

二. 寓言選 (下)

(乙) 刻舟求劍¹



課文 (Text)

楚人有涉江者，² 其劍自舟中墜於水，³ 遽契其舟
 曰：⁴ 「是吾劍之所從墜。⁵」舟止。⁶ 從其所契者入水求
 之，⁷ 舟已行矣，⁸ 而劍不行，求劍若此，⁹ 不亦惑乎？¹⁰

《呂氏春秋·察今》¹¹

註釋 (Annotations)

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| 1. 刻 | kè | to carve (a mark). |
| 舟 | zhōu | boat. |
| 2. 涉 | shè | to wade (through shallow water); to cross (a river). |
| 江 | jiāng | the Yangtze River. (江 was later used as a generic term for "river".) |
| 3. 自 | zì | from. (A preposition.) |
| 4. 遽 | jù | hurriedly; hastily. (An adverb.) |
| 契 | qì | to cut (a mark). |
| 5. 是 | shì | this; these; that; those. (A demonstrative pronoun.) |
| 所 | suǒ | a nominalizer of the verb or verb phrase that follows it. (A particle.) (See 文法闡釋 II and III.) |
| 從 | cóng | from. (A preposition.) |
| 6. 止 | zhǐ | to stop. |
| 7. 入 | rù | to enter. |

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| 8. 已 | yǐ | already. (An adverb.) |
| 行 | xíng | to move. |
| 9. 若 | ruò | to be like. (Same in meaning as 如.) |
| 10. 不亦...乎 | bú yì ... hū | isn't it ...? (An idiomatic pattern, expressing a rhetorical question.) |
| 惑 | huò | confused; foolish. |
| 11. 呂氏春秋 | Lǚshì chūnqiū | an encyclopedic work compiled during the late Warring States period under the patronage of and named after Lǚ Bùwěi 呂不韋, a prime minister of the state of Qin. |
| 察今 | Chá jīn | "Investigating Contemporary Matters". A chapter title of the <i>Lǚshì chunqiu</i> . |

✎ 文法闡釋 (Grammar Notes)

I. 刻舟求劍

Syntactically, this is a short form for 刻舟以求劍 "carving a mark on the boat in order to search for the (lost) sword", a metaphor for lacking the wisdom or ability to adjust to a changing situation.

II. 是吾劍之所從墜

This is an equational sentence, though not marked by 也. Its subject is 是 and the rest is the predicate. 所 is a nominalizer for the verb or verb phrase that follows it, and is the implied object of the verb, if there is only one verb; or the object of the co-verb ("preposition") when one exists, as in the present example 從. Thus, the phrase 所從墜 can be literally translated as "that from which (something) fell off". 之 is here a possessive particle. So the whole sentence means literally, "This is my sword's place from which it fell off", and idiomatically, "This is where my sword fell off".

III. 其所契者

The structure of this nominal phrase is similar to the predicate of the sentence analyzed above. 其 means "his". 所契 means "that which (somebody) marked" (or "that which was marked"). 者, also a nominalizer, is used here in coordination with 所. As such, its use is optional and semantically secondary to 所. The whole phrase means, therefore, "the place that he marked".

IV. 不亦惑乎?

不亦…乎? is a commonly-used form for rhetorical questions, always carrying a tone of courtesy. That tone comes from the word 亦 which implies other possibilities or alternatives, therefore, suggesting an attitude of non-assertion on the part of the speaker. So the sentence can be translated as: "Isn't it rather confused?"