Why Is “A White Horse Not a Horse”? A New Perspective on Gongsun Long’s “A Discussion on the White Horse”

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Abstract
This paper attempts a new reading of Gongsun Long’s “Baima lun”, through comparison with the Heidelberg School’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s “Being and Judgement” as a critique of self-consciousness and its judgmental form. It demonstrates that “Baima lun” correspondingly employs a reflectivity, or logic-transcending, anti-foundational perspective of “Being”, in order to undertake an ironical critique of judgment by a judgment as an illustration and confirmation of the epistemological ideas developed in “Zhiwu lun” and “Mingshi lun”. Consequently, based on the GSLZ, this paper proposes a new nominalist approach which differs from that of Hansen. Derived from further elaboration of the Heidelberg School’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s conception of Being, this paper posits that “things”, as read in “Mingshi lun”, are a specific dimension of “Being”, as singular infinity, and “name”, as superior to “zhi” or judgment in the rendering of things as criticized in “Zhiwu lun” and “Baima lun”.

Keywords: Gongsun Long, “A Discussion on the White Horse”, critique of judgment, the Heidelberg School, Hölderlin

Zakaj »beli konj ni konj«? Novi pogledi na Gongsun Longovo »Razpravo o belem konju«

Izvleček
V tem članku se lotevamo nove interpretacije Gongsun Longovega poglavja »Baima lun« (Razprava o belem konju), ki ga primerjamo z interpretacijo heidelberske šole Hölderlinovega dela Bit in sodba, ki predstavlja kritiko samozavedanja in njegove sodbene forme. Članek izpostavi, da ta študija nakazuje refleksivno razumevanje biti, torej takšno, ki presega logiko in vključuje perspektivo, ki biti ne priznava narave osnovne podstat. Namen članka je v stvaritvi ironične kritike sodbe prek sodbe; to služi kot ilustracija in hkrati utemeljitev Gongsunovih epistemoloških idej, ki jih razvija v svojih drugih poglavjih, na primer v »Zhiwu lun« in v »Mingshi lun«.

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I. Introduction

The *Gongsun Longzi* (公孫龍子) (*GSLZ*) remains one of the most mysterious works in the history of Chinese philosophy, while the chapter entitled “Baima lun” (白馬論), remains one of the most famous philosophical debates. The Jesuit Matteo Ricci was the first Western scholar to have interpreted the *GSLZ*. Ricci wished to convert the Chinese people through the dual influences of natural reason and Christianity and believed that a solution to “Baima lun” could be found through application of Aristotelian notions of substance and accident (Zhang 2019). His interpretation, though misleadingly based on the rationalistic trend of Western thought, remained the common tendency of most subsequent scholars.

Similar to the eternal Platonic ideas, Feng Youlan read the “names” (名) of “white”, “horse”, and so on as abstract universals which belonged to the intelligible world, while “things” (物) were read as transient, belonging to the sensible world and opposed to names (Ren and Liu 2019). Firstly, it is generally accepted that “there is no historical background for discovery of such abstract entities” in Chinese philosophy, for according to Hansen (1976) “China was entirely unaware of a closed system of concepts”. Secondly, in “Mingshi lun” (名實論) “things” are considered “real”, and are categorized in the same realm as names. (“A thing is a thing and does not exceed what it is. This should be reality” (物以物其所物/而不過焉/實也) ("Mingshi lun" 2)); “To rectify (the expression of) a thing, is to rectify it by its reality; to rectify it by its reality, is to rectify its name” (其正者/正其所實也/正其所名也) ("Mingshi lun" 6)). Thirdly, abstract universals or Platonic ideas actually belong to “zhi” 指 which is rejected by “Zhiwu lun”, as “zhi” can never correctly depict things (see part III of this article).

Based upon Emil Benveniste’s comparative linguistic approach, Zhang concluded that the claim “A white horse is not a horse” is a result of the specific syntax structure of the Chinese language. As opposed to Western languages that operate with
copulas, since there is no copula “is” in Chinese which calls for predication, this claim can only be read as inclusion and not identity. However, Zhang recognized herself that this reasoning cannot explain the relation between the categories of “shape” and “colour” (Zhang 2019, 4). Relatedly, neither can the reasoning explain the remainder of the “Baima lun” nor relate it to other chapters of the GSLZ. This linguistic approach is misleading, for authors of the *Xunzi* (荀子), the *Zhuangzi* (莊子), and so on,¹ who spoke the same Chinese language as the author of the *GSLZ*, all criticized the *GSLZ* for playing with words without regarding their corresponding reality. This leads to the fact that if the linguistic perspective indeed plays a role, it cannot be counted as decisive.

These studies from a rationalistic, logical or linguistic perspective fragmented the *GSLZ*. Actually, the logical approach functions only as a method of persuasion for presenting the epistemological ideas. Gongsun Long’s fundamental concern should be essentially opposed to the Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction and the law of identity (She 2022).

Hansen’s famous nominalist mass-noun hypothesis regarded “names” in the Chinese language as concrete mass substantives rather than abstract universals (Hansen 1976). This approach tended to reduce the *GSLZ* to its mere materialistic aspects. This aspect is not generally considered an essential feature of Chinese—and especially of pre-Qin—philosophy since its first period. Moreover, not only was the philosophical value of the *GSLZ* reduced to a linguistic one, thus rendering the statement “White horse not horse” a counterintuitive false statement, but neither could Hansen explain the rest of the *GSLZ*.² Finally, the materialistic plane (mass nouns) cannot escape from “zhi” 指 and thus, from realism, which is radically rejected by “Zhiwu lun” (指物論 4), as will be shown in this paper (part III).

From an anti-rationalistic perspective, Rieman (1977) interpreted “Baima lun” as sceptical about linguistic designation while favourable about its practical “use”, compared to Wittgenstein. Thompson (1995) and Schilling (2020, 211) developed the similar idea of linguistic communication. This pragmatic interpretation is an important insight, but it did not allow these scholars to draw the necessary conclusions which would have enabled the interpretation of the remaining parts of the *GSLZ*.

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¹ The early Chinese sages were not necessarily actual existing authors, and in most cases they are more fictitious characters than actual historical people (Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003). Here, Gongsun Long is referred to as the author of the text for the sake of convenience.

² Ren and Liu (2019) following Hansen, attempted to reconcile the mass-noun theory with pro-realist abstract universals. This approach presents the same problem as that of Hansen.
Rieman (1980, 1981) further related the idea of “language use” to the Confucian “rectification of names”. However, the textual evidence for this political interpretation only consists of the very end of “Mingshi lun”: “How perfect were the ancient farsighted kings! They examined names and their corresponding realities and were careful about their designations!” (Perleberg 1952). This claim should be considered an illustration of the epistemological ideas of “Mingshi lun” (She 2022).

Bo Mou made a distinction between a semantic referent, “A white horse is a horse”, and a pragmatic one, “A white horse is not a horse” (Mou 2007) and claimed that the two referents should be complementary to one another as ultimate solutions. However, while this distinction is important for “Baima lun”, there is no sign of Gongsun Long having assigned equal value to the two referents, as his conclusion “A white horse is not a horse” attests to. Gongsun Long’s attitude towards the linguistic and logical (“semantic”) referent is a refutation. This refutation is confirmed through “Zhiwu lun”: “Judgments/designations (指) are what does not exist in the world; things are what does exist in the world. To identify what exists in the world with what does not exist in the world, this is not admissible” (指也者/天下之所無也/物也者/天下之所有也/以天下之所有為天下之所無/未可) (“Zhiwu lun” 4). Here, the linguistic and logical sphere is radically separated from that of “things”. Failing to relate this distinction to “Baima lun”, Mou claimed that Gongsun Long’s “pre-theoretical” solution of “due place actuality” in “Mingshi lun”, cannot be found in the GSLZ, but in the Xunzi (Mou 2020, 42). Nevertheless, it is precisely the refutation of the logical and linguistic sphere (指), which not only constitutes the theme of “Zhiwu lun”, but also that of the GSLZ, that allows for the subsequent elaboration of “names” (名) in “Mingshi lun” as the epistemological remedy for 指, thereby deducing all the qualities of “names” as opposed to the ones of 指 in “Zhiwu lun” (She 2022).

Yiu-ming Fung (2020b, 119–68) regarded 指 in “Zhiwu lun” as similar to Plato’s ontological universals and thus, similarly to Mou, undermining Gongsun Long’s radical critique of the cognitive capacity of 指 (“Zhiwu lun” 4, cited above). Although he highlighted the individual feature of 名 (names) in “Mingshi lun”, he seemed to have confused the separate functions of 指 and 名, and did not

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3 As the GSLZ has found consensus neither in translation nor interpretation, I have provided my own translation, subdivision and comment on each proposition cited in this paper. The Chinese original text is from Perleberg (1952). Although the newest edition (The Mingjia and Related Texts (Johnston and Wang 2019)) is available, both the Daozang and the modern versions are provided with suggested subdivisions of propositions which do not entirely suit my interpretation. However, when compared to the 2019 version, the 1952 version inverted the Guest (the Opponent) and the Host (Gongsun Long). Therefore I changed this order to align to the 2019 version. The rest of the Chinese text follows the 1952 version.
succeed in relating “Zhiwu lun” to “Mingshi lun”. Instead, Fung interprets the terms “horse” (馬) and “white” (白) in “Baima lun” as 指 (universals) rather than as 名 (names) (Fung 2020b, 119–68).

Other commentators view the line “A white horse is not a horse” as the GSLZ exposing a paradox which he was unable to resolve, or a form of sophistry (Suter, Indraccolo, and Behr 2020; Jiang 2020, 301). This would indeed be the conclusion if we take his intention to be the explication of a logical problem. However, the essential divergence between the Opponent and Gongsun Long is precisely that the Opponent argues primarily from a logical perspective of judgment, while Gongsun Long fundamentally argues from an anti-logical concern, although mostly via logical methods. This can be demonstrated as related to the key propositions of “Zhiwu lun” and “Mingshi lun”.

As Gongsun Long “was not understood by any of his contemporaries nor by any subsequent Chinese philosopher until the contact with Western philosophy” (Hansen 1976), it is crucial to engage in a dialogue with the West. However, a new Western approach which differs from all previous mainstream analytical or rationalistic ones is needed. Hölderlin’s relevance lies in the fact that, as a poet, he proposed a philosophical approach which not only radically transcended but was also opposed to most rationalistic, Aristotelian trends in the West. This departure is observable through the understanding of “Being” as radically out of grasp for all “judgments” in the widest sense (judgments which include but are not limited to abstract universals or entities, reflectivity, Platonic ideas, logical set, mass nouns, etc., echoing the radical critique of “zhi” compared to “things” in “Zhiwu lun” (see Part III of this article). On one hand, this anti-logical, anti-foundational approach of Being aligns exceptionally well with the dominant nominalistic character of the pre-Qin philosophy to which the GSLZ belonged, while on the other Hölderlin’s conception of “Being” based on the equally widest semantic range (of which I will distinguish several dimensions upon the Heidelberg School’s interpretation), when related to “things” in “Mingshi lun”, evades the risk of reducing the GSLZ to its mere materialistic aspects (differing from Hansen, see Part III of this article). Consequently, this paper develops a new nominalist approach based on the GSLZ. It reads “things” as a specific dimension of Hölderlin’s “Being” (as singular infinity) and “name” as superior to “zhi” or judgment in the rendering of things, as criticized in “Zhiwu lun” and “Baima lun”. Finally, it bolsters the articulation of “Baima lun” with the theoretical chapters of “Zhiwu lun” and “Mingshi lun”, an undertaking which has been found to be lacking in other approaches.

Therefore, I will propose to read “Baima lun” under the framework of the Heidelberg School’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s critique of self-consciousness and its
judgmental expression in German idealism in the fragment “Being and Judgment”.

In equal parts a critique of Fichte’s foundational principle of self-consciousness (“I am I”) as well as building upon Kant’s identification of thinking and judging (Frank 2004), Hölderlin understands “judgment” not only semantically as “making a judgment about something”, but in the broadest sense, thereby as the “original separation” (Ur-theil) between subject and object in (self-)consciousness and the mere formal reunification of them. Thus, this separation is the basis of our object-oriented cognition in general in opposition to that which is “separated” by judgment, i.e., “Being” (Henrich 1997). In “Being”, subject and object are intimately united, and thus it logically and ontologically transcends judgment and reflectivity and so is not only limited to the materialistic understanding (the realm of objects).

Moreover, what the Heidelberg School does not highlight is that the reunification of subject and object in a judgment, which constitutes its formal structure at the surface of this more essential “separation”, is fundamentally the logical identity of the reflective self-consciousness “I” (the law of non-contradiction). I will put in parallel with this framework the central claim of “Baima lun”. I will attempt to demonstrate that the claim “White horse (is) not horse”, from a similarly expressed interpretation of “Being”, undertakes an ironical critique of judgment. Methodologically, based on my interpretation of judgment in Hölderlin’s sense in contrast to “things” (物) and “name” (名) as I elaborated in a previous paper (She 2022), I will verify the feasibility of my hypothesis of “Baima lun” through a textual analysis.

Although the GSLZ does not use terms such as Being or self-consciousness, the reasons why I consider this approach to be valid are as follows:

First, “Being and Judgment” (Being is inaccessible for judgment) and “Baima lun” (“A white horse is not a horse”) textually appears to show common points of view.

Second, while until now almost all other interpretations remain fragmentary and even contradictory among them, “Being and Judgment” would allow for the interpretation of the core chapter “Zhiwu lun” in relation with “Mingshi lun” and “Baima lun”, as I will subsequently demonstrate.

Third, the failure of other linguistic interpretations leads to the approach based on an idea of self-consciousness, which is an experience that shares a greater, though not as abstract as the aforementioned rationalistic frameworks, generality among different cultures rather than language.4

4 Of course, the approach of self-consciousness also relies on language just as every thought or thesis relies on language. It is the minimum condition for every expression. Based upon this absolute level, it would make sense to differentiate language from consciousness and thus, semantics from facts, on a more sophisticated level, otherwise no expression would be possible.
Fourth, the Heidelberg School’s interpretation of Hölderlin has “developed a position of its own that arguably stands as the most important contribution to a clarification of self-awareness in recent German philosophy” (Zahavi 2007)—a negative approach to the description of the nature of our self-consciousness which transcends any reflective, i.e., judgmental, logical and dualist relation, and thus all the mainstream analytical and rationalistic trends in the West. Although it has long been thought that Chinese philosophy does not use logic and other analytical methods to express its ideas, and the mode behind its conceptualization is essentially different from that in the Western tradition, although some scholars show that the thinking in most philosophical arguments in ancient Chinese philosophy, especially in Later Mohism and the “School of Names”, is comparable to that in the Western (Fung 2020a, 3). Nevertheless and most importantly, ancient Chinese thinkers do not consciously aim at making logical arguments. Their analytical and logical language is mainly for explaining philosophical problems (Fung 2020a, 3), which precisely transcend the expressibility of language and logic (Daoism, the “School of Names”, etc.). In this sense, a suitable Western approach does not aim at imposing abstract ideas or foundations on Chinese philosophical discourse, but rather serves as an attempt to describe the ultimately implicit, ineffable bases of the latter via the Western language mode (which is also modern Chinese language mode), as an allegory of such bases.

In this sense, the Heidelberg School’s approach to self-consciousness—deconstruction of the logical structure of judgment and reflectability in their reading of Hölderlin—would be a suitable perspective amongst the various Western philosophical trends. As “Baima lun” defends its thesis on the grounds of a play on words, its epistemological and ontological value becomes veiled. I thus attempt to demonstrate that the Heidelberg School’s interpretation of Hölderlin does not only provide a complementary justification, but also a theoretical reconstruction of the implicit presuppositions of “Baima lun”, without claiming that Hölderlin would be the only valid reference in the Western tradition.

II. Critique of Judgment in the Heidelberg School’s Interpretation of Hölderlin’s “Judgment and Being”

The excerpt “Judgment and Being” was only published for the first time in the 1960s. After having been restructured by Dieter Henrich, it opened new paths of exploring the problem of self-consciousness in early German idealism: judgment (Urtheil) is the “original separation” (Ur-theil) of subject and object, while Being, their seamless unity. Being, as the original unity between subject and object,
essentially precedes their relation, and therefore can never be identified with an object of knowledge provided in the form of a judgment. As such, we should radically distinguish between any object of knowledge and Being.

This fragment is an intervention in an ongoing philosophical debate of Hölderlin's time. According to his critique of the early Fichte and Schelling, even in case of our self-consciousness (not to mention consciousness of external objects), described by a first principle of judgmental self-identity (“I am I”), it cannot provide this “seamless” ground for itself, and needs to presuppose a “Being” that can no longer be rendered by any form of subject/object dual self-consciousness. For in the form of knowledge based on self-consciousness, the subject is still separated from itself as this object due to the intentionality and unavoidable objectification intrinsic to the very structure of our self-consciousness. As a result, being can only be rendered by a boundary concept “intellectual intuition”, where subject and object are in such a pre-supposed, absolute unity (Henrich 1997; 2004).

… the I is only possible by means of this separation of the I from the I. How can I say: ‘I!’ without self-consciousness ... Hence identity is not a union of object and subject which simply occurred, hence identity is not = to absolute Being. (Hölderlin 1988, 38)

For Hölderlin, judgment only introduces a dualist “original division” of the actual judgment, reflection, dualism or consciousness-transcending Being, into a subject and an object (the object is the subject itself in the case of self-consciousness) and reunifies them in a mere judgmental identity, which is relative and dualist in contrast to its formally pretended absoluteness, Being. Judgment is thus finite, mediated and dualist by its structure and can never render Being in its totality.

Henrich's student, Manfred Frank, reading “Objekt” in the fragment not only as that of the object-oriented knowledge in the widest sense, but also as predicate, emphasizing the semantic apprehension of the separating nature of judgment (Frank 2004), analytically expanded Henrich's interpretation (She 2022): first, the dual form of judgment dividing the expression into a subject and a predicate, contradicts its content. On the level of content, a judgment should present not a separation, but the unity of subject and object (“Being” of the subject with necessarily more than one predicate). Second, the predicate as concept only provides a partial image of the subject which is in fact an intuition. The predicate picks out only a single possibility among all the characteristics that the intuition of the “Being” of the subject possesses. For example, “Socrates is a philosopher”. Here, “philosopher” is not sufficient to describe the integrity of the intuitive “Being” of Socrates, because it is only one attribute among all the potential attributes of it.
In the relation of subject and predicate, judging is the relativizing of the original Absolute position of “Being”, separating the inseparable. Even in the particular case of the self-consciousness articulated in the judgement “I am I”, there is also differentiation; an original division separates the I as subject and the I as object/predicate, otherwise self-consciousness would be inconceivable, as Hölderlin noted. In other words, what is intended in the judgment is the absolute bond of subject and object, whilst the form of the judgment consists in separating these non-separable terms. Judgment is only a relative identity, while Being should be an absolute unity. Being cannot be grasped conceptually, for, as according to Kant, to think is to judge and to judge is to differentiate (Frank 1997).

This leads to the distinction between the object-oriented act of (self-)consciousness and the non-objective intuition in which Being is self-evident or self-aware. Hölderlin names this “intellectual intuition”. It is immediate and places no distance between itself and the object of its consciousness, even if this object is itself. Awareness of this original Being is neither conceptual nor judgmental, since what is known through concepts is only seized mediately (according to Kant) in a fundamental separation (Frank 2004).

Expanding the Heidelberg School’s interpretation, Hölderlin’s conception of “judgment” as the “original separation” between subject and object in (self-)consciousness includes object-oriented knowledge in the widest sense, such as semantic judgments, perceptions (which are never pure in themselves but also already imply the separation between the observer and the object of perception, and thus, conceptualities and judgments), conceptualizations, designations, syntheses, associations, signifiers, symbols, signs and so on, as well as actions. However, compared to the other texts of the GSLZ “Baima lun” is a discussion of the validity of linguistic claims and mostly centres on the semantic dimension of “judgment”, and I will mainly refer to Frank’s interpretation for the elucidation of this dialogue.

What the Heidelberg School has not highlighted is the fact that since “Judgment and Being” belongs to Hölderlin’s earlier texts, its critique is deepened and extended to an existential dimension in his later theoretical works. The separation of self-consciousness from Being is described as “the Tragic” of human subjectivity in challenging fate in his “Remarks” (She 2016). This draws the dimension of action into the scope of Hölderlin’s critique of self-consciousness and adds an ontological aspect to the epistemological interpretation of the Heidelberg School. The aspect of action also finds its correspondence in “Baima lun”.

5 In contrast, “Jianbai lun” centres on the perceptive dimension of “judgment”, whilst “Zhiwu lun” centres on judgment in the theoretical sense.
III. Further Elaboration of Hölderlin’s “Being” in Relation to Gongsun Long’s “Thing” and the GSLZ

Hölderlin, after already in the throes of a mental disorder, mysteriously described a concrete expression for this subject/object union in his later texts. Nevertheless, we can attempt to distinguish several dimensions of it based on the opposite features of judgment as already analysed by the Heidelberg School. In the statement “Socrates is a philosopher”, the narrow focus on one particular predicate (… is a philosopher) is based on the abstract sphere of the logical identity of consciousness, where the grammatical subject (Socrates) is separated from the predicate or object, as Socrates’ “being” is not exhausted by the single concept of “philosopher” (Dimension 1). As we become aware of Socrates’ other, equally valid, potential predicates (he is also a man, citizen, cynic, not good-looking, etc.), we begin to transcend this single predicate. Our perception and knowledge of “Socrates” expands from the abstract to the physical and material. In this dimension, subject/object separation and logical re-identification are always present, as even in their entirety these concepts/judgments/definitions/predicates are insufficient in describing the totality of Socrates’ being. Namely, they cannot be absolutely identified nor fuse with the totality of Socrates’ being, and thus the logical bond linking the subject and object continues to exist as judgments (Dimension 2). This is the apprehension of reality/things/beings as individuals (“shapes” such as Socrates, horse, etc., which are individualities distinguished one from another by their materialistic boundaries and individualistic features).

Consequently, we come to discover that the amount of possible predicates, or attributes of Socrates, must necessarily be infinite. In other words, Socrates no longer possesses a human, materialistic boundary, and thus a “shape”. As the single-intended predicate of Socrates expands infinitely, it progressively merges with the infinite predicates/objects that exist. Therefore, as it merges with all predicates/objects, there is no predicate/object to which it is not connected (the being of Socrates becomes infinity itself, and this paper names this quality “Socratesness”, Dimension 3). As the subject disappears and merges with objects that have become infinite, the logical bond whereupon a specific predicate/object (or a series of specific predicates/objects) is attached to a subject as exists within a judgment, is finally broken. This dimension transcends the dualistic, materialistic, individualistic one and enters a quantum realm where every object is existentially (not logically) connected with all others.6 It is from this point that the realm of Being, in Hölderlin’s sense as seamless subject-object union, begins.

6 Similar to the hypothesis of the Unified Field where there is no abstract separation between the knower (Observer) and the object known (Observed).
Dimension 3 is distinguished from a universal, a concept of set, a mass noun (Hansen, “white stuff”, “horse stuff”) or a Platonic idea of abstract entity. Ultimately, the latter cannot escape from being judged, as they all possess specific definitions/predicates which would distinguish them from other universals/sets/masses nouns or Platonic abstract entities. For example, the universal/Platonic idea of a “human-being” is distinguished from that of an animal through the definitions, predicates or judgments we attribute to it, e.g. definitions delineating the human or animal “boundary” (“shape” 形 in “Baima lun”) or “essence”. “Horse stuff” (Hansen) is still defined by the species “horse” and the material “stuff”; “white stuff” by the colour “white” and the material “stuff”. In contrast, as Dimension 3 escapes from all predicates/judgments, it is unselectively related to infinity/all predicates/objects. It becomes an unbounded, concrete, ineffable, singular, ever-changing, trans-individual, almost celestial apprehension and awareness, and thus radically predicate/language-transcending. In this sense, it better fits with the general nominalist background of the pre-Qin period. For example, “horseness” refers to colour, weight, species, temperament, race, freedom, meadow, knight, war, and so on, infinitely transcending the “shape” that is “horse”, connecting to infinite beings. Relatedly, “whiteness” refers to snow white, light grey, ashen, ivory, wedding gown, Casablanca, innocence, horse, sun, hospital, clouds, beginning, etc., infinitely transcending the “colour” white and connecting to infinite beings. “Whiteness-horseness” at once refers to both of these infinite series and more (see interpretation of “Baima lun” prop. 10–11).

Finally, the cognizing “I” (the logical identity in which self-consciousness is separated from itself) which underlies all judgments and always possesses subjective tendency and narrowness derived from the specific predicate, or series of specific predicates, intended by the expresser (“I”) of the judgment, is also dissolved by the infinite expansion of its objects/predicates. In other words, the subject also infinitely expands itself and finally merges with its infinite objects/predicates. An infinite, unitary, non-objectal, non-intentional awareness is born (Dimension 4). Its scope transcends subjective, dualistic, object-oriented (self-)consciousness in its various forms. This final, unitary cognitive dimension is not explicit according to the textual evidence of the GSLZ.

In many aspects, “zhi” 指 is comparable to judgment as understood in the widest sense by Hölderlin as separation between subject and object. I have already attempted to posit this hypothesis and verify its feasibility through a detailed textual analysis of “Zhiwu lun” together with “Mingshi lun” (She 2022), and I will briefly

7 The Heidelberg School reinterpreted Fichte’s absolute self-consciousness as this non-objectal, pre-reflective self-awareness (Henrich 1982). Here, I have provided a more concrete and expanded description of their notion via the example of Hölderlin.
present the general points here. “Zhiwu lun” shows that there is a paradox between “zhi”/judgment and things: although the entirety (of our perception and knowledge) of things is based on “zhi”/judgments, judgments can in no way be identified with the things/reality that they judge: “Things are all about judgments, but judgments are not what they judge/judgments are non-judgments” (物莫非指/而指非指) (“Zhiwu lun” 1). “Judgment is not (in itself) non-judgment, however, when a judgment is considered as judging things, it becomes non-judgment” (指非指也/指與物/非指也) (ibid. 16). “Moreover, judgment entails already in itself its own deconstruction (its own “non-judgment”), does it (judgment) need to relate itself to things in order to be judgment at all?” (且夫指/固自為非指/奚待於物/而乃與為指) (ibid. 19). While judgment, with its separating, dual nature, is neither absolutely fallible nor valueless in itself—for although “philosopher” cannot encompass all of Socrates’ qualities, it provides nevertheless one possible depiction of his infinite unity—it is a wrong (非指, non-judgement) only as long as it is measured by its goal: things in their inseparable unity.

The fallacy of “zhi” has nothing to do with things, since things “cannot be judged” (不為指) (ibid. 10) in themselves anyway. In their nature, things simply exist and are not predicated through the human mind, even though they always appear to us in a judgemental form—the realm of our perception and knowledge in general is always conditioned by judgments: “There is nothing which is not judged (by us)” (非有非指) (ibid. 9). “[Things] cannot be judged. However, if we still identify them with judgments, this is doubling (兼) the unjudgeable nature of things” (不為指/而謂之指/是兼不為指) (ibid. 11). I more we attempt to judge things (via logico-linguistic methods), the more we find that things are far from being identical with our depiction of them—judgements can never exhaust the infinite unity of things. The fallacy and paradox of “zhi” inherently lies in its own structure: the contradiction between its dual, separating form (between a subject and an object) and its unitary content, its intended absoluteness, fullness and unity of Being (指與物/非指也, (ibid. 16)). This inadequacy in representing the seamless unity of things without objectifying, predicating and thus separating them, is the inherent paradox of “zhi”/judgement. Thus “zhi” as “judgment” is self-deconstruction in nature (固自為非指, (ibid. 19)), a form of irony.

“Things are Heaven and Earth and what they produce” (天地與其所產焉/物也)
“A thing is a thing and does not exceed what it is. This is reality” (物以物其所物/
Gongsun Long views things in terms of nature, as the products of “Heaven and Earth”, and in this sense they are opposed to the fictive products of the human mind, “zhi”. This is the right “place” (位) (“Mingshi lun” 3) of things and why only “things” can be considered “reality” (實).

Only things are reality (實) and radically transcend “zhi”: “Judgments/designations (指) are what does not exist in the world; things are what does exist in the world. To identify what exists in the world with what does not exist in the world, this is not admissible” (“Zhiwu lun” 4). “If there were no things to be judged in the world, who would claim that things were non-judged? If there were no things in the world, who would call them judged?” (使天下無物指/誰徑謂非指/天下無物/誰徑謂指) (“Zhiwu lun” 17). It is also worth noting that without things any attempt at judging or not logically becomes meaningless. Understood in the widest sense, the basic form of our perception and cognition, “zhi”/judgment, also includes universals, Platonic ideas, concepts of set and material nouns, as they still unavoidably possess specific characterizations/definitions/predicates, and thus separations and judgments. Consequently, “zhi”/judgment, i.e., universals, Platonic ideas, concepts of set (logical identity), and material nouns are deconstructed compared to things. This deconstruction of “zhi”/judgment and its relationship with things is the theme of “Zhiwu lun” (She 2022), and corresponds to the nominalist background of the pre-Qin period.

A thing is everything opposed to a judgment (“Zhiwu lun” 4). If things are understood as radically transcending judgments, they belong to the realm of Being as Dimension 3. Consequently, a thing is not an abstract universal, a Platonic idea of an abstract entity, a concept of set, nor a material noun, for they still have definitions – they are being judged and belong to the fictive realm of “zhi”.

“Mingshi lun” explores the relation between name and reality/things, which confirms our interpretation of the relation between “zhi” and things in “Zhiwu lun”. Only things are reality (“Mingshi lun” 2). Reality’s place (位) is full (不曠) (ibid. 3) and does not exceed what it is (ibid. 2)—it consists of infinite possibilities of predicates and is not dualistically segmented by only one of them (Dimension 3). Only this fullness corresponds to reality’s “place” and rectification (正) (ibid. 4). “To rectify the non-rectified with the rectified and to doubt the (already) rectified with the rectified” (以其所正/正其所不正/疑其所正) (ibid. 5). “Zhi”/judgment as understood in the widest sense would be that which is non-rectified, as it “exceeds” (過) (ibid. 2) the right place of the thing which should be an infinite,
intuitive, all-encompassing, unitary apprehension, and is instead “displaced” to the secondary, “wrong” place of the predicate/object (所位非位) (ibid. 4)\(^{10}\). As such, we should “leave the wrong place that it occupies, occupying its rightful place, makes it rectified/right (正)” (出其所位非位/位其所位焉/正也)” (ibid. 4). We should leave the wrong place of the single abstract predicate of a judgment in favour of a return to the original place of the thing in its infinite possibilities of predicates and unitary fullness.

In order to rectify the non-rectified/”zhi”, we cannot rely on the non-rectified itself. In order to justify any judgment, we need another judgment of a higher order, the validity of which requires a third judgment of a higher order, \textit{ad infinitum}. In order to break the chain of infinite regress, the end of this justification—the thing—can only be an intuitive, infinite apprehension, which stands for its own validity and requires no further justification/predicate/judgment/logico-linguistic link. For example, only the infinite intuition of “whiteness-horseness” is capable of functioning as an absolute standard of knowledge applicable to the measuring of the incomplete, one-sided, abstract knowledge provided by the predicate “horse” in the judgment “A white horse is a horse”. A different predicate (in a new judgment) can in no way deconstruct the predicate “horse”, for it would be just as incomplete and rootless as the predicate “horse”. Likewise, only the “rectified” can doubt the “only seemingly rectified”. Apprehending the fullness of meaning behind the name “horse” does not equate to the predicate “horse” in the tautological judgment “A horse is a horse”. The fullness of the meaning of “horseness”, would also be overshadowed by the abstract predicate “horse” as well, for if we compare the poorness of the latter to the incessant memories, imagination and feeling that the name “horse” could simply evoke (the meaning of horseness), it becomes clear that tautology is not rectification.

“Judgments do not exist in the world. This arises from the idea that things have their own names and cannot be judged” (天下無指者/生於物之各有名/不為指也) (“Zhiwu lun” 10). Once the identification between “zhi” and thing is rendered moot, name becomes a superior method of rendering things/reality than “zhi”. As the reality of the thing transcends any possibility of judgment as understood in the widest sense, it can only be an infinite, non-predicative apprehension provided by its name. The evocation of the “name” of each thing (known as the strict one-name-one-reality correspondence) could, to some extent, escape from the radical subject/object segregation and the logical re-identification of them in a judgment. Instead of saying “Socrates is X”, or even “Socrates is Socrates”, which still remains judgmental (tautology)—and thus in all cases our holistic

\(^{10}\) See footnote 13.
Apprehension and intuition of Socrates' infinite features would be hindered and overshadowed by the specific predicate in the judgment—it is sufficient to “call” the name of Socrates and nothing else. This serves to avoid the risk of judging it with a predicate (of building a logical bond). In this way, we would have the chance to freely feel, recall, imagine and intuit all the possibly ineffable, unbounded qualities of “Socratesness” behind this evocation of his name, without having to build any logical bond which would only serve to separate and segment this infinite, inseparable whole by a specific predicate/judgment. In this sense a name is no longer a concept, a universal, a mass noun, a Platonic abstract idea, a logical set, or a predicate, but instead acts similarly to a “mantra”, which symbolically suggests an infinity which linguistic means are incapable of directly representing.

Rectification of names means to break any judgmental expression—where two “names” are logically combined—into separate names, so that each name would be an independent window through which infinity is perceived as a concrete, un-classifiable, non-conceptual, non-predicative, ineffable, unbounded singularity (what “separates” the “whiteness” of the stone from its “hardness”, “Jianbai lun”). However, how can infinity—the connection with all objects—be singular? Is it not rather homogenously infinite everywhere? An abstract universal (a Platonic idea, a mass noun, etc.) only presents a false/abstract infinity, as it still contains specific predicates/judgments and thus is only a logical set. In contrast, infinity as defined in Dimension 3 and confirmed via the GSLZ is an absolutely ineffable, incommensurable experience. Therefore, the “infinities” provided by different names are not homogenous. Instead, by the very definition of infinity, they are all necessarily singularities. True infinity is necessarily singular, while true singularity is necessarily infinite. This is a singular infinity.

“Once names (of things) have been rectified, (our apprehension of) each thing would be only about or limited to itself and be separated from each other” (其名正則唯乎其彼此焉) (ibid., 7). The judgment “Socrates (white horse) is a philosopher (horse)” should be broken into the “names” of “Socrates” (white horse) and “philosopher (horse)”, so that these names point to the realities of “Socratesness (whiteness-horseness)/philosopherness (horseness)” in their singular infinity. In this way they are presented in contrast to the judgmental state, whereby “Socratesness” (whiteness horseness) is not “only about itself”, apprehended in its infinite possibilities of predicates, but only entangled with the abstract, logical set of philosopher (horse) in a judgment.

“Calling ‘that’ and ‘that’ is not limited at/not only about ‘that’, this is not the right way of calling ‘that’” (謂彼/而彼不唯乎彼/則彼謂不行) (ibid. 8). “Taking (當) it as what it is not, this is chaos” (其以當不當也/不當而亂也) (ibid. 10). Therefore,
to apprehend the reality about a thing we should simply call (謂) its name and lin-
ger in that infinite feeling evoked by this name (行彼) (ibid. 11), without logically
linking it to another name which functions as its predicate. When we take Socrates
(white horse) as a philosopher (horse), this is making the judgment “Socrates (white
horse) is a philosopher (horse)”. The two terms concerned are not absolutely iden-
tical, as an infinity (Socratesness/whiteness-horseness) is being reduced to a logi-
cal abstraction (philosopher/horse). “Taking that for this, and taking this and that,
this is not admissible” (此彼/而此且彼/不可) (ibid. 13). Taking philosopher/horse
(“that”) for Socratesness/whiteness-horseness (“this”), taking Socratesness/white-
ness-horseness (“this”) and philosopher/horse (“that”), this is making the judge-
ments “Socrates (white horse) is a philosopher (horse)”—not admissible.

As all our perception and knowledge cannot avoid being based on judgments,
they are rootless. The logical link in the judgment is ultimately arbitrary, since it
randomly selects only one predicate amongst the infinite predicates of a thing. So
our perception and knowledge can be said to be chaotic and radically separated
from the reality of things (ibid. 10). This is a typical nominalist position—philos-
opher (horse) is just an abstract name based on logical identity and in no way can
depict whichever reality it wishes to depict.

“A name must correspond to its reality. Knowing to what extent this is not this
and to what extent this is not at its place, we would not call (this this)” (夫名實/
謂也/知此之非此也/知此之不在此也/則不謂也) (ibid. 14) “zhi” would be the
situation in which “this is not this” and “not at its place”. A philosopher (horse)
does not equal Socratesness (whiteness-horseness) and thus, should not be “called”
such via a judgment.

A detailed articulation of these texts and verification of the possibilities of these hy-
potheses will be made in the textual analysis of “Baima lun”.

IV. Textual Analysis of “Baima lun”

Guest: “May we say that a white horse is not a horse?” Host: “We may
say so.”

白馬非馬/可乎/曰/可. ("Baima lun" 1)

Guest: “Why?” Host: “Horse designates a shape; white designates a col-
our. What designates a colour does not designate a shape. This is why a
white horse is not a horse.” 曰/何哉/曰/馬者/所以命形也/白者/所以
命色也/命色者非命形也/故曰/白馬非馬. (ibid. 2)
At the beginning of the debate, Gongsun Long presents what may be considered the most extravagant argument in the eyes of a Western reader. He separates the concept of a white horse into “shape” and “colour” which are actually two “names” (名, “Mingshi lun”), in order to persuade the Opponent of the distinction between a white horse and a horse. However, upon further analysis, it will be possible to reconstruct the presupposition of this claim as it relates to “Mingshi lun” and “Zhiwu lun”.

Guest: “If there is a white horse, we cannot say that there is no horse. If we cannot say that there is no horse, then is a white horse not a horse?”
[Meaning the positive: a white horse should equal a horse!]
曰/有白馬不可謂無馬也/不可謂無馬者/非馬也. (“Baima lun” 3)

Guest: “If there is a white horse, this means that there is a horse. How can (the qualification of) white make the horse non-horse?
有白馬為有馬/白之非馬/何也. (ibid. 4)

The position of the Opponent can be resumed as “A white horse is a horse”. He argues from the perspective of the judgment and reflective (self-)consciousness, in which the bond between subject and predicate is essentially a logical synthesis of identity, and follows the principle of inclusion.

Semantically, judging represents the act of attributing a predicate to a subject of intuition in a dual, logical form. It is true that the copula “be”, which belongs to one of the possibilities of the predicate, is bypassed in a judgment in Chinese due to the specific syntax of the language. However, the separation of subject and object theorized in “Judgment and Being” and the minimal intentionality of the speaker as reflectivity and (self-)consciousness based on this fundamental separation exist all the same, only to a weaker degree. As such, a judgment in the Chinese language and the underlying (self-)consciousness share the basic characteristics of their Western counterparts and remain a starting-point in the cognition of the ancient Chinese (She 2022).

Frank's interpretation of Hölderlin (Frank 2004) stands in contrast to the Guest's position: what a judgment intends to refer to in its content, is the subject considered in its absolute, seamless unity, the intuition of its “Being”, the integrity of its existence without conceptual separation between itself and its object. However, in its form, judging a thing means depriving the subject of its original identity, separating it into a subject and a predicate and reuniting the two only formally. Judgment thus represents a partial capturing of what was an inseparable unity of Being and can never be absolutely identified with the Being of the thing. The reality of the
thing actually possesses much more possibilities of predicates (‘fullness’ (不曠) of its ‘reality’ (實), “Mingshi lun” 3) compared to the one-sidedness of the single characteristic provided by judgment, ergo the single predicate in the judgment.

Expanding Frank’s analysis, for example: Socrates is a philosopher. Although “philosopher” has been “correctly” attributed to Socrates intuited in his integral aliveness, the abstract concept of “philosopher” does not encompass and even dogmatically veil other possible predicates/objects we might as well attribute to him, such a man, a citizen, the ineffable meaning of his life, the incessant changes he underwent during his life time—what connected him with all objects, etc. The aggregate of all of Socrates’ attributes should be a mathematically infinite set, the elements of which are logically independent from one another. The existence per se of Socrates occupying the subject position surpasses in quality the determinate meaning of any single predicate, the totality of a finite set of predicates and any logically organized predicative construction, all of which are based on the law of non-contradiction—one can never be absolutely judgmental about Socrates in his Being (“Socratesness”). From the perspective of the one-sided narrative and logical identity of judgment, the reality of the subject should be in a state of perpetual flux, polyperspectivity, singularity and infinite cosmic transformation. The formal claim of truth of judgment would be illusory (曠), partial and ephemeral compared to its content, the “Being” of the subject in its totality which is infinite and incommensurable.

It is for this reason that Hölderlin radically separates the sphere of “Being” from that of judgment. Judgment is that which is deprived of real existence and separated from the world of “Beings”. Semantically, this is because judgment is only a formal synthesis of the separation between two parts of an originally inseparable unity. The identity it provides, or rather constructs, is a logical, but not an absolute one, and thus, can only be considered a fiction of human mind, radically separated from the “Being” of the thing—its reality—that it judges.

指 in “Zhiwu lun” also belongs to a radically different sphere compared to that of “things”: “指 are what do not exist in the world; things are what (do) exist in the world. To identify what exists in the world with what does not exist in the world, this is not admissible” (指指也者/天下之所無也/物也者/天下之所有也/以指天下之所有為天下之所有為/未可) (“Zhiwu lun” 4). There is thus a possibility of comparing 指 to (self-)consciousness as the separation between subject and object expressed in the judgmental form, and 物 (things, “Mingshi lun” 1, 2; “Zhiwu lun” 4) to “Being”. These presuppositions have been closely tested through all the

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11 Professor Manfred Frank led me to this term when I described the phenomenon of Chinese landscape painting to him.
propositions of “Zhiwu lun” (She 2022), and now they also need to be evaluated through “Baima lun”. There are several reasons for these presuppositions:

First, 指 designates “what does not exist in the world”—it is ontologically secondary to “things”, which are “what (do) exist in the world”. In other words, only things are realities. In terms of Hölderlin, the ontological priority of Being over (self-)consciousness is expressed by the characterization of “things” as realities/existence/fullness (實, 不曠, “Mingshi lun” 2, 3) and that of 指 as non-existence/absence/emptiness. 指 could then be understood as a “fiction”, a “possibility” of our self-consciousness. It reappears in “Baima lun” as the hidden theme of the discussion on “A white horse (is) not a horse”.

Second, in Chinese 指 means “pointing at something outside of oneself” (its ancient form is 旨, meaning intention, aim, or purpose). This attests to the dual structure of judgment as conceived by Hölderlin—the intentionality of (self-)consciousness to step out of its initial “Being” (“position” 位), “Reality is reality, not an absence. This is its place” (實以實其所實12/不曠焉/位也) (“Mingshi lun” 3) to dualistically reach for a “goal”, a predicate, an object of knowledge or of action outside.

Third, for Hölderlin only Being is reality, for it enables self-consciousness and reflectivity. “Zhiwu lun” makes the same radical distinction between the realms of “things” and that of 指. As such it also seems to characterize things as transcending the fictional construction of human thought—dualism and reflectivity.

Finally, “A thing is a thing and does not exceed what it is. This should be its reality” (物其所物/而不過焉/實也) (“Mingshi lun” 2). This attests to the fact that things transcend judgments, for only when a thing is judged and attributed to by a predicate can it be said to “exceed” (過) its reality. The “thing” judged would then be interfered with by human reflectivity and displaced from the “place” (位) (“Mingshi lun” 3), reality and “fullness” (不曠) of its unbounded “Being” to a single, external object (a predicate), “out of its place” (所位非位) (“Mingshi lun” 4), thus “exceeding” its nature (“Reality is reality, not an absence. This is its place” (實以實其所實/不曠焉/位也) “Leaving the wrong place that it occupies, occupying its rightful place, makes it rectified/right” (出其所位非位/其所位焉/正也) (“Mingshi lun” 4; She 2022)). Semantically, this can be described by the dual structure of judgment A is A/B.

12 實以實其所實: the same structure as 物以物其所物 and 所位非位 (footnotes 9 and 13). The first 實 is a noun and the subject (the “reality”), the second 實 is the main verb of the expression, the third 實 is the verb of the subordinate clause. Literally, “Reality realizes what it realizes”, “Reality is reality” (She 2022).

13 In 所位非位, the first 位 is a verb, the second 位 is a noun—“to occupy” the “wrong position”. 出其所位非位/其所位焉/正也, leaving the “wrong place” that it “occupies” equals being “rectified” (She 2022).
Moreover, “Baima lun”, “Zhiwu lun” and “Mingshi lun” belong to the tradition of the Chinese philosophy of language, and specifically that concerned with the relationship between “name” (名) and “reality” (實). Although within the philosophy of language dating back to ancient Greece there is a difference between this relationship and its Western counterpart, Chinese tradition considers whether names are consistent with things, while Western tradition considers whether propositions are consistent with facts. From the perspective of consciousness however, there is 指, which in the widest sense can be understood as a separation between consciousness and reality. “Zhi”/指, even though defined according to two different semantic expressions, exists in both traditions and constitutes the common ground upon which this relationship lies in each of them.

Understood as a critique of this semantic dimension of judgment (指), “Baima lun” could be related to “Zhiwu lun”, “Mingshi lun”, and so on via a theoretical continuity:

Host: “If you only require a horse, then brown and black ones all can meet the requirement. If what you require is a white horse, brown and black ones cannot.”

曰/求馬/黃黑馬皆可致/求白馬/黃黑馬不可致. (“Baima lun” 5)

Host: “Suppose white horses were horses; in this case, what is sought would be one and the same.”

使白馬乃馬也/是所求一也/所求一者/白者不異馬也. (ibid. 6)

Host: “If what is sought is not different, then in the case of brown or black horses, how is it that some are admissible and some are not? That admissible and not admissible contradict each other is clear. This is why brown and black horses are the same, and can meet the requirement for horse, but not that for white horse. This is evident for claiming that a white horse is not a horse.”

所求不異/如黃黑馬/有可有不可/何也/可與不可/其相非明/故黃黑馬一也/而可以應有馬/而不可應有白馬/是白馬之非馬/審矣. (ibid. 7)

The sphere of judging and (self)-consciousness (指) is only “one and the same”—a formal and logical identity. It depends on the existential sphere of “Being” in Hölderlin’s sense. Even though implicit in “Baima lun”, the theoretical reason why a white horse and a horse are “one and the same” is because it is based on the reflectivity of our dualistically positing and separating (self-)consciousness and its judgmental form presupposing the logical self-identity of the (self-)consciousness.
of the speaker. Its form is definitively neither existential nor absolute, and thus unrelated to concrete, infinite “things” (the sphere of “Being”).

Requiring (求) a horse is the demarcation between the sphere of judgment (identity in language and logic) and that of action. It constitutes the divergence between the arguments of the Opponent and that of the Host. In praxis and not logically, when someone requires a white horse and is provided with a brown or black horse, if we insist on the logical principle that a white horse is “whichever” horse, so something “not different”, there would be a contradiction, as when it comes to brown and black horses, then “some would meet your requirement and some not”. Here, the Host uses a logical term (xiangfei 相非, contradict) to ironically describe the deconstruction of the logical principle through the sphere of action. The condition of the validity of brown and black horses belongs only to the logical inclusion. Its requirement would not necessarily be met in real life. Consequently, a white horse cannot be mingled with the action of requiring a horse. On a purely theoretical and logical level, not only white horses but also brown or black horses all equate to “horse”. However, it is only when we make this particular “requirement” in real life, pragmatically, that the equation is rendered invalid: “If you only require a horse, then brown and black ones all can meet the requirement. If what you require is a white horse, brown and black ones cannot” (“Baima lun” 5). Although we can logically say that a white horse is a horse, in real life the demand for a white horse is more precise than a horse of any random colour would provide.

If this pragmatic sphere which appears in “Baima lun” stands in opposition to the semantic sphere of 指 (judgments) in “Zhiwu lun”, where preferential use seems apparent, is this the intent of the GSLZ? What is the status of this pragmatic sphere in the GSLZ, compared to 名 (names) and 物 (things) in “Mingshi lun”? Interpreting the GSLZ according to this pragmatic sphere is a view shared by various commentators (Rieman 1977; Thompson 1995; Mou 2007; Fung 2020b; Schilling 2020, etc.). Nevertheless, from Hölderlin’s perspective, in the realm of action, the “separation” between subject and object is still present as “judgment”, since the agent only strives (qiu 求) to be in fusion with a “Being”, which by the very definition of action, lies outside the agent. The pragmatic sphere is a judgment which shifts from Dimension 1 to 3.

This is confirmed by “Mingshi lun”. Through action, although it is sufficient to reveal the deficiency of the logical sphere, it would be equally difficult to totally “partake in” the infinite reality of the thing (“行彼”, “Mingshi lun” 11, Dimension 3) and be “only about the thing” (唯乎此, “Mingshi lun” 11). The implicit foundation for action is equally the sphere of “Being” for Hölderlin and “things” for Gongsun Long. The GSLZ’s position for transcending the dual character of 指
lies instead in what “Mingshi lun” expects of 名 (“names”, She 2022). This will be confirmed by the rest of the debate.

Guest: “Then a horse with colour is not a horse. In the world there are no uncoloured horses. Are there no horses in the world then?”

曰/以馬之有色為非馬/天下非有無色之馬也/天下無馬/可乎. (“Baima lun” 8)

Host: “Horses naturally are coloured, therefore there are white horses. If horses were uncoloured, we would have only horse and not white horse. This is why a white horse is not a horse.”

曰/馬固有色/固有白馬/使馬無色/有馬如己耳/安取白馬/故白者非馬也. (ibid. 9)

The identity in the claim “White horse (is) horse” is valid only in a partial, logical and semantic sense, not absolutely. The perspective of the bond between the reality of the “white horse” and the predicate “horse” as logical identity has always been the position of the Opponent.

Host: “(The word compound) ‘white horse’ means ‘horseness’ plus ‘whiteness’. On one side, there is ‘horseness’, on the other side, there is ‘whiteness-horseness’ (And ‘horseness’ is not absolutely the same as ‘whiteness-horseness’)\(^{14}\). This is why I say ‘A white horse is not a horse’.”

白馬者/馬與白也/馬與白馬也/故曰/白馬非馬也. (“Baima lun” 10)

Guest: “Horse without white is horse. White without horse is white. Horse, when combined with white, forms the compound, white horse. White and horse are compatible (相與) with one another (in the form of the compound ‘white horse’). However, if we take white and horse to be incompatible with one another and take them to be (separate) names (white/horse), this is not admissible. This is why it is not admissible to say that ‘A white horse is not a horse’.”

曰/馬未與白為馬/白未與馬為白/合馬與白/復名白馬/是相與/以不相與為名/未可/故曰白馬非馬未可. (ibid. 11)\(^{15}\)

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\(^{14}\) I have directly translated the language of the Host similar to the term “Socratesness” that I have defined.

\(^{15}\) There are still contentious issues in the translation of prop. 11 (See Johnston and Wang 2019, 280, note 449). However, the issues in all these translations may arise from the lack of punctuation between 是相與 and 以不相與為名. This paper proposes to make this punctuation and has provided a new coherent translation of prop.11.
Since the argument of action (5‒7) is not comprehensive to the Host, in (10), he provides a second argument. (10) is the answer to (2) and the true argument of “Baima lun”, and it links “Baima lun” to “Mingshi lun” and “Zhiwu lun”.

To no one’s surprise, the Opponent finds the Host’s way of dividing the compound term “white horse” into two “names”, in order to make “white horse” different from “horse”, naïve. These two names refer to whiteness and horseness (like Socratesness, Dimension 3).

For the Opponent and common sense, in the compound term “white horse”, “white” should be considered as qualifying (相與) (“Baima lun” 11) “horse” and should not be separated from “horse”. The compound term “white horse” is equal to the judgment “This horse is white”, since from the implicit perspective of zhi and consciousness, both cases “separate” the infinity of “horseness” via the abstract predicate “white”.

The Host’s point is precisely the opposite: the making of this division (馬與白也), or the critique of the judgment “The horse is white”. We should not attribute “white” to “horse” to make the compound term “white horse”, nor link the two terms in the judgment “This horse is white”. This is because, each considered in itself, “white” and “horse” should be “names” indicating “things” (or predicate-transcending “Beings”)—“whiteness” and “horseness”.

How can “white” also be a thing of the same order as “horse”? Is it not simply an attribute of the horse? If we define things from the materialistic plane (Dimension 2, see Part III of this article), only a horse can be called a thing, and white is a possible attribute of the horse. However, since Gongsun Long also assigned a name to white, then white must also possess a reality, namely, a “thing” corresponding to it. Dimension 3 provides a quantum explanation. If a thing is considered as a certain amount of energy which possesses a vibration and a specific frequency (“Things are Heaven and Earth and what they produce”, “Mingshi lun” 1), instead of a stable “shape” (a so-called “individual” with a specific, physicalistic boundary, e.g., a horse, Dimension 2), then whiteness can be considered a “thing” in the same order as horseness. Thus, in this sense, a memory, sadness, a sound, a smile, etc. are all “things”, since they all exist in nature.

The justification and theoretical presuppositions for the Host’s position can be made explicit both with Hölderlin’s theory of judgment and the critique of 指 in “Zhiwu lun”. “White” can certainly exist in the form of a universal/logical set and as a possible attribution/predication for “horseness” in its predicate-transcending “Being”, but 1) it cannot encompass the infinite qualities that “horseness” might possess, which may include, but are not limited to, colour, weight, species,
temperament, race, freedom, meadow, knight, war, etc., infinitely transcending the “shape” horse and connecting to infinite beings. So this compound or synthesis is, absolutely speaking, partial, invalid and “absent” (kuang曠) (“Mingshi lun” 3) from the totality of the reality of this “horseness” (its singularity constituted by infinite attributes); 2) after dividing this compound term “whiteness” (白), when it is no longer considered a predicate “white” (指) for “horseness”, nor is itself attributed to another predicate (which is apparently also the view of Gongsun Long and Hölderlin), should be, just like “horseness”, the “name” as an evocator of a concrete yet infinite singularity, and thus the predicate-transcending “Being” or “thing” of “whiteness”. It is the infinite features that whiteness entails, including “snow white”, “light grey”, “ashen”, “ivory”, “wedding gown”, “Casablanca”, “innocence”, “horse”, “sun”, “hospital”, “clouds”, “beginning” and so on, that infinitely transcend the “colour” white and connect to infinite beings. Only this incessant, infinitely ongoing totality could constitute the “reality” (實) of whiteness. An abstract predicate/attribute (the logical set of the colour “white”, defined by a determinate scientific criterium of measuring light) only illusorily takes itself—a single aspect of this totality—to be this totality, in the form of a judgment (指) which is only a fictive (“Judgments do not exist in the world” (天下無指)) narrative of this reality: “Judgments do not exist in the world. This arises from the idea that things have their own names and cannot be judged” (天下無指者/生於物之各有名/不為指也) (“Zhiwu lun” 10).

Consequently, “to rectify [the expression of] a thing, is to rectify it by its reality; to rectify it by its reality, is to rectify its name” (其正者/正其所實也/正其所實者/正其名) (“Mingshi lun” 6). To rectify “names” involves separating “names” (and consequently our apprehension of the “realities” and “Beings” of “things” behind “names”) one from another, avoiding combining them one with another in the form of judgments (A is A/B). We should take the reality of each “thing” as it is (in its infinite “Being” and singularity), namely, we should take each “name” as independent in itself, and not as a predicate for another “name”: “… taking this for this, this is only about this [wei bu ci 唯乎此] and partaking [xing 行] in this. Taking what it is for what it is, this is rectification” (… 此此當乎此/則唯乎此/其謂行此/其以當而當也/以當而當/正也) (“Mingshi lun” 11); “Once names have been rectified, (our apprehension of) each thing would be only about itself” (其名正/則唯乎其彼此焉) (“Mingshi lun” 7). Then, the name “white” indicating the “thing” behind it (“whiteness”) would be “only about” the “thing” (唯乎此)—its “reality” and “Being” (the totality of its infinite attributes/predicates)—without the intrusion from a predicate which, by its logical, finite and abstract nature, is qualitatively different from and thus narrows and overshadows this concrete infinity. Since “a thing is a thing” (物其所物) (“Mingshi lun” 2), it cannot be judged
and should be radically distinguished from a predicate ("指 are what do not exist in the world; things are what (do) exist in the world. To identify what exists in the world with what does not exist in the world, this is not admissible" (指也者/天下之所無也/物也者/天下之所有也/以天下之所有為天下之所無/未可), ("Zhiwu lun" 4)).

In the infinity of this concrete, incessant, panoramic apprehension, not a single attribute is disregarded. This apprehension could be intuitive, and then each thing would occupy its “place” (位)—having not yet become “contaminated” by a qualification (which is supposed to refer to another predicate-transcending “thing” on its own) that only “displaces” this intuition out of its original “place”, 16 to the “wrong” “place” of a predicate (指, “…is B”) thus, narrowing the infinite features of the “Being” of the thing down to only one among them. As such, a “name” as a “road sign” or “mantra” of the “thing” in its reality, “leaves the wrong place that it (the predicate/attribute) occupies, occupies its rightful place, makes it rectified” (出其所位非位/位其所位焉/正也) (“Mingshi lun” 4), reconstructing the infinity of the “thing” by separating itself from other “names”, avoiding any possibility of being combined with them in judgments, thereby radically destructing the dual structure of judgement. Zhengming (正名) would then deny the possibility of any predication of an attribute.

This is the signification of a “name” for a “thing”. As a name does not possess a predicate (unlike a judgment), it is what restrains us from narrowing our cognition with judgments, and thereby opens us to the more intuitive, wider realm of “things”. The respective predicate, or universal-transcending horseness and whiteness, are incommensurable singularities which should not be synthesized in the realm of logical inclusion.

This makes it equally wrong to say that “A white horse is a horse” (“On one side, it’s ‘horseness’, on the other, ‘whiteness-horseness’. (And ‘horseness’ is not absolutely the same as ‘whiteness-horseness’)). This is because, the judgment “A white horse is a horse” is precisely based on the presupposition that we can attribute 1) the single abstract attribute “white” to the concrete, intuitive reality of the “thing”—“horseness” in the word compound “white horse” (the total attributes of “horseness” including “white”, but not excluding height, weight, temperament, race, freedom, meadow, knight, war, etc., infinitely transcending the “shape” horse and connecting to infinite beings); 2) the single abstract concept/predicate “horse” to the concrete, intuitive reality “whiteness-horseness” in the subject position in the judgment “A white horse is a horse” (the total attributes

16 The infinity which constitutes its true reality: “Reality is reality, not an absence. This is its place” (實以實其所實/不曠焉/位也) (“Mingshi lun” 3).
of “whiteness-horseness” including “white” and “horse” but not excluding the possibly implicit ivory, pearl white, light grey, paper, wedding gown, clouds, innocence, Casablanca, hospital, beginning; height, weight, temperament, race, freedom, knight, meadow, war, etc., infinitely transcending the “shape” (horse) and “colour” (white), connecting to infinite beings—the infinite features of “whiteness-horseness” constituting its singular existence), disregarding the fact that the former, in 1) and 2), can never exhaust the latter. Thus the judgment “A white horse is a horse” is based on the double judgments “This horse is white” (the word compound “white horse”) and “A white horse is a horse” of logical identity, ignoring the predicate-transcending singular infinities, the “Beings” of “whiteness”, “horseness” and “whiteness-horseness”.

This is the same as with the claim of 2). The true meaning of the extravagant differentiation between “shape” (horse) and “colour” (white) is that the names “horse” and “white” indicate two “realities” which should be conceived of as existing in themselves, namely as predicate-transcending, infinite “things”—“horseness” and “whiteness” (“only about this” (唯乎此) “Mingshi lun” 11)), and not combined with one another in judgments, such as “This horse is white”, “A white horse is a horse”, etc., as the predicates are not absolutely identical with these “things” (“taking (當) it as what it is not, this is chaos” (其以當不當也/不當而亂也) (“Mingshi lun” 10)). By avoiding the chaos (亂) of judging, we finally take each “thing” as it is (物其所物)—apprehending it in its predicate-transcending, panoramic infinity, instead of as “what it is not”—a universal, a logical set and a mere fiction of our mind (white/horse) in a judgment/“zhi”. This conclusion also echoes “Zhiwu lun”: “… but judgments are not what they judge/are non-judgments” (… 而指/非指17) (“Zhiwu lun” 1)—judgments do not equate to the “things” they judge.

Host: “If we have white horse and may take it for a horse, may we say then that a white horse can be taken for a brown horse? Guest: We may not.”

曰/以有白馬為有馬/謂有白馬為有黃馬/可乎/曰/未可. (“Baima lun” 12)

Host: “If there is a difference between horse and brown horse, this is differentiating brown horse from horse. If we differentiate brown horse from horse, this makes it also correct to say that “A brown horse is not a horse’.”

曰/以有馬為異有黃馬/是異黃馬於馬也/異黃馬於馬/是以黃馬為非馬. (ibid. 13)

17 See footnote 19.
Host: “Taking brown horse for non-horse and white horse for horse, this is like flying into a pool, or to have the inner coffin and the outer coffin in different places. This is contradictory.”

以黃馬為非馬而以白馬為有馬/此飛者入池而棺椁異處/此天下之悖言亂辭也. (ibid. 14)\(^{18}\)

The Host reconfirms his position of (10) with the example of the brown horse.

Guest: “The claim that ‘having a white horse is not having no horse’ is a claim which separates whiteness [from the ‘whiteness-horseness’ conceived in 10]. If not separated, you would claim that having a whiteness-horseness does not mean having a horseness. So, if you take a horse (for a white horse), you actually take a horse for a horse and not the whiteness-horseness for horseness. This is how a white horse is taken to be a horse. It makes no sense to claim that a horse is a horse.”


This is again a reaffirmation of (10). The identity of the abstract predicate “horse” with the infinite intuition of “whiteness-horseness” is valid only logically—when we make the mere logical and illusory inclusion between the two terms “A white horse is a horse”. However, this is “separating whiteness from the ‘whiteness-horseness’” and is only equal to tautologically identifying “horse” with “horse” (“you actually take a horse for a horse”). Then one ignores the infinite meanings and nuances of the predicate-transcending singularities—“whiteness”, “horseness” and “whiteness-horseness”.

“You actually take a horse for a horse” reveals the essence of the judgment “A white horse is a horse”—tautology. It finally equals to the judgment “A horse is a horse”. The two judgments are both based on the logical principle of identity. In contrast, to simply call a horse “horse” (via its “name”) corresponds to the feeling of the infinite and ineffable qualities of “horseness” as evoked by this “name”. This infinity (Dimension 3) transcends by far the cognitive and semantic poorness of the tautological “A horse is a horse” (Dimension 1). Therefore, we should simply call a horse “horse” and call white “white”, intuiting them in their concrete infinity without predicates, without linking these “names” one to another via logical identity in the form of judgments.

\(^{18}\) In this passage there are several differences between the 1952 version and the others. I have taken the advice of the reviewers and followed the Daozang version regarding these differences.
From Hölderlin’s perspective, even in case of tautology a horse conceived by the speaker in the subject cannot be identical with the concept of the horse in the predicate, for the self-consciousness of the speaker changes permanently and does not retain a logical identity with itself (“In opposing myself to myself, separating myself from myself, yet in recognizing myself as the same in the opposed regardless of this separation. Yet to what extent as the same?” (Hölderlin 1988, 38)). Thus the speaker views the object, i.e., the horse, at a time that is already different from the time of the enunciation of the subject. Therefore, due to the dualist structure of judgment, this identity (A horse is a horse) is only logically valid, as there is still a “separation” between subject and object due to the time interval, and cannot depict the integrity and semantic infinity of the “thing”—the horoseness in its predicate-transcending “Being”, instead of conceptually doubling it (A is A).

It is a serious misunderstanding to take tautology for Gongsun Long’s last word. Just like Hölderlin, he radically distinguishes the sphere of judgment from that of “things” or reality (“… and things cannot be named judgments” (……而物不可謂指也) (“Zhiwu lun” 5), denying any possibility for judgmental knowledge, including tautological judgment, to gain access to things. Moreover, he claims that to gain real understanding of the reality of things and avoid “chaos” (亂) (“Mingshi lun” 10) in cognition, we should simply not combine “names” one with another, making one of them subject, the other predicate, namely, in a judgment: “Calling ‘that’ and ‘that’ is not limited at ‘that’, this is not the right way of calling ‘that’” (謂彼/而彼不唯乎彼/則彼謂不行) (“Mingshi lun” 8), “Taking it as what it is not, this is chaos” (其以當不當也/不當而亂也) (“Mingshi lun” 10). When “calling ‘that’” by its “name” one must “limit” oneself at the holistic, infinite intuition of the reality (“Being”) suggested by its “name”—without adding any abstract predicate to this pre-predicative apprehension which only overshadows and distorts its infinity (“Taking it as what it is not, this is chaos”), even if it is the same predicate as its name (She 2022). A predicate appearing in the form of a judgment radically differs from the “thing” that it qualifies (“Judgments are not what they judge” (而指非指) (“Zhiwu lun” 1)). Judging in all forms would be chaotic, as it segments and disturbs our widest possible cognition of a thing by separating our unity with it into a cognizer and object.

Consequently, a “name” should be distinguished from a concept as the logical identity of the noun with itself (tautology A is A), or a more complex predicate applied in a judgement such A is B, or a series of predicates. In all cases, a predicate belongs to the separation from the infinite intuition of the subject (指), abstracted from the “real” (實) (“Mingshi lun” 3) experience of the “Being” of things. In contrast, a “name” can be the indicator of the intuitive, ineffable feeling of a thing in its infinite features which constitutes its singularity, since
the intuiting consciousness would be in a, if not total (since the attribution of “names” involves minimum reflectivity), at least quasi-unity with the thing intuited (quasi-Dimension 3) and “participate” in (行此) (“Mingshi lun” 11) the flux of its ever-transforming reality (and thus no longer radically “separated” from it). As this unbounded feeling runs through infinite predicates without identifying itself with any of them, it experiences the “thing” as ever-changing and thereby, by “participating” in the infinite reality of the thing, transcends the dualism of judgment to some extent.

This would be the overcoming of the object-oriented thought, judgmental expression and even action in the usual sense: “Judgments do not exist in the world. This arises from the idea that things have their own names and cannot be judged” (天下無指者/生於物之各有名/不為指也) (“Zhiwu lun” 10). In this sense, a “name”—rather than an action which has to permanently strive towards (and thus, is separated from) reality, or a predicate, which only segments reality—would be a better solution for depicting reality.

Host: “[the attribute] ‘white’ cannot determine the thing that it qualifies. If we forget this, we would claim that a white horse is a horse.”

曰/白者不定所白/忘之/而可也. (“Baima lun” 16)

Again, we should not attribute “white” to a thing (the horse) as a predicate for the horse, for the single attribute “white” cannot cover (or “determine” 定) the whole range of infinite attributes of the horse in its “horseness”. Instead, we should consider whiteness as it is and horseness as it is, not combining the two “names” in a judgment—one as the holistic, infinite intuition of the thing, the other as a predicate which divides it. Not only does horseness point to a predicate-transcending reality encompassing an infinity of qualities, but whiteness as well. Both “names” should be separated, so that each can be free from any predicative entanglement, and thus mutual limitations. If, on the contrary, we make one “determine” the other in a judgment such as “This horse is white”, hence “separating”, overshadowing and narrowing the holistic, infinite intuition of the horse through the predicate “white” and effectively determining the undeterminable (Being or the thing in its infinity), we would for the same reason be led to make another judgment, “A white horse is a horse”.

Host: “[The compound term] ‘white horse’ is saying [the attribute] ‘white’ as well as determining the thing that this [attribute] ‘white’ qualifies. The thing that this [attribute] white qualifies [its ‘horseness’] is not [the attribute] ‘white’ [itself].”

白馬者/言白/定所白也/定所白者/非白也. (“Baima lun” 17)
(12)‒(20) are further elaborations of (10). In the compound term “white horse” sharing the same “separating” structure in consciousness as the judgment “This horse is white”, we are “determining” the infinite intuition of the “Being” or reality of the horse (horseness) through the attribute “white” which only has a linguistic nature (“saying” 言). However, the “thing” (horseness) determined by this attribute “white” should be distinguished from this linguistic sphere of the attribute “white”. This means the horse, considered in itself, in its predicate-transcending infinity—horseness—is not absolutely identical (“Baima lun” 6) to the semantic sphere of the attribute “white” (“Judgments are what does not exist in the world; things are what does exist in the world. To identify what exists in the world with what does not exist in the world, this is not admissible”, (“Zhiwu lun” 4)). A horse in its reality and horseness contains an infinity of qualities, among which the semantic feature “white” “determines” (定) only a part. This “determination”, which essentially is 指, is based on a logical identity, ignoring the singular infinities of “horseness” and “whiteness”.

Host: “What a horse is, the colour of which is not yet determined, so brown horses or black horses would meet the requirement.”

馬者/無去取於色/故黃黑皆/所以應. (“Baima lun” 18)

Host: “What a white horse is, the colour of which is determined, so brown horses or black horses are all eliminated for their colours. This is why only a white horse would meet the requirement for a white horse.”

白馬者/有去取於色/黃黑馬皆所以色去/故唯白馬獨可以應耳. (ibid. 19)

Host: “those not eliminated are not those eliminated, this is why we say, a white horse is not a horse.”

無去者/非有去也/故曰/白馬非馬. (ibid. 20)

Only a white horse can meet the requirement when one asks for a white horse, a random horse without specification of its colour may or may not have the white colour needed (“separate whiteness from the ‘whiteness-horseness’” (“Baima lun” 15)). This sphere of action in “Baima lun” presupposes the predicate-transcending sphere of “things” in “Mingshi lun” and “Zhiwu lun”: we should feel and intuit whiteness and horseness in their predicate-transcending infinities instead of composing these names in the logical form of judgment, be it the simple judgment “This horse is white” (the compound term “white horse”), or “A white horse is a horse”. The logical identity made in both judgments can in no way guarantee an absolute identity and unity between the subject and predicate. What the
The predicate of the judgment presents is nothing but a one-sided narrative ("horse") of the infinite reality of the subject ("whiteness-horseness"), which contains much more than this narrative. Since Gongsun Long’s argument is based on the judgment-transcending realm of “things”, and not on a logical and linguistic level of judgment (指), a white horse intuited as “whiteness-horseness” cannot be reduced to a single predicate “horse” in the logical realm, nor the intuition of the “horse-ness (without ‘whiteness’)” in the realm of action.

However, how should the conclusion “White horse (is) not horse” be explained? Although this is actually a judgment, and thus inevitably a separation of the absolute integrity of “whiteness-horseness” through the concept of the horse, due to the negation it is cognitively better than “White horse (is) horse”. The structural fallacy of the judgment “White horse (is) horse” is to a certain extent resolved by the negation of the logical bond between subject and object, and exists as the distortion of the distortion of reality, namely as the irontal self-relativization of the initial dogmatic perspective of “White horse (is) horse”. In this way “White horse (is) not horse” transcends the single-sided knowledge represented in the judgment “White horse (is) horse” and becomes dialectical (She 2022). However, this dimension remains implicit in “Baima lun” and needs to be reconstructed.

In the same way, for Novalis, the nature of reflection (Spiegelung in German) is an ordo inversus: thinking is like “reflecting in a mirror”, it renders the left side of the object on the right and vice versa. To resolve this unavoidable paradox, we should overturn this inversion through an opposite reflection, reestablishing the right relation between judgment and Being in an act of “not-knowing of knowing” (Frank 1989). If we submit to Kant’s claim that thinking is judging, then this semantically coincides with judgment.

Therefore, I would correlate Gongsun Long’s conclusion, “White horse (is) not horse”, with irony, mainly for following reasons:

First, irony is a style which is not only often observed in Gongsun Long’s debates, but also in the few surviving anecdotes about his life. This should be the formal answer.

Second, Gongsun Long radically separates the spheres of judgment and things in themselves. “Guest: Things (物) are all about judgments (指), but judgments are not what they judge” (物莫非指/而指非指)19 (“Zhiwu lun” 1); “… and things

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19 非指 (non-judgment) is a term created by Gongsun Long and appears throughout “Zhiwu lun”. 物莫非指 should be broken into 物/莫/非/指 instead of 物莫/非指: nothing is not about judgments (double negation with 莫 and 非). 而指非指 should be broken into 而指/非指 with the term 非指. Some translations are based on the subdivisions 物莫/非指, 而指/非指, taking both 非指 as fixed concepts, and consequently falling into this linguistic trap (She 2022).
cannot be named judgments” (…而物不可謂指也) (ibid. 5). There is an unavoidable paradox between judgments and things, for although everything that a judgment expresses about a thing is a rootless, fictive construction, this fiction seems to be all that we have and all that we can take to be the reality of thing. This irony lies in the dualistic, segmenting structure of judgment itself, for things are not segmented in themselves, they inherently “cannot be judged”. So “White horse (is) not horse” is an ironical critique of judgment by a judgment, a self-negation rather than self-affirmation and confirmation of the critique of judgment (指) in “Zhiwu lun”.

Third, on a more theoretical level Gongsun Long clearly criticizes any attempt at combining “names” in the form of judgments: “Calling ‘that’ and ‘that’ is not limited at ‘that’, this is not the right way of calling ‘that’” (“Mingshi lun” 8). For example, not limiting at the infinite intuition suggested by the name of “whiteness-horseness” (“that”) and adding the predicate “horse” (“this”) to it in the judgment “A white horse is a horse”, this is the wrong way of calling “that”. “Taking this for that, and taking that and this, this is wrong” (ibid. 13). Namely, taking the predicate “horse” (“this”) for “whiteness-horseness” (“that”) and taking “whiteness-horseness” (“that”) and the predicate “horse” (“this”) together in the judgment “A white horse is a horse”, instead of taking “whiteness”, “horseness” and “whiteness-horseness” separately. As a result, the best way of thoroughly apprehending a thing is through the direct intuition of its predicate-transcending reality by the calling of its “name”: “Once the names of things are rectified, (our apprehension of each thing would be only about/limited at itself and be separated from each other” (ibid. 7). “This is why taking that for that, this is limiting oneself at that (唯乎彼) and partaking (行) in that” (ibid. 11).

Finally, as the system of “names” proposed by Gongsun Long points to a new system of language in contrast to the usual one based on dualism (be it in the Western or Chinese form), it would be impossible to directly express it in the usual language form. Irony would be a boundary-expression which suggests such a possibility of language.

To have true knowledge of a thing is to place it directly, without the interference of predicates which only segment, overshadow and hinder our widest possible apprehension of things, into its infinite reality (its “Being”) via its “name”. “Rectification of names” can be achieved this way, because only through an infinite, intuitive awareness can we fuse with the thing, “partaking in” its changing process without segmenting our holistic apprehension of it. Intuitive apprehension does not dualistically separate the thing into a subject and its predicate, which is the only possible characterization of the thing by a judgment, only to reunite them
afterwards in a synthesis. Instead, it panoramically holds together the infinite characteristics of things, without excluding, distorting or segmenting it through the predicate in the one-sided perspective of judgmental, dualistic cognition—“colluding” the mere predicates “white”, “horse” and “white horse” with each other in the dual judgmental form. The judgment “White horse (is) not (a) horse” is thus valid as self-destructive irony.

Conclusion

Through the Heidelberg School’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s fragment “Being and Judgment”, considered a complementary justification and reconstruction of the hidden premise of Gongsun Long’s view, this paper has interpreted the famous paradox “White horse is not a horse” of “Baima lun” as the ironical critique of judgment by a judgment and confirmed this thesis through “Baima lun”, “Zhiwu lun” and “Mingshi lun”. Upon further exploration of the Heidelberg School’s path, this paper has distinguished several Dimensions in Hölderlin’s conception of “Being”. “Things” in “Mingshi lun”, interpreted as Dimension 3, are concrete, ineffable, non-conceptual, non-predicative, trans-individual, and a singular infinity. This singular infinity radically transcends a universal, a concept of set (logical identity), a mass noun or a Platonic idea of abstract entity, as the latter all still belong to the realm of “zhi” (judgment) and predication, which the “Zhiwu lun” considers as not only infinitely opposed to but also radically transcended by the realm of things. Consequently, a name is superior to “zhi” as a method for rendering things. As a single name escapes from any possibility of predication, it allegorically provides a means of viewing and suggesting things as this singular infinity. This approach thereby authentically places the GSLZ into the nominalist background of the pre-Qin period. As Hansen’s approach is still considered as based on the realm of “zhi”, thus remaining both abstract and realist, this approach can be seen as transcending it. Through this approach, “Baima lun”, “Mingshi lun” and “Zhiwu lun” are theoretically interconnected.

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