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Getting to Know Knowing-as as Knowing

Abstract: In ‘Swimming Happily in Chinese Logic’ (2021) I suggested that the root conception of knowing for the ancient Chinese Mohists was knowing-as, a conception that fits well with perspectivism in the *Zhuangzi*, a key Daoist text. Drawing on Wittgenstein’s discussion of both seeing-as and samples, and developing the analogy between seeing-as and knowing-as, I explore various forms of knowing with particular reference to the *Mozi*, in attempting to make sense of ancient Chinese epistemology and thereby shed light on the whole phenomenon of knowing.

I Introduction

Exploring knowing-as

1. In ‘Swimming Happily in Chinese Logic’ (2021) I suggested that the root conception of knowing for the ancient Chinese Mohists was knowing-as, a conception that fits well with perspectivism in the *Zhuangzi*, a key Daoist text. In this paper, I want to explore this conception further by drawing on Wittgenstein’s discussion of both seeing-as and samples, and developing the analogy between seeing-as and knowing-as. Wittgenstein’s remarks on seeing-as, in what was originally called ‘Part Two’ of the *Philosophical Investigations*, were themselves exploratory. I have cast my own thoughts in the form of remarks as the most appropriate way of getting to know knowing-as. They are very much first thoughts, even experimental thoughts, but I hope that they are suggestive enough to open up the space for deeper investigation and to encourage others to engage with Chinese philosophy. If we are inspired to recognize different forms of knowing, then we will need to try out different forms of writing to express them – just as Wittgenstein developed his style of writing to reflect his own thinking.

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A plea for cross-cultural linguistic phenomenology

2. Knowing takes many forms, or better put, the various phenomena included under the broad heading of ‘knowing’ are talked about in a variety of ways, using a variety of terms and linguistic constructions. What is required is a *linguistic phenomenology* of such talk. These terms and constructions have a variety of corresponding terms and constructions in other languages, which relate to one another in a variety of different ways. So what is required, more specifically, is a *cross-cultural linguistic phenomenology* of such talk.
3. The term ‘linguistic phenomenology’ comes from Austin’s paper, ‘A Plea for Excuses’ (1956). In noting how we can “dispose of the problem of Freedom” (p. 180), he draws our attention to the many ways in which we describe ‘unfree’ actions, such as ‘unwillingly’, ‘inadvertently’, ‘mistakenly’, ‘accidentally’, ‘absent-mindedly’, ‘unintentionally’, ‘carelessly’, ‘automatically’, ‘aimlessly’, ‘purposelessly’, and so on. Appreciating this makes us aware that there is no single distinction between ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ actions but instead a whole host of smaller-scale, context-dependent distinctions, which may cross-cut one another. So, too, once we recognize the various ways in which we talk of ‘knowing’ (in ‘disposing of the problem of Knowledge’) we will be less likely to assume some overarching distinction – between ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’, or between ‘knowing’ and ‘believing’ (or something else ‘less’ than knowing), or between two kinds of knowing – within which all debate proceeds. I take this to be a very Daoist project.

Knowing-that and knowing-how

4. At the centre of debate in contemporary (Western) epistemology is the distinction between knowing-that and knowing-how. Which is more basic? Can one be ‘reduced’ to the other? Presupposed here is that these two forms of knowing carve up the field of knowing. But is this correct? Cross-cultural linguistic phenomenology can provide an answer, and one contribution to this is to look more closely at ancient Chinese conceptions of knowing. In what follows, I will be attempting to make sense of these in English, but I will occasionally also make comparisons with conceptions of knowing suggested by linguistic constructions in German and in Scottish Gaelic.
5. The supposed (overarching or dichotomous) distinction between knowing-that and knowing-how – or the privileging of one over the other – distorts our understanding of Chinese philosophy: its projection onto the ancient texts prevents us from appreciating the different conceptions that are in play. While

it is reasonable to translate Chinese texts by using the ‘know that’ construction, and indeed almost impossible to avoid doing so in talking about Chinese philosophy, we need to be very wary of importing the metaphysical baggage that talk of knowing-that carries in Western philosophy. On the other hand, the idea of knowing-how is pervasive in Chinese philosophy, but precisely because of this, appeal to it does little work without more detailed specification.

Other forms of knowing

6. Much more helpful and informative is to see *knowing-as* and *knowing-to* as the two core conceptions of knowing in ancient Chinese philosophy, while recognizing that there are others as well, such as knowing-about and knowing-when. Furthermore, all these forms of knowing, as expressed by constructions of the form ‘knowing-*zhi*’, presuppose a more minimal form which I will simply call *bare knowing* – although this may, with qualification, be characterized as *knowing-of*. This is implicit in ancient Chinese conceptions of knowledge, just as it is in Western conceptions, even if there is a tradition in Western philosophy that seeks to explain knowledge in terms of belief. (Since I regard this tradition as misguided, I might be seen as in the ‘Knowledge First’ camp, but this, too, involves various positions, many of which face problems of their own. For recent critiques of the ‘Belief First’ tradition, as exemplified in the claim that knowledge is justified true belief, see Dutant 2015, Le Morvan 2017, and Antognazza 2020.)

II Forms of Knowing

Linguistic constructions

7. In English, the verb ‘know’ can take a direct object (‘P knows X’), where it can have the sense of ‘be aware of’, ‘be acquainted with’, or ‘be familiar with’ (cf. German ‘kennen’, French ‘connaître’, modern Chinese ‘rènshí (认识)’), or can be used with an infinitive (‘know to φ ’ – as well as ‘know not to φ ’) or with a variety of different prepositions or subordinating conjunctions (complementizers). Examples of constructions with prepositions include ‘know of’ (understood in a *de re* sense), ‘know about’, ‘know from’, ‘know by’ (e.g., ‘know by hearsay’, one of three types of ‘knowing’ that the Mohists distinguish: *wén* 聞; *Mozi*, A80), ‘know through’ (e.g., ‘know through experience’), as well as ‘know as’. Examples of constructions with subordinating conjunctions are not con-

fined to ‘know that’ and ‘know how’, but also include ‘know who’, ‘know which’, ‘know what’, ‘know when’, ‘know why’, ‘know if’, and so on. Perhaps some of the forms of knowing expressed by these constructions can be explained in terms of knowing-that and/or knowing-how, but each has its own character and function. The linguistic qualifications can alter the verb in subtle ways – just like the Mohists recognized, in general, in the compounding of names.

Bare knowing

8. It is tempting to think that bare knowing is expressed in the simple ‘P knows X’ construction. But this construction can also express much more complex forms of knowing, although there would be the expectation that it could be filled out appropriately: it would merely be an elliptical schema for relevant elaboration. What is required for bare knowing is just that P has some means of identifying or individuating X – for example, as a spatio-temporal particular, as exhibited by a relevant response to encountering X or the ability to call X ‘X’ (or an equivalent term in another language) in appropriate circumstances. In the case of persons, if I claim to know someone, then it would normally be taken to imply that I have encountered or am acquainted with them in some way – for example, by having met or seen them. All other forms of knowing presuppose bare knowing, and the more complex linguistic constructions involving the term ‘know’ can be regarded as elaborations on the simple ‘P knows X’ schema. (This is the truth in ‘direct realism’, however misleading this term may otherwise be.) As far as the analogy with seeing and seeing-as is concerned, it is this bare knowing that corresponds to the seeing that is contrasted with seeing-as.
9. If I am asked, of a certain person, “Do you know them?”, then I might simply reply “Yes” or “No”. But it is far more likely that I will give a longer answer, elaborating in some appropriate way: “Well, I know *of* them”, “Not really, although I know who they are”, “I’ve heard of them, but don’t know them personally”, “I met them once, but know little about them”, “We’re acquainted, but hardly friends”, “I’m aware of their existence, but am not at all familiar with them”, “I only know them from their writings”, “All too well: we were colleagues for twenty years before I took up this new job”, and so on. That I am far more likely to give such a qualified reply is revealing, for it shows the need to elaborate on any simple claim to know someone. Presupposed in any positive (true) answer, however, is some bare knowing of who they are, exhibited in an ability to identify or individuate them in some way. This may have been acquired from having encountered them (knowledge by acquaintance) or from

having learnt something about them (knowledge by description), but however the ability was acquired, (causal) contact or connection with the person is necessary.

Knowing-of

10. Of the various linguistic constructions, ‘knowing of’ might seem to come closest to capturing this minimal form of knowing. In answering “Well, I know *of* them” to the question “Do you know them?” or “I know *of* it” to the question “Do you know the *Zhuangzi*?”, one is signalling the barest acquaintance or awareness. One does indeed speak of being aware or conscious *of* something. Significantly, ‘knowing of’ has been used to explain one of the main uses of ‘*zhī*’ (知) – ‘knowing’ – in the ancient Chinese texts. Chad Hansen, for example, writes:

References to knowing [*zhī*] in Chinese philosophical texts are most naturally treated as either knowing how or knowledge by acquaintance. Knowing the virtues (e.g., knowledge of benevolence), can be read as either knowing (how) to be benevolent or knowing of (being acquainted with) benevolence. (1983, p. 66)

In suggesting that ‘knowledge-of’ is a form of recognition, Chris Fraser writes: “Knowledge-of is manifested as the practical ability to correctly discriminate the referent of a word, or “name” (*míng* 名), that denotes the object of knowledge” (2011, p. 131).

Linguistic constructions in German and Gaelic

11. In other languages the distinction between ‘knowing’ in the sense of ‘being acquainted with’ and ‘knowing’ in a more full-blooded sense (covering knowing-that and knowing-how as well as other forms of knowing) is expressed by two different terms, such as the verbs ‘kennen’ and ‘wissen’ in German, or the nouns ‘eòlas’ (‘acquaintance’) and ‘fios’ (‘knowledge’) in Scottish Gaelic. In German ‘Ich kenne sie’ could be used to translate ‘I know them’, ‘I know of them’, ‘I am acquainted with them’, and ‘I am aware of them’, whereas ‘Ich weiß es’ could translate ‘I know it’, and ‘Ich weiß davon’ could translate ‘I know of it’, but only where, for example, factual or propositional knowledge is involved. ‘Knowing how’ is less straightforwardly captured in German. ‘I know how to speak’ would be translated as ‘Ich kann sprechen’, though ‘I know how he speaks’ could be translated as ‘Ich weiß wie er spricht’.

12. In Gaelic ‘Tha mi eòlach orra’ could be used to translate ‘I know them’, in the sense of ‘I am acquainted with them’ or ‘I am familiar with them’, while ‘Tha fios agam mu dheidhinn’ translates ‘I know it’ or ‘I know of it’, but more in the sense of ‘I know (something) about it’, so again as involving factual or propositional knowledge. The noun ‘eòlas’ expresses a deeper knowledge than ‘fios’ and is used for knowing persons as well as things, unlike ‘fios’, which cannot be used for knowing persons. The two Gaelic constructions are also interesting for another reason. ‘Tha mi eòlach orra’ literally means ‘There is at me being acquainted with them’, and ‘Tha fios agam mu dheidhinn’ literally means ‘There is knowledge at me about it’. ‘Tha fios agam ...’ is the standard way to say ‘I know ...’ (‘There is knowledge at me ...’). One might speculate that acquaintance or knowledge is (or once was) conceived as something that (locatively) connects me and something else rather than a mental state I am in that somehow concerns something ‘outside’ me. There may be an interesting connection with Chinese conceptions of knowledge here.

Mohist definitions of ‘knowing’

13. At the beginning of the ‘Canons and Explanations’ in Book 40 of the *Mozi* (A3–6), the (later) Mohists explore the analogy between knowing (*zhī* 知) and seeing (*jiàn* 見):

[A3] Canon: The knowing [*zhī* 知] is the capacity [*cái* 材].

Explanation: (Knowing, capacity.) As to the knowing, it’s that by which we know, such that we surely know. Like eyesight [*míng* 明].

[A4] Canon: Considering [*lǜ* 慮] is seeking [*qiú* 求].

Explanation: (Considering.) Considering is, by means of the knowing, seeking something without necessarily getting it. Like peering [*nì* 睨].

[A5] Canon: Knowing [*zhī* 知] is connecting [*jiē* 接].

Explanation: (Knowing.) Knowing is, by means of the knowing, passing something and being able to describe its features. Like seeing [*jiàn* 見]. (*Mòzǐ*, p. 145)

In A3 ‘*zhī*’ (知) is translated (by Fraser) as ‘knowing’, understood as the *capacity* to know, comparable to eyesight, the capacity to see. Correctly employed, we ‘surely know’: the verb ‘know’ here is factive, like ‘be aware of’. The analogy is developed further in A4 and A5 in contrasting two uses of our capacity to know: ‘*lǜ*’ (慮), translated as ‘considering’ (it has also been translated as ‘thinking’), and ‘*zhī*’ (知), translated again as ‘knowing’ but where this is understood as the employment of the capacity to know in yielding ‘sure knowing’. In A4 ‘consider-

ing' is characterized as seeking, comparable to peering. In this case, success is not guaranteed – just as it isn't in the case of peering. In A5 'knowing' is characterized as 'connecting' (*jiē* 接), understood as being able to correctly describe something having 'passed' it, just as we are able to do so having seen it. 'Connecting' might thus be glossed as making contact with something through sense-perception, such that we can describe it later by using language appropriately (applying the right distinctions).

14. In A6 a term related to 'zhī' (知), with the same pinyin but a different tone, and incorporating the simpler Chinese character, 'zhì' (智), translated as 'knowledge', is defined as follows:

[A6] Canon: Knowledge [*zhì* 智] is understanding/clarity [*míng* 明].

Explanation: (Knowledge.) Knowledge is, by means of the knowing, discoursing on things such that one's knowing them is obvious. Like clear sight [*míng* 明]. (*Mòzǐ*, p. 145)

Again, there is an analogy to seeing, the clarity of the knowing that constitutes 'understanding' (*míng* 明) being compared to clear sight (with the same character – *míng* 明 – being used for 'clear sight' as well as in A3 for 'eyesight', making the analogy clear to see!). Here the idea is presumably that just as clear sight enables us to see all features of something, 'understanding' enables us to know all features of something, as made obvious by the account we give of it. '知' was explained by the Qing dynasty philologist Duan Yucai as composed of '矢' (*shǐ*), meaning arrow, and '口' (*kǒu*), meaning mouth, suggesting the idea of 'quick-wittedness' (see Ames 2015, p. 273). Allowing further hermeneutic licence (in keeping with a notion of 'interpreting-as'), '知' might be alternatively glossed as 'verbally hitting the target' (Beaney 2021, § 4.5). If so, then '智' might be glossed as 'verbally hitting all the targets constantly'.

III Knowing and Knowing-As

The analogy between seeing/seeing-as and knowing/knowing-as

15. If there is something to the analogy between seeing and knowing, and there is a distinction to be drawn between seeing and seeing-as, then there might be an analogous distinction to be drawn between knowing and knowing-as. An immediate objection might be that 'seeing-as' implies that something is not 'really there', which would be inappropriate in talking of 'knowing'. But seeing something as a picture of a duck is to see something that others could see just as well, so there need be no loss of objectivity. In discussing seeing-as in the

Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein talks of seeing an ‘internal relation’ between the picture we are looking at, say, the duck-rabbit picture, and other pictures of ducks (or actual ducks) when we see it as a picture of a duck. This core idea is readily extended in talking of knowing-as: in knowing something as an actual duck, say, I recognize an internal relation between it and other ducks or pictures of ducks.

16. The objection to talk of ‘knowing-as’ might be pressed, however. When we see something, there must be something in front of us that we see. But when we know something, it need not be in front of us. As we saw above, this is precisely what the later Mohists recognized in characterizing knowing as “passing something and being able to describe its features” (A5). This suggests that once we have seen something, with sufficient clarity to describe it (cf. A6), we know it in such a way that we no longer need to have it before us to continue knowing it (even after we have ‘passed’ it). But this, too, is no objection to talk of ‘knowing-as’. The internal relations would remain, and what we know it *as* can be spelt out by describing the relevant features. Furthermore, to press the analogy between seeing/seeing-as and knowing/knowing-as, what also remains is the dependence of knowing-as on bare knowing. Just as we must see something to see it *as* something, so too we must be able to know something in some minimal way to know it *as* something.

Conceiving-as and knowing-as

17. In a paper on ‘Seeing-as and Mathematical Creativity’ (2018) co-authored with Bob Clark, we talked of aspect *conception* by analogy with aspect perception. In solving the problem of how to construct a square of twice the area of a given square, as famously posed in Plato’s *Meno*, the slave boy comes to conceive a square *as* composed of two triangles rather than four smaller squares. It is only one step further to talk of *knowing-as*. In ‘recollecting’ how to solve the geometrical problem, the slave boy comes to *know* a square *as* divisible into two triangles (on the hypotenuse of which a square of twice the area of the original square can be constructed). Analogies offer a further way of illustrating this step. We can talk, for example, of conceiving the atom as a mini-solar system. Talk of *knowing* it as a mini-solar system may be a step too far in this case, but where there is something correct in the analogy, and the analogy becomes ‘dead’ (in the way that metaphors become ‘dead’), talk of knowing something *as* something might be appropriate – as in knowing the benzene molecule *as* a ring, to give just one example.

18. In fact, there are plenty of ordinary uses of ‘knowing-as’ constructions. Imagine being asked for your opinion of someone. You might say, “Well, I only know her as a colleague, and she is very efficient and smart”. Indeed, most people we know we might only know *as* occupying some particular role or roles. In the Chinese context, this would be fully in accord with Confucian emphasis on the roles we occupy as human beings, and reflective of Zhuangzian perspectivism, too. And the same might be said of things in general: we only know them as having certain features, functions, or aspects. If there is aspect perception and aspect conception, then there must also be aspect knowledge – or aspectual knowledge, as we might also call it.

Uses of the ‘know as’ construction

19. Consider the claim that I know someone as a doctor. This is ambiguous. It might mean that I know them in their capacity as a doctor or that I know them in my own capacity as a doctor (I know them as their doctor). ‘I know X as Y’ is ambiguous between ‘I know X-as-Y’ and ‘I-as-Y know X’. I am more concerned here with the former, as when I say ‘I know her as a brilliant philosopher’ (unless I am being very immodest). But there is not always a clear distinction between the two uses. If I say ‘I know her as a colleague’, then this involves both: knowing her-as-a-colleague is achieved through my being her colleague. There is generally some context, though, in which such constructions are used – in this case, our being colleagues – which makes clear what is meant.
20. In both uses there must be a practice of predicating something of someone or something, a practice in which the relevant terms are used and their meaning explained. Such explanation can be provided by giving examples, and then, instead of saying ‘I know X as Y’, we could say ‘I know X as like P’ (‘as internally related to P’, in Wittgenstein’s terminology), where P is a paradigm example of Y, or ‘I know X as conforming to S’, where S provides a standard for being Y. These expressions can be seen as *elucidating* the claim to know X as Y, just as claims to (simply) know X are clarified by elaborating in some appropriate way (see § 8 above).
21. Talk of knowing-as also suggests a perspective or stance from which the knowledge is claimed – a perspective or stance that presupposes practices of using the relevant terms. (‘Stance’ may be a better term than ‘perspective’ here; see Ma and van Brakel 2019, ch. 9. But I shall gloss over this here.) These practices range from the ‘literal’, such as in talking of a ‘colleague’, to the ‘metaphorical’. If I talk of knowing someone as a ‘social butterfly’, then I am invoking a metaphorical source domain that invites my audience to see that person in a

certain way. Here we might also speak of knowing them as like a butterfly, but here more elucidation would be needed to explain the idea of a ‘social butterfly’.

Knowing-as in Mohism

22. Recognizing (knowing!) knowing-as as a form of knowing – and indeed, as a fundamental form of knowing (though presupposing knowing-of, in the sense elucidated above) – helps make sense of ancient Chinese epistemology, especially as expounded in ‘The Canons and Explanations’ (Books 40–43) of the key Mohist text, the *Mozi*. The key passages are A31–32 and A70–71. Let us look first at A31–32.

[A31] Canon: To mention/cite/bring up [舉 *jǔ*] is to emulate objects [*nǐ shí* 擬實].

Explanation: (Mention/cite/bring up.) To inform is to use this name to mention that object. ...

[A32] Canon: To state [言 *yán*] is to utter mentions [*chū jǔ* 出舉].

Explanation: (To state.) Stating is the uttering of features of which all speakers are capable. Describing features is like drawing a tiger, but it is a statement. Saying statements – like ‘stone’ – is communicating. (*Mòzǐ*, p. 148)

Among other things, ‘*jǔ*’ (舉) means ‘lift up’, ‘cite’, ‘pick out’, ‘select’, while ‘*nǐ*’ (擬) means ‘(form a) plan’, ‘imitate’, ‘assess’, ‘compare’, and ‘*shí*’ (實) means ‘reality’, ‘stuff’. The Explanation of A31 makes clear that what is at issue is the use of names to mention objects. The Canon of A31 might thus be translated instead as “To name something is to imitate reality”. A32 extends the basic idea to statements, in which more than one name is used, describing more than one feature of something. In the explanatory notes to his translation of A31, Fraser writes:

in using a name to mention something, we are emulating or modelling that thing by means of the name, which functions as a model for the thing referred to. In the case of names of kinds, which apply to things because of their similarity to other things of that kind, using the name as a model informs listeners that the thing is similar to other things of that kind. (*Mòzǐ*, p. 228)

Although there is not yet explicit mention in (or up to) A31–32 of ‘models’ and similarity relations, the stage is nevertheless set in explaining the role of names in informing someone of something – in bringing them, we might say, to knowledge of something. In knowing *of* something by understanding a name, we can be brought to know it *as* something, as appeal to the idea of a ‘model’ soon makes clear.

23. The idea of a standard or model (*fǎ* 法) is introduced in A70–71:

[A70] Canon: A model [*fǎ* 法] is what, things being like it, they are so.

Explanation: (Model.) Thought/intention [*yi* 意], compass, and circle are three. All can be used as models.

[A71] Canon: The match/duplicate [*ěr* 耳] is wherein it's so.

Explanation: (Match/duplicate.) Being so is the features being like the model. (*Mòzǐ*, p. 153)

A70 defines what a standard or model is, and A71 then makes the key claim: something has the feature it has in being *like a standard* for having that feature. Such a standard can take one of three forms: it can be the 'idea' or 'thought' (*yi* 意) of that feature, the result of some way of producing something with that feature, or an actual exemplar of that feature. A circle is a circle, for example, in conforming with a definition of a circle (such as the one suggested in A58: "Circular is from one centre, the same lengths"; *Mòzǐ*, p. 152), in being constructible or testable by means of a compass, or in being like an actual (drawn) circle.

24. On the view that emerges here, to say that something is an F is to say that it is like – or conforms with – our standard(s) of something's being an F. By parallelism, then, to know that something is an F is to know that it is like – or conforms with – our standard(s) of something's being an F, that is, to know it as an F – as like our standard(s). Knowing-that is 'reduced' here to knowing-as. A knowing-that theorist might reply that knowing something as like a standard is knowing *that* it is like that standard. But knowing them as similar seems more basic; such knowledge can more plausibly be ascribed to animals. (So, too, if we are to have a satisfying conception of 'comparative' philosophy, we must not think of it as issuing in propositions (boringly) stating that an idea in one philosophical tradition is similar to a (corresponding) idea in another philosophical tradition, but in knowing the former idea *as* like the latter idea, in coming to know both ideas better.)

Treating Harbsmeier as one step away from the conception of knowing-as

25. In his account of the concepts of knowledge and belief in ancient China, Christoph Harbsmeier addresses the question of whether the ancient Chinese had the notion of propositional knowledge. Alluding to Hansen's views, in particular, he writes:

In recent times this has been summarily denied. The suggestion is that when the Chinese believe *X* to be a *Y*, they really have no mental attitude to a proposition at all. They only have an attitude towards *X*, namely that attitude which is appropriate to things of the kind *Y*. Believing *X* is *Y* is just treating *X* as *Y*. Again, when the Chinese know that *X* is *Y* – according to this account – that does not involve the notion of a proposition at all, it only involves *successfully* treating *X* as *Y*. (1998, p. 249)

This raises a number of interesting issues. The most important thing to say, though, is that it is just a short step from how the account is described here to explicit talk of *knowing-as*. Knowing that *X* is *Y* is characterized as ‘successfully treating *X* as *Y*’, but we may as well just call it ‘knowing *X* as *Y*’. The ‘successfully’ italicized by Harbsmeier is also revealing: this is what distinguishes it from ‘merely’ treating *X* as *Y*. So we have here a reflection of the distinction between knowledge and belief. But rather than developing this, Harbsmeier goes on to note the distinction that Hansen drew between knowing-how and knowing-of (citing the passage also cited in § 10 above) and then gives some examples where he maintains that knowledge-that is involved (1998, pp. 249–51). As far as Hansen’s view is concerned, however, we might now suggest reformulating it as the claim that the ancient Chinese had a notion of *aspectual* rather than propositional knowledge.

Mohism and the logic of samples

26. The conception of knowing-as opened up here enables us to recognize – and defend – an important feature of Mohist philosophy. On their view, something is an *F* not in virtue of possessing the property of *F*, but in being similar or conforming to a relevant standard. We might describe this as being a member of the *kind* (*lèi* 類) *F*, that is, as being a member of the class of *F*s. But we don’t want to reify these kinds instead of properties or universals. Kinds are not logician’s classes, i.e., some sort of abstract object. It is just that we can sort things into different kinds, which are given a name, and something is an *F* just in virtue of being like the standard examples of this kind. We stop there, ontologically speaking: there is no temptation to endorse realism about universals. (There is an interesting analogy here to Carnap’s construction of properties out of similarity classes in the *Aufbau* of 1928.)
27. What is especially significant in this Mohist view is the connection to Wittgenstein’s later conception of samples (for an account of this conception, see Beaney 2006). Wittgenstein’s key claim in § 50 of the *Philosophical Investigations* is that one cannot say of the standard metre either that it is a metre long or that it is not, since it is an *instrument of our language*. This is the Mohist

view, in effect. What we have in Mohism is not a metaphysics of properties but a logic of samples (although this might be seen as grounded on a metaphysics of similarity relations instead).

28. We can show this by considering the obvious objection that someone might make to the Mohists' conception of knowing as appealing to a standard, where we can now restrict ourselves to an actual exemplar, that is, a *sample*. On this view, we know that something is an F, i.e., know it as F, because it is like our sample. But doesn't this presuppose that our sample is F, and hence that we must know that this is an F, i.e., know that our sample has the property F? Isn't a metaphysics of properties implicit in Mohism? It is certainly tempting to *read* this into their philosophy, but it distorts their views. We might defend this by saying that what they implicitly hold is the Wittgensteinian view that it is neither the case that the standard is F nor that it is not; it is simply the standard by means of which similarity claims are made. On the Mohist view, we simply know something *as like* the relevant standard. They don't ground this in the supposedly more basic claim that the standard *has* the property F. The similarity claim is grounded in the relevant (rule-following) practice, not in a metaphysics of properties. Wittgenstein would often invent primitive language-games in his deflationary projects; what we have here is an actual language-game in which the participants haven't trapped themselves in a fly-bottle.
29. So the Mohist picture is like this. We simply group things by similarity relations into kinds (*lei* 類), and anything is (deemed) what it is in virtue of being like the samples of the relevant kinds. This applies to inferring as well as naming. Inferences are bad if they are like the samples offered of bad inferences, good if like good ones (see Beaney 2021, § 2.1). We argue by finding the convincing analogy. Reasoning is analogical, and knowing is knowing-as.

Aspectual knowledge in the Zhuangzi

30. As already alluded to, another application of the idea of knowing-as – or aspectual knowledge – is in capturing Zhuangzi's perspectivism. Knowing is always knowing from some particular perspective or stance: knowing is always rooted in some particular rule-following practices. Those practices provide the standards by which to make judgements. Since it is still a form of 'knowing', his perspectivism does not imply scepticism about knowledge. He does not claim that we can never know anything. His 'return to the root' at the end of the happy fish dialogue emphasizes that his claim about the fishes' happiness is made within the perspective he shares with Huizi: he knows the fishes' happiness *as like* the happiness that he and Huizi both experience in their roaming

together (see Beaney 2021). Perhaps we might identify a further form of knowing here: *knowing-from*. But we could also see recognizing this form as part of elucidating the conception of knowing-as, with the details still to be spelled out.

IV Further Aspects of Knowing-As

Asymmetries between first-person and third-person claims

31. A crucial feature of our use of ‘see as’, as Wittgenstein pointed out but which has not been appreciated as much as it should (I stressed it in my book on *Imagination and Creativity*), is the asymmetry between first-person and third-person claims about what is seen. Someone can say “I see a duck” when looking at the duck-rabbit picture, while I can say of them that they see it *as* a duck, the recognition of alternative possibilities of seeing being expressed *by the person using the phrase ‘see as’*, not necessarily by the person who is doing the seeing. ‘Seeing-as’ need not refer to a different state of mind than ‘seeing’, as it might – slightly misleadingly – be put. The description (this is seeing) and evaluation (this is only one possibility of seeing) come apart.
32. Is there a similar asymmetry between first-person and third-person claims about what is known? From what has been said about the role of samples in knowledge claims, the answer would seem to be ‘yes’. Someone can say “I know this is a fish [or fish happiness]”, while we might say of them, bearing in mind the Mohist conception, that they know it *as* a fish (or fish happiness) – as like our standard examples of fish (or happiness). The situation is more complex, however. For in making knowledge claims, we are expected to be able to *support* such claims – ‘justification’, perhaps, in the case of propositional knowledge, and ‘elaboration’ in the case of objectual knowledge. We saw this illustrated even in the (apparently) simplest case of saying “I know X”, where we generally feel compelled to spell out or qualify our claim to know something here (see §§ 8–9 above). So too, if someone claims to ‘know fish’ or ‘know fishes’ happiness’, understood on the Mohist view as knowing something *as* a fish or *as* (fish) happiness, then they must be able to point to some exemplar of fish or (fish) happiness in supporting – or ‘elucidating’ – their claim. But if the use of ‘know as’, by analogy with the use of ‘see as’, indicates that there are other ways of knowing the relevant object, then this is not necessarily implied merely by saying that it is like some exemplar. However, we need not expect such a person to use the phrase “I know it *as* a fish” in supporting their claim to knowledge; they may simply point to its likeness to some standard fish. It is we, in reflecting on what is going on here, who express this by talking of them

(third-person) of knowing something *as* something. So the analogy with seeing-as holds up.

33. There is also an asymmetry in some uses of ‘know’. Someone is only said to ‘know’ something if there is some kind of support (‘justification’ for their ‘true belief’, if we were ‘Belief First’ theorists), but this does not necessarily have to be provided or recognized by the person who is said to ‘know’, unless that person is making the claim. In describing someone as knowing something *as* something, then, there need be no expectation that they themselves would describe it as knowing-as and explain it accordingly. There must still be the possibility of support – in this case, by appealing to the likeness to the relevant standard. But this need only be demanded of the person making the knowledge claim. So, in the happy fish dialogue, Zhuangzi can reasonably claim that Huizi knows fish happiness, even if Huizi denies it himself, if there is indeed a similarity to human happiness that can be recognized – a similarity that is expressed in the very framing of the dialogue (see Beaney 2021, § 5.6).

Attributing a conception of knowing-as to the Mohists

34. This enables us to answer an objection that might be raised to the very idea of attributing a conception of knowing-as to the Mohists (and ancient Chinese philosophy, more generally). There is no corresponding term or phrase in ancient Chinese for ‘know as’, it might be claimed; all we seem to have is the character 知 (*zhī*), standardly translated as just ‘know’. However, even if this were true, it does not mean that in translating ‘知’ in particular contexts we may not use ‘know as’, just as we might use ‘know that’, ‘know how’, or any other construction, to make sense in English. In any case, as far as attributing the conception of knowing-as is concerned, we should heed one of the messages of Wittgenstein’s discussion of seeing-as and move up a hermeneutic level. We can come to know the Mohists *as* having a conception of knowing-as even if they themselves do not explicitly formulate it as such. It is implicit in their conception of the role of standards in using language.
35. In fact, expressions can be found in the ancient Chinese texts that suggest a form of knowing that might indeed be reasonably characterized as knowing-as. In the *Mozi* itself, in Book 50, where Mozi is trying to convince Gongshu Ban not to build ‘cloud-ladder machines’ (i.e., siege engines) to attack the state of Song, he is reported as saying the following:

Your norm of righteousness is not to kill few, yet you would kill many – this cannot be called knowing kinds [*zhī lèi* 知類]. (*Mòzǐ*, p. 202)

As a noun, ‘lèi’ (類) can mean ‘kind’ or ‘class’, and as a verb, it can mean ‘resemble’, ‘be like’, or ‘be similar to’. So ‘zhī lèi’ might also be translated as ‘knowing similarities’. In planning to kill many people, by building siege engines, Gongshu Ban fails to recognize the similarity to the case of killing just a few people, which he holds to be wrong. So he fails to know killing many people *as like* killing just some. In the explanatory notes to his translation of the *Mozi*, Fraser comments that ‘knowing kinds’ is “a technical term in early Chinese logic for distinguishing and responding to different kinds of things correctly and consistently” (*Mòzǐ*, p. 254). It is itself a kind of knowing, I would say, that can also be described as knowing-as. (I am grateful to Eva Henke for drawing my attention to the use of ‘知類’ in this passage.)

36. In fact, the whole issue of the use of the term ‘know as’ has very interesting hermeneutic implications. If the descriptive and evaluative aspects of the use of a term such as ‘see as’ or ‘know (as)’ come apart, then we can describe what someone else sees or knows using a richer vocabulary than they themselves use. So we can still use ‘know that’, ‘know how’, ‘know as’, and any other ‘know’ constructions, in discussing Chinese philosophy, but that is not necessarily to attribute to them the corresponding *conception of knowledge*. The Mohists do not have a conception of knowing-that, since there is no metaphysics or even conception of propositions and (corresponding) facts. But they arguably do have a conception of knowing-as, since they themselves explain the knowing expressed by using names in terms of likeness to a standard.
37. Let’s assume that there is something to the conception of knowing-as just sketched. It is not a conception that seems to have been recognized, and certainly not as in any way an alternative to the two dominant conceptions of knowing-that and knowing-how. But it is a conception that we can easily form within the resources and use of the English language, even though we are developing it as a way of making sense of ancient Chinese Mohism and the conception is only implicit in the Mohist texts themselves (if the key passages have been interpreted correctly). This ease of formation is illustrated by the remark made by Harbsmeier cited above (§ 22), where he can be seen as just one step away from explicit talk of knowing-as. What we are thus doing is utilizing a potential in our own conceptual scheme to represent a conception in a different conceptual scheme which, if it works, both sheds light on that different conceptual scheme and enriches our own. We come to know an aspect of that different conceptual scheme as like a hitherto unappreciated aspect of our own conceptual scheme. It is in this way that, generalizing, we can thus speak of knowing Chinese philosophy *as* philosophy (as the ‘Western’ philosopher understands it).

Knowing-as and walking-two-roads

38. One of the key ideas in chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* is that of ‘walking-two-roads’ (*liǎng xíng* 兩行), which the sage does in both going along with the ordinary (*yōng* 庸) and resting at the centre of the heavenly wheel (*tiān jùn* 天鈞). The story of the monkeys illustrates this. The monkey trainer can go along with what the monkeys want, knowing it – like them – as four nuts in the morning and three nuts in the evening, while also knowing – from a ‘pivotal’ perspective – that they receive the same number of nuts per day if they have three in the morning and four in the evening. We can know 7 as $4 + 3$ or as $3 + 4$, but in describing this in terms of knowing-as we recognize that these are different ways of knowing the same thing, something that the monkeys fail to recognize. The monkey trainer can go along with how the monkeys (want to) know it but – unlike them – knows that there are other ‘equal’ perspectives. We might redescribe the Daoist sage, then, as someone who knows that knowing is knowing-as – who knows how to talk of knowing-as (to express this in the more familiar constructions of the Western epistemologist). So, too, if we are going to do what is (misleadingly!) known as comparative philosophy or what is better known (and pursued) as linguistic phenomenology, then we must both go along with the different ways in which things are known and adopt a pivotal stance that recognizes the different aspects of things. We must walk two roads, just like the Daoist sage, the exemplary master of knowing-as.

V Knowing-As and Other Forms of Knowing

Knowing-to

39. The conception of knowing-as may be compared to the conception of *knowing-to*, which has also been articulated only in the last few years (see especially Lai 2012; Hetherington and Lai 2015; Huang 2017). This nicely captures a key idea in Confucianism: the emphasis placed on learning the right rituals in human interaction. In becoming a *jūnzǐ* (君子), one *knows to* bow or kowtow in the correct way in appropriate situations, *knows to* speak to superiors only when addressed, and so on. This conception of knowing-to may have only been recently formulated, but it chimes with familiar practices in our own culture, and certainly makes sense of Confucian philosophy. It is tempting to think that this is reducible to knowing-that and/or knowing-how. One knows *that* a certain response is appropriate, or knows *how* to respond appropriately. But we can know *that* an action is the right thing to do on a certain occasion, and further,

know *how* to perform that action, yet still fail to do it. To say that someone knows *to* do something it is a stronger claim: they actually do it on the appropriate occasions. In the practical domain, ‘know to’ is more of a success verb.

40. The conception of knowing-to is illustrated very well in the account of *liángzhī* (良知), which has been translated as ‘moral knowledge’, offered by Wang Yangming (1472–1529), a leading member of the Neo-Confucian School of Heart-Mind (*Xīn xué* 心學):

there has never been one who knows and yet does not act. To know and yet not to act is without knowledge ... today people regard knowing and acting as two separate endeavors, thinking that one has to know before one can act; one shall first make an effort to know today, and only after one really knows does one start to make an effort to act. As a result, one does not act one’s whole life, nor does one know one’s whole life. This is a serious disease that has been long lasting. The doctrine of oneness of knowledge and action that I am advocating today is precisely meant to cure this disease. (Cited by Huang 2017, p. 72)

On Wang’s view, knowing is the initiation of acting, and acting is the completion of knowing (*zhī shì xíng zhī shǐ, xíng shì zhī zhī chéng* 知是行之始, 行是知之成). We might describe this as *enactional* knowledge, a form of practical knowledge. In the Confucian tradition, as Hetherington and Lai write, “manifestation, not the possession, of knowledge is the primary concern” (2012, p. 387).

Knowing-as as like knowing-to

41. Knowing-as can be known as like knowing-to. I can know *that* X is like Y or know *how* X can be compared to Y but not genuinely know X *as* Y. Knowledge-that and knowledge-how, whether individually or jointly in whatever degree of complexity, seem to fall short of knowledge-as. In knowing something as something I may be drawing on or utilizing a whole set of ideas or conceptual scheme in conceiving it in a fruitful way – in the way that analogies or metaphors shed light on an object or phenomenon. A simple case would be knowing someone as a social butterfly (see § 21 above). Knowing Chinese philosophy *as* philosophy is another example, albeit one that is much richer and more complex. Indeed, we might suggest that aspectual knowledge in these richer cases is itself *enactional*, in realizing and manifesting a whole new practice of understanding.

Other forms of knowing

42. There are other forms of knowing that, like knowing-as and knowing-to, are (arguably) not reducible to knowing-that and/or knowing-how, even if knowing-that and/or knowing-how are involved at some level or in certain cases. The sage can be said to possess excellent *knowledge-when*: knowing precisely when to act, when to intervene, when to say nothing, and so on. ‘Timeliness’ was recognized as a virtue in Confucianism, and in Daoism as well, knowledge of the incipient was highly regarded, so that one could go with the flow from the very beginning, or catch things before they got out of control, before anyone else even realized (see Allen 2015). In the practical domain, ‘know when’ is also a success verb.
43. Gareth Evans, years ago (1982, ch. 9), emphasized the idea of *knowing-which*, which I picked up on in my book on Frege (1996, ch. 6; cf. Dummett 1978, pp. 124–9). To know the sense of a proper name is to *know which* object is referred to, knowledge that can be exhibited by giving an appropriate definite description but which does not require there being one particular definite description that all those who understand the proper name must be able to give. (There is a scope ambiguity here which I explain in my book.) This conception of knowing-which might help elaborate the conception of knowing-of identified above (§ 10).
44. A linguistic phenomenologist should be alert to all these different ‘knowing’ constructions, which vary interestingly across different languages. Prepositions and subordinating conjunctions, in particular, deserve to be better appreciated, and there are certainly linguistic differences here. (What is needed is prepositional logic rather than propositional logic, focusing not on the relatively crude relations between propositions but on the subtler and finer-grained relations between all the various elements and aspects of a situation of which knowledge is claimed.)

VI Knowing-As in Language and Literature

Knowing-as and the Chinese language

45. The idea of knowing-as, and its connection to the use of analogy, also elucidates, and is supported by, certain features of the Chinese script. Consider the example of ‘矛盾’ (*máodùn*), which literally means ‘spear-shield’, but which is the Chinese term for ‘contradiction’. The English word derives from the Latin ‘*contra*’ and ‘*dicere*’, and hence literally means ‘saying against’, which indicates

something of its semantic meaning. But there seems to be nothing of this meaning in the term ‘spear-shield’. In fact, however, ‘*máodùn*’ alludes to the famous story in the *Hanfeizi* of the maker of spears and shields who claimed that his spears were so sharp that they could penetrate any shield and his shields were so strong that no spears could penetrate them – a clear contradiction. To say that something is a ‘*máodùn*’, then, is to say that it is like that standard ‘saying against’ of the maker of spears and shields in the story. To know what a ‘*máodùn*’ is, correspondingly, is to know something as like the ‘saying against’ in the story. Many other examples of this phenomenon could be given. The Chinese characters for a concept often refer literally to a paradigm instance of the concept, the extension of that concept then being determined by analogy – indeed, by extension from the paradigm case. Analogy and similarity relations are woven into the very linguistic fabric of Chinese thinking.

Knowing-as and the commentarial tradition

46. The conception of knowing-as makes sense of the commentarial tradition in Chinese philosophy: the extensive body of commentaries on the key texts that built up over generations of scholars which offer very different interpretations of those texts, interpretations that may strike the contemporary Western reader as only loosely anchored in the texts. But the more relaxed conception of knowing-as, which allows for knowing something *as like* ideas the commentators already have, may permit variation without threatening or undermining the text itself. Their objectual knowledge of the text is elaborated both aspectually and enactionally. (If such an extension of the idea of knowing-as is too much for some, however, then there is always the retreat to the weaker idea of interpreting-as.)
47. This historiographical conception is beautifully encapsulated poetically in the Summary (*Tsan*) of chapter 38, on ‘Factual Allusion and Textual Reference (*Shih-lei*)’, of the famous work of literary theory, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, written by Liu Hsieh (c. 465–522), as translated here by Vincent Yu-chung Shih:

Profound and rich are the Classics and ancient texts,
 Their language is exquisite and their ideas have far-reaching implications
 Their realm is vast as rivers and seas,
 And fruitful as Mount K'un and Forest Teng;
 They are [filled with literary allusions and timber] for a literary carpenter to choose and take,
 And jade and pearls in abundance as gifts,

To be able to use the words of others as if they were one's own creation
 Is to have perfect understanding of the past.

VII Conclusion

Integrating interpretation

48. It is now customary to draw a distinction between 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' translation, and the same terms might be used of interpretation. Interpreting ancient Chinese philosophy in terms of knowing-that and knowing-how would illustrate domesticating interpretation. Interpreting using key terms such as '*dao*' and '*xin*' untranslated would be foreignizing interpretation. But what we have done, in developing the idea of knowing-as, is neither domesticating nor foreignizing interpretation. It is *integrating* interpretation, which brings author and reader closer together in creating a new and richer conceptual space (along the lines that a conceptual blending theorist might elaborate; see e.g. Fauconnier and Turner 2002). We are contributing to a deeper understanding both of ancient Chinese thinking and of our own knowing practices.

Knowing knowing as knowing-as

49. In these remarks I have explored ways of getting to know knowing-as as a form of knowing. In concluding, it now strikes me that the forms of knowing that might be distinguished – from knowing-that and knowing-how to knowing-as and knowing-to – might all be seen as *aspects* of knowing, reflecting the richness and complexity of the relevant linguistic phenomena. We can indeed know knowing-as, then, as an aspect of knowing. But what about knowing knowing itself? Here we can end on a paradox that would delight both the Daoist and the Wittgensteinian. Knowing knowing itself can only be known as knowing-as.¹

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