

## TAMKANG ENGLISH

專題報導

Aesop<sup>1</sup> and the Ass<sup>2</sup>

Animals in beast fables<sup>3</sup> talk and behave like humans. They are given distinctive qualities:<sup>4</sup> for example, the "dumb ass," the "meek sheep," the "rapacious<sup>5</sup> wolf," the "sly fox," the "formidable<sup>6</sup> lion and tiger," the "ruthless<sup>7</sup> hawk," the "proud peacock," and so on. Beast fables are in fact about the hu-man world, in which people tend to label<sup>8</sup> other people as dumb, meek, rapacious, sly, proud (etc.), and call them by the names of these animals correspondingly.<sup>9</sup> In Aesop's Fables, the ass is always portrayed<sup>10</sup> as extremely unintelligent.<sup>11</sup> Ae-sop writes:

An Ass undertook to run a race with the Horse.

The result was as might have been expected,

and the Ass got laughed at. "I now see what was

the matter with me," said the Ass "I ran a thorn

into my foot<sup>12</sup> some months ago, and it still pains

me."

—"The Ass and the Race—Horse"

Animals are stereotyped<sup>13</sup> in Aesop's stories to moralize about<sup>14</sup> human nature, and the stereotypes persist<sup>15</sup> today. In the English language, an "ass" means a fool. In Chinese, likewise, a fool has come to be called ch'un-lu (蠢驢). Lessing,<sup>16</sup> however, makes fun of Aesop in his adaptation<sup>17</sup> of the story:

"The next time you write a fable about me," said the Ass to Aesop,

"make me say something wise and sensible."

"Something sensible from you!" exclaimed Aesop "what would the world think? People would call you the Moralist<sup>19</sup> and me the Ass!"

—"Aesop and the Ass"

Since there is no way for an ass to trade<sup>20</sup> his role with Aesop's, the ass will most likely remain a stupid animal for a very long time to come.

註釋：

1. Aesop: 伊索 (620? —560? B.C.)，希臘寓言集Aesop's Tables (《伊索寓言》) 的作者。
2. ass: 驢，又稱donkey。
3. beast fables: 動物寓言。
4. distinctive qualities: 特性。
5. rapacious: 貪婪的。
6. formidable: 可怕的，難對付的。
7. ruthless: 殘忍的，無情的。
8. to label: 貼標籤，把人稱為... (as)。
9. correspondingly: 對應地。
10. to be portrayed as: 被描繪為...。

11. unintelligent: 不聰明的，為intelligent的相反詞。12. to run a thorn into one's foot: 腳被荊棘刺傷。13. to be stereotyped: 被刻板印象化。14. to moralize about: 就…說道理【通常一則寓言的結尾都有個寓意，英文叫moral，動詞是moralize】。15. to persist: 持續。16. Lessing: 萊興 (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 1729–1781)，德國批評家及戲劇家。17. adaptation: 改編。18. sensible: 明智的，有見識的。19. moralist: 道德家，說教者。20. trade: v. 交換。

動物寓言是人類社會的投影，故事中形形色色的動物各具個性，單純固定。《伊索寓言》中有凶猛的獅和虎、柔弱的羊、貪婪的狼、狡猾的狐狸和驕傲的孔雀等，都是大家熟悉的動物造型。另外一種動物—驢子—也經常出現在故事中，總是因為行為愚蠢，缺乏自知之明，而淪為讀者取笑的對象。伊索的動物眾生相已成了經典，融入了讀者的意識型態和語言之中。萊興對「驢子」的刻板形象進行反思，認為人類（伊索）以筆為利劍，「謀殺」手無寸鐵的動物的形象，將驢子塑造成亙古不變的「蠢驢」。驢子為自然界的生物之一，在生態體系中自有牠的一席之地，本不需人類的褒或貶。萊興的反思，受益者其實是人類自己，學習謙恭自省，才能免於自大。