamic* concept of "limit" (as "reaching" or "exhaustion") and the Western absolute, *static* concept of "limit" (as "line" or "threshold") may be an essential crux for comparative logic and metaphysics.
19. This "reaching never ends" has been interpreted in terms of Kung-sun Lung's paradox in *Lieh-tzu* 4: "Things never come to naught" (*yu wu pu chin*), Perleberg's translation in *The Works of Kung-sun Lung-tzu* (Hong Kong: Hyperion Press, 1952), Prolegomena 5, 36. Graham in *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle: Open Court, 1989) 91 cites an explanation by Kung-sun Lung's friend: "without pointings-out, you reach them all: what exhausts things there constantly is." This reechoes not only the pointing paradox and Graham's "nominalist" reading of Kung-sun Lung's *Chih Wu Lun*, but also Hui Shih's tenth point, "heaven and earth are one body," and Ch'i's response to T'ang in *Lieh-tzu* 5 (which could be a version of Hui Shih's own argument according to Graham). See the last section of this essay.

20. Graham's comment in *Chuang-tzu* II 2, 53 on Chuang-tzu's (mocking Kung-sun Lung) "Rather than use the meaning to show that 'The meaning is not the meaning,' use what is *not* the meaning": "Chuang-tzu thinks (Kung-sun Lung) was wasting his time; since all disputation starts from arbitrary acts of naming, he had only to pick something else as the meaning of the word, name something else 'horse,' and then for him what the rest of us call a horse would not be a horse." And notice too Graham's comment on p. 60: "Chuang-tzu likes the thought that instead of selecting and approving something as 'it' one may use the word to embrace and approve everything, to say 'Yes!' to the universe."
21. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: UP, 1952, trans. Bodde) Vol. I, 9, 3, 198.
22. Fung *ibid* 199.
23. *Chuang-tzu* 5, Fung's translation *ibid* 198-199.
24. Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, "Autumn Floods" 99.
25. Fung, *History* I, 9, 2, 195: "The *Lu-shih Ch'un Ch'iu* (X XI, 5) says that Hui Shih taught the 'abolition of honorable position' (p. 383), and the *Han-fei-tzu* (ch. 30) says that he 'wished that fighting between the states of Ch'i and Ching would cease (*chuan* 9, p. 4) . . . . Thus Hui Shih, like the Mohists, advocated universal love and opposed war . . . . Chapter 33 of the *Chuang-tzu* does not put him in their school, however, because the Mohists possessed a definite organization, to enter which a person must 'regard their *Chu tzu* as a Sage, want him as his leader and hope to be his successor,' mere preaching of universal love and opposition to militarism were insufficient to make him a Mohist. Hui Shih's doctrine of 'abolition of honorable position' . . . . also seems to be directly opposed to the Mohist doctrine of Agreement with the Superior."
26. Fung, *Short History* 8, 87.
27. On Hui Shih as a Mohist, see note 25 above. The Greek Stoic ethics is essentially the ethics of the stiff upper lip: man must accept the place accorded him in the vast, indifferent cosmos, accept his fate and make the best of it.
28. See note 19 above.
29. Chinese *chin* and *ch'ung*, "inexhaustible," both seem to have this sense of (paradoxically) emptying-and-filling, as does *ying*, "waxing-and-waning" in Lao-tzu's ch. 4: "Tao's well is used yet *pu ying*, not exhausted." These three characters strike me as *aporias*, their meaning (as signs) already split, or deferred. See my essay "Limit and Exhaustibility in the *Questions of T'ang*" in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, June 1992, and note 18 above.
30. Graham takes Kung-sun Lung's "*Chih*-meaning (pointing) is not meaning" to mean: when we try to point out the whole world (indeterminate totality of things) there is no (discrete) "thing" we are pointing out, since no thing *not* pointed out; since we can't point out *any-thing* we can't point, can't "mean." See my essay "Meaning is not Meaning" in the previous *Tamkang Review*.
31. Chad Hansen's "mass noun" hypothesis is adopted by Graham to explain Kung-sun Lung's "A white horse is not a horse" (*Studies* 196-197): "It is an application of his hypothesis that Classical Chinese nouns function like mass nouns rather than the count nouns of Indo-European languages. English "water" denotes the whole or parts of a discontinuous mass. . . . ; "horse" . . . denotes individuals composing a class. . . . But if (Kung-sun Lung) is thinking of a horse as a mass with discontinuous parts similar in shape, and of white as a mass of discontinuous patches of color, then for him a white horse is indeed a part of the former mass combined

with part of the latter . . . . a whole is not one of its parts. . . .” Thus perhaps: “many things” but also “much thing,” and “much world (or “much reality”) . . . . but also “many worlds”?

32. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, trans. Pears & McGuinness) 19-35: “3 A logical picture of facts is a thought. 3.01 The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world. . . . 4 A thought is a proposition with a sense. 4.001 The totality of propositions is language. . . .” While Wittgenstein here is concerned with the relation between his ideal logical language and the reality which it “pictures”—a little like the later Plato’s problem of the relation of subsisting forms to existing things—in his later *Philosophical Investigations* he abandons this ideal logical language in favor of ordinary language, or rather, an indeterminate pattern of loosely related language games.
33. See Graham *Studies* 271 and *Disputers* 80, and Watson *Chuang-tzu* 1, 25 (note).
34. Chan’s translation in *Source Book* 18 B, 312. For a discussion of the whole issue of the logical-metaphysical dilemma of limits and the second-order epistemological paradox, see my “Limit and Exhaustibility in the *Questions of T’ang*” in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, June 1992.
35. Graham, *Disputers* 15, 80.
36. Here I’m “turning the tables” on Chuang-tzu in his dialogue with Hui Shih in chapter 26 (Watson 136-137): “Hui Shih said to Chuang Tzu, “Your words are useless!” Chuang Tzu said, “A man has to understand the useless before you can talk to him about the useful. The earth is certainly vast and broad, though a man uses no more of it than the area he puts his feet on. If, however, you were to dig away all the earth from around his feet until you reached the Yellow Springs, then would the man still be able to make use of it?” “No, it would be useless,” said Hui Shih. “It is obvious, then,” said Chuang Tzu, “that the useless has its use.” But perhaps if he were responding from his own text/game, Hui Shih might say here: “We are first speaking/thinking of the *usefulness* (for support) of the ground, and only then of its ‘uselessness’ when cut away.” Or: “human language is always thus *ungrounding* itself, that is its very nature and *use*.”
37. See the previous note.