

Luo Shengmen

I met Shengmen in the fall of 2021, when he took the Logic, Language and Philosophy course that Liu Fenrong and I teach together. He did very well, not only in the logic part of the course, but also in the philosophical part. Shengmen gave a presentation on Russell's On Denoting, together with three other students, and when I checked my comments on a draft version of their presentation, I noticed that I had quite some comments, but that on Shengmen's part I wrote "This section is very well done" .

As one of those talented Tsinghua students Shengmen took up the study of logic and almost effortlessly did the four qualifying courses for the certificate programme of the Joint Research Center. And Shengmen stayed in logic and came to the ILLC to broaden and deepen his knowledge.

But Shengmen was not only a very good logic student, he was also talented in other ways. I recall the piano recital he gave during the event at which we celebrated the 10th year anniversary of the JRC. It was a very moving performance.

There are other examples of such multi-talents that combine musical ability and competence in logic/mathematics. Apparently the kind of abstraction and contemplation that is needed for both is quite similar. Shengmen combined that ability with a presence that was both stylish and modest.

We know that death is the inescapable part of life. But it should not come for someone at Shengmen's age. For someone to die so early defies our sense of fairness, our idea of what human life should be, and it leaves a gap that we are not prepared for, a gap that is almost too difficult to close.

But Shengmen's family and Shengmen's friends and we will have to deal with this, and we wish them all the strength they need to do this.

Someone who is gone is still there in our memories, sometimes we can almost feel their presence. For me this is one way to read the following short poem by Wang Wei, one of China's great poets, who lived during the Tang dynasty. It reads as follows:

On the empty mountain there is no-one to be seen
You only hear the echo of someone's voice
The sun's returning rays enter the deep woods
And shine again on the dark, green moss

I hope that when we remember Shengmen we will hear his voice, his music, and that the memory will be like the sun returning.