Situations Beyond Human Control in the *Zhuangzi*

D.Phil thesis
17/5/2018, Wuhan

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Abstract

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Ai YUAN, The Queen's College, DPhil Oriental Studies, 2018.

In this project, I reexamine the idea of acceptance in the *Zhuangzi* and develop it by reconstructing *an* 安 (contentment) as a fundamental element in dealing with 'human limitations', and accordingly, with things beyond human control. I argue that the question of *how* to deal with human limitations is central to ideas in the *Zhuangzi* of how one should live in the mundane world. That is to say, the idea of *an* is seen as an important part of self-cultivation for living a good life. In other words, the reason for the discussions on human limitations in the *Zhuangzi* is to arrive at a way of *dealing* with these limitations, rather than to try to escape from them.

To be specific, this project not only examines debates and discussions regarding human limitations through different terms and stories, but also focuses on actions and attitudes that can be adopted to deal with these limitations. It discusses the following aspects: how the *Zhuangzi* justifies the attitude of *an* (安) as a conscious and active choice through which one can willingly accept human limitations, namely *ming* (命) and nature *xing* (性), and accordingly lead a safe, efficient, and peaceful life; how the idea of contentment allows one to be a filial (*xiao* 孝) child when confronted with a problematic relationship with one's parents; how the idea of *an* is justified in the *Zhuangzi* as a form of courageous (*yong* 勇) behaviour*;* how and why the Zhuangzian sages chose singing (*ge* 歌) as a means of expressing their contentment towards situations that are beyond human control; and how laughing (*xiao* 笑) at the uncontrollable can be transformed into a form of self-control.

With a thorough analysis of contentment in the *Zhuangzi*, this project makes the following contributions. First, the Zhuangzian idea of contentment is re-evaluated by

relating it to other questions of philosophical concern, therefore bringing new significance to it. Second, this work opens up a new discussion on how and why one can affirm and willingly accept the human limitations within the field of Chinese philosophy, so that one can engage in a topic that is also of concern in religious studies and Western philosophy. Third, through this project, we will be able to appreciate more fully the ways in which Zhuangzian philosophy is related to other works in early China.

To my family

For their trust and support

Acknowledgements

As I researched and wrote this thesis, many people have helped me. I am grateful to all of them.

My DPhil advisor, Professor Dirk Meyer, who never stops trusting me and giving me freedom to exercise my ideas and interests, all the while helping me bridge sinology and philosophy. While sometimes having to disagree with my wilder ideas, he never stopped supporting my ideas and explorations. I never forget the smell of Queen's cappuccino and the chattering of the stairs. I thank him for his boundless energy, care, and friendly support.

Professor Barend Ter Haar helped me improve my work on numerous occasions and stimulated me to reflect on the gap between philosophy, socio-cultural and religious history. Every time I left his classroom – wacky Dutch jokes to decipher and all – with an ever-growing reading list and new ideas to work through. I am thankful for his support, advice, and encouragement, as always, Barend was both umbrella and mentor for students in need.

Professor Bernhard Fuehrer, who introduced SOAS to me back in Hong Kong and supported me all the way for my studies there. Since then, I never stop finding chances to go back to the beautiful Thornhaugh Street, for seminars, lectures, or a drink at SOAS garden in the rain (it is London after all). Fuehrer has given me much needed feedback on my thesis over the past four years, challenging my assumptions, drawing my attention to different explanations, and most importantly, kept asking: So, what is next?

My academic journey could not have continued without the two exciting years in Hong Kong. I began researching ideas surrounding "situations beyond human control" when I was a MPhil student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. My supervisor back then, Professor Liu Xiaogan gave me endless patience and help. He taught me how to be a decent scholar and colleague. My co-supervisor Professor Kwong-loi Shun guided me through the Confucian tradition and Western philosophical debates. Professor Wim De Reu introduced me to new methodologies to the *Zhuangzi*.

I am happy for all the fantastic opportunities to present, learn, and get comments I encountered along the way, in no particular order: Thursday seminars at China Center; regular Queen's College reading groups; the Wei Jin Nanbei Chao Summer School; Two reading groups back in Taipei (and the strong coffee); my anonymous reviewers of the SACP, ISCP, and EACP young scholar essay awards. I also thank SOAS and Oxford libraries for their precious deposits. I wandered (and wondered) around within and they gave me candies.

I think my life and my project could not be complete without friends. I thank Yegor Grebnev for his long-term friendship. I thank Chu-Man Kwong and Michael Schapers for reading my earlier drafts. I thank Joern Grundmann, Jin Xiu, Peter Ditmanson, Li Mingshu, Liao Jiajun, Shi Zhentao for beautiful moments in Taipei. I thank Haijie Tan, Chen Qu, Jennifer Lim, Pakavarin Louphrasitthiphol, Jingyi Ma, Yiding Chen, and Qin Chunlin for their horrible jokes, outspoken laughs, bad drinks, and good food, as well as our exchange of ideas on medical science, material science, philosophy, chemistry, etc.

I owe a massive debt to my parents who never worried about me being a stereotypical single-female-doctoral student (or: “Dinosaur” in Chinese). Instead, they always showed me how proud they are to have a daughter who can think, talk, and act as a free person (albeit a bit rebellious). They are a home to go back to with limitless support, love, and *laughter*. My grandparents who gave me their memories, both through stories and good food, always teach me the strength of life, the spirit of being good person, and the importance of family. We do not say I love you often or hug, but I know their happiness when I say, I am about to be a doctor.

Finally, another important person, Rens Krijgsman, is many things in my life. My laogong, critical reader, best friend, partner in life, and honest listener. We tried avoiding academic discussions in the beginning, but eventually, I could not resist the honest (but a bit too straightforward) comments and the fun that came with those debates. My whole life is fuller with him. I thank him for bringing me a bigger family and growing together with me.

Introduction: The Problems of 'Situations Beyond Human Control' and 'Acceptance'

The problem of situations beyond human control is prevalent throughout the *Zhuangzi*. The *Zhuangzi* talks of undesirable, uncontrollable, and irreversible occurrences in life that human beings can do nothing about. As loyal a minister as Wu Zixu (伍子胥) was, the ruler Fu Chai (夫差) ended up killing him and dumping his body into a river.[1] As wise and influential a man as Confucius was, he had to escape from danger between Chen and Cai, or from being surrounded by troops in Wei.[2] As filial a son as Xiao Ji (孝己) was, he was not loved by his father Wu Ding (武丁), who sent him off into exile until his death.[3] This was also the case with the filial son, Zeng Shen (曾参), who, despite his filial behavior, was almost beaten to death by his parents.[4] The fate that these individuals suffered is, we believe, not *supposed* to happen. We wonder why bad things happen to good people, such as loyal ministers and loyal sons. In this thesis, I examine the ideas and solutions that the *Zhuangzi* advances to deal with this problem. I will make the case that the *Zhuangzi* advocates an active attitude of *acceptance* to deal with situations beyond human control. To show the significance of such an approach, I give a brief introduction of how other thinkers – ancient and modern – have dealt with this problem.

Throughout early China, different approaches were discussed to deal with situations that are beyond human control. For example, in the Guodian (郭店) manuscript 'Qiong da yi shi' 窮達以時 (Failure and Success Depend on Timing),[5] we see a call for

[1] Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844-1896), *Zhuangzi Ji Shi* 莊子集釋 (Collected Annotations of the *Zhuangzi*), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007 [first edition, 1961], p. 155, p. 920.
[2] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 595-596.
[3] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 920.
[4] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 920.
[5] For an account of the discovery of the tomb, see Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation*, Vol. 1, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012. On the order of the manuscripts, I

moral cultivation and self-examination when the era (*shi* 世), encounter (*yu* 遇), or timing (*shi* 時) are not right for fulfilling one's moral and political ambitions. As the text says, 'there are distinctions between heaven and humans.' (天人有分) When it comes to things that are beyond human control, one needs to know that 'failure and success appear at their respective times, yet dark and bright do not alternate. It is for this reason that the gentleman esteems self-examination.' (窮達以時，幽明不再，故君子反敦于己)

There is likewise an emphasis on self-cultivation in the *Analects* and *Mencius*; however, these two texts also call for acknowledging that such things are the result of *ming*, namely what is mandated. Confucius said that 'If the way is going to be put into practice, it is mandated; if it is going to be discarded, it is also mandated.' (道之將行也與，命也；道之將廢也與， 命也) He felt that human effort can lead to success only with the approval of the Dao and Heaven. Mencius further argued for the establishment of his *ming* (*li ming* 立命) through self-cultivation and the acceptance of whatever Heaven mandates.[6]

Others, such as Mozi, simply rejected the existence of *ming* and directed our attention towards human efforts.[7] These are just a small selection of attitudes and ideas towards uncertainties and uncontrollable situations in early China. They do not do justice to the full complexities of every thinker as presented in these texts; however, they do suggest that the issue was broadly discussed in early China.

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followed Meyer's reconstruction. See Dirk Meyer, "Structure as a Means of Persuasion as Seen in the Manuscript 'Qiong da yi shi' 窮達以時 from Tomb One, Guodian," *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005): 173-210.

[6] For a detailed discussion, see Michael Puett, "Following the Commands of Heaven, the Notion of Ming in early China," in Christopher Lupke, ed., *The Magnitude of Ming, Command Allotment and Fate in Chinese Culture*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 49-69. The translations also follow that of Puett.

[7] For a detailed discussion on ideas against fate in the *Mozi*, see Franklin Perkins, "The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2008): 421-436.

The problem of how to deal with the uncontrollable and undesirable is also a major concern in the West. Scholars have tried to find different frameworks to deal with the issue, including frameworks such as 'freedom and fate'; 'theodicy'; and, more recently, 'moral luck'.

One typical way to understand an undesirable occurrence is to problematize it within the debate of 'freedom and fate'. In this debate, many try to find solutions by thinking of how they could act otherwise when faced with fate. To be specific, when dealing with the contradiction between uncontrollability and human free will, many scholars have argued that the two concepts are incompatible. They argue that future events are decided by 'logical laws', 'metaphysical necessities', the 'existence and nature of God', or simply 'causal determination'.[8] They believe that if situations cannot happen otherwise and actions could not have been performed otherwise, then there is no way to exercise one's freedom of choice.

Despite the different ideas that have been attributed to freedom and fate, we can find a shared logic, that is: first, they acknowledge the premise that events are all inevitably unchangeable in life; and then, they search for freedom merely through action. In other words, scholars generally treat the acknowledgement of uncontrollable events as a denial of self-control, and only find control through action. The solution that they focus on is to question how one could have acted differently.

Certain tremendous, undesirable occurrences also lead us to reflect on the problem posed in theodicy, that is, the question of why God/the world permits the manifestation of evil, why God let bad things happen to human beings, a concept admittedly alien to

[8] Baron Holbach, "The Illusion of Free Will," in *The Experience of Philosophy*, D. Kolak and R. Martin, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 176-181; Daniel Wegner, *The Illusion of Conscious Will*, MIT Press: Bradford Books, 2003. In philosophical discussions, many people have argued that determinism and free will are compatible. See, for example, A. J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity," in his *Philosophical Essays*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954, pp. 3-20; Ishtiyaque Haji, *Incompatibilism's Allure*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2009; and Ishtiyaque Haji, *Moral Appraisability*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Chinese thinking. Human beings are assumed to be unique compared to other species, because the universe/God resembles us and gives objective grounding of objective values for living good. In other words, our values resemble those of God. However, bad things still happen to good people, such as the Holocaust or cancer. This leads to the questions whether the divine really orders the world in the way humans believe it should be ordered; whether the divine actually shares our values; and whether, as a result, our acknowledged values might not be groundless after all.[9] Scholars have presented various explanations for the disunity between humans and the divine/world, which fall under the following two main types.

On the one hand, claims are made that side with the divine. Theologians such as John Hick have argued that difficulties can be justified if one sees suffering as designed by God. By facing and experiencing suffering, one has exercised one's free will, and therefore undergoes the ultimate spiritual growth. According to Hick, if people believe that it is problematic when bad things happen, but believed ought not to be, this is only because they wrongly perceive the world as a hideous paradise.[10] On the other hand, scholars such as Alvin Plantinga reject the idea of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. He argued, 'It is possible that God, even being omnipotent, could not create a world with free creatures who never choose evil. Furthermore, it is possible that God, even being omnibenevolent, would desire to create a world that contains evil if moral goodness requires free moral creatures.'[11] He also questioned whether the current world, with all its

[9] For a basic summary of "the problem of evil," see Tooley Michael, 2005, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/evil/#The. Accessed: December 2016. Also for, a comparison of the problem of evil between East and West, see Franklin Perkins, *Heaven and Earth are not Humane*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.
[10] See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, New York: Harper and Row, revised edition 1978.
[11] Chad Meister, *Introducing Philosophy of Religion*, Routledge, 2009, p. 133.

ills, is better than any other imagined world, and he regards any defence of God's reasons for permitting evil as shallow and ultimately frivolous.[12]

Together with the question of God, the existence of uncertainty and uncontrollable occurrences in life also lead us to question our moral responsibilities in general, resulting in the discussion of 'moral luck'. This topic, developed by Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel, argues against morality that is immune to luck, which is a term to identify different types of factors that are beyond human control in life.[13] As Nagel defined it, 'Where a significant aspect of what someone does depends on factors beyond his control, yet we continue to treat him in that respect as an object of moral judgment, it can be called moral luck.'[14] Before these arguments on moral luck, scholars tended to be persuaded by Immanuel Kant, who argued that luck is irrelevant to morality:

> A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because of its fitness to attain some proposed end, but only because of its volition, that is, it is good in itself.… Even if, by a special disfavour of fortune or by the niggardly provision of a stepmotherly nature, this will should wholly lack the capacity to carry out its purpose—if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing and only the good will were left (not, of course, as a mere wish but as the summoning of all means insofar as they are in our control) – then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has its full worth in itself. Usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add anything to this worth nor take anything away from it.[15]

To show how luck influences moral judgement, Nagel identified four types of luck that he considered relevant to our moral responsibilities. First, is how things turn out to be. For example, whether a careless driver ever ends up hurting someone, will change that

[12] Alvin Plantinga, "Self-Profile," in James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen, eds., *Alvin Plantinga*, Dordrecht: D. Riedle, 1985, pp. 3-97.
[13] For a more detailed discussion on moral luck, see Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, Vol. 50 (1976): 115-135, 137-151.
[14] Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 59.
[15] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, M. Gregor, ed., and trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 4: 394.

driver's moral and legal responsibility for the relevant hurt or loss. The result of certain actions will influence how we evaluate the person performing the action.

Second, one's character traits and disposition, which one cannot decide, can largely influence one's actions. When a negligent driver who forgets to check the car's brakes causes someone's death in an accident, we cannot judge the driver without taking into consideration his or her inborn trait.

Third, there is the circumstance of luck that one cannot choose. 'For example, consider Nazi collaborators in Germany, who were condemned for committing morally atrocious acts, even though their very presence in Nazi Germany was due to factors beyond their control.'[16]

Last, is casual luck, namely how casual things can influence the result; this problem is similar to the case of 'freedom and fate' discussed above. All four types of luck can help us to understand the importance of luck and things that are uncontrollable, in terms of their relevance to one's moral judgements in life, as well as one's evaluations of a person in general.

The above three different frameworks put forward by Western thinkers provide us with ways of thinking about undesirable occurrences that are beyond human control. An evaluation of the above approaches is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I present them to show that there are a variety of perspectives and approaches through which we can deal with the problem of undesirable occurrences, through which we can come up with new insights.

There is, however, one idea that most philosophers in the West will disagree with regarding dealing with situations beyond human control, namely the attitude of

[16] See the entry on "moral luck" in the Stanford encyclopaedia Dana K. Nelkin, 2013 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-luck/#Acc. Accessed: December 2016.

acceptance. As previously discussed, when scholars search for answers on how to act otherwise and when they try to find a way to solve the dichotomy between God and the human world, in rejecting the importance of luck within moral judgements they in fact reject the acceptance of uncontrollable and undesirable occurrences. Let us examine the fundamental reasons for rejecting the idea of acceptance, and also explore some unique voices in the West that, on the contrary, find meaning within acceptance.

'Acceptance' in the West

For most philosophers in Western countries, the idea of acceptance and of being content with what one has been given is unacceptable, since it devalues human effort and suggests that one should give in and not fight against unjust or undesirable situations. As Sophia Botros pointed out, 'Accepting the circumstances of one's life and its attendant miseries is, if not positively repugnant to modern ears, at least utterly puzzling.'[17] Scholars such as Isaiah Berlin believe that the idea of accepting what is beyond one's control justifies resignation to cruel and cold-blooded behaviour, leading to inertia. Therefore, they tend to focus on defying an unjust social order;[18] they seek freedom[19] and happiness, by rejecting the idea of acceptance. In other words, acceptance is seen as contrary to acting to bring about a different result, and to fighting against what is given.

In the West, the general aversion towards the idea of acceptance has made the philosophical attempts to justify it rather unique. For example, in his 1952 book *The Courage To Be*, the German philosopher-theologian Paul Tillich emphasized the importance of courage and acceptance. He discussed the courage to accept and continue to

[17] To justify how acceptance serves moral functions, see Sophia Botros, "Acceptance and Morality," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 58 (1983): 433-453.
[18] Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *Against the Current*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1979, pp.1-24, see especially p. 16.
[19] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 129.

live a meaningful life when our life and existence may appear to have no purpose, and while we are swallowed by guilt that we are destined to bear. He related courage to acceptance and self-affirmation.[20] Tillich stated that 'courage is the power of life to affirm itself in spite of this ambiguity, while the negation of life because of its negativity is an expression of cowardice.'[21] Such an affirmation of one's own existence involves the acceptance of its finitude, and of death as the inevitable end of life.

Furthermore, according to James Kellenberger, two nineteenth-century existentialist thinkers, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), both envisioned a joyful acceptance of life, despite all of its uncontrollable pains and suffering. Kellenberger argued that, for Kierkegaard, joyful acceptance flows from the certitude of faith in God, and the knowledge that has been given. For Nietzsche, joyful acceptance is an acceptance of life and eternity, and is ultimately a matter of will.[22] Moreover, as Sophie Botros argued, both Kierkegaard and the early thought of Wittgenstein closely relate the idea of acceptance with freedom.[23] Wittgenstein even argued that only by accepting the powerlessness of human beings to affect things can one find freedom in the world.[24] The similarities between the above examples suggest that ideas on acceptance share one crucial similarity, namely the acknowledgement and affirmation of undesirable and uncontrollable occurrences. They either affirm it through examining the meaning of life and human existence, or through the idea of freedom, as well as of one's faith in God. Voices on acceptance are not uniquely Western. It is also a core idea in the *Zhuangzi*.

[20] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, New Haven, Yale University, 2000 [first edition, 1952].
[21] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, New Haven, Yale University, 2000, p. 21.
[22] James Kellenberger, *Kierkegaard and Nietzsche*: *Faith and Eternal Acceptance* (Library of Philosophy and Religion), New York: St Martin's Press, 1997.
[23] Sophia Botros, "Acceptance and Morality," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 58 (1983): 433-434.
[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), *Notebooks 1914-1916* [second edition], G.E.M. Anscombe and Georg Henrik von Wright, eds., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 19.

'Acceptance' in the *Zhuangzi*

The problematizing of situations beyond human control is vividly illustrated in the *Zhuangzi.* Why do uncontrollable situations happen? Why has this happened to me? How can I deal with it? These are questions that human beings ask when faced with undesirable and uncontrollable occurrences. Human beings are trying to determine the responsible parties. They search for reasons and causes, and try to think of what to do in response. The mental process of dealing with an uncontrollable situation is vividly illustrated through the following story.

> 子輿與子桑友，而霖雨十日。子輿曰：「子桑殆病矣！」裹飯而往食之。至子桑之門，則若歌若哭，鼓琴曰：「父邪母邪！天乎人乎！」子輿入，曰：「子之歌詩，何故若是？」（子桑）曰：「吾思乎使我至此極者而弗得也。父母豈欲吾貧哉？天無私覆，地無私載，天地豈私貧我哉？求其為之者而不得也。然而至此極者，命也夫！」[25]
> Master Yu and Master Sang were friends. Once it rained incessantly for ten days. Master Yu said to himself, 'Master Sang is probably ill,' and he wrapped up some rice and took it for his friend to eat. When he got to Master Sang's gate, he heard something like singing or crying, and someone drumming a zither and saying, 'Father? Mother? Heaven? Man?' Master Yu went inside and said, 'Why are you singing a verse like that!' 'I was pondering what it is that has brought me to this extremity, but I couldn't find the answer. My father and mother surely wouldn't wish this poverty on me. Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears up all without partiality – heaven and earth surely wouldn't single me out to make me poor. I try to discover who is doing it, but I can't get the answer. Still, here I am – at the very extreme. It must be *ming.*'[26]

This example calls for the consideration of why undesirable and uncontrollable situations occur. It explains away human interference, as well as supernatural predestination

[25] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi,* pp.285-286.
[26] All of my English translations are based on and revised from Burton Watson's work. See Burton Watson, trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

as potential causes for Master Sang's miserable experience, and directs the reader's attention to the idea of *ming*.

Traditionally, scholars have come up with three main types of explanations on the acceptance of *ming* in the *Zhuangzi*: the 'accept and escape' model, the 'accept as embodiment' model, and the 'accept to adapt' model. Of these three interpretations, the first one is probably the most widely accepted. Many scholars have argued that human beings have too little control over situations that occur in daily life. Therefore, they hold a fatalistic view of real life, believing that the *Zhuangzi* advocates giving up control and completely withdrawing from social life. Accordingly, they have suggested that the *Zhuangzi* argues for an escape into a realm of imagination, spiritual freedom, or the transcendence of the limitations of mundane life.[27] This is the first model of acceptance, which leads to an escape from worldly affairs. For example, Liu Xiaogan in his article 'Zhuangzi's Philosophy: A Three Dimensional Reconstruction' treats the acceptance of, and escape from, inevitable situations in life as only a means for one to reach the kingdom of spiritual freedom, where one can enjoy oneself in transcendent carefree wandering.[28] In this model, the acceptance of *ming* has no place in the framework of the ultimate goal. On the contrary, spiritual freedom requires a withdrawal from worldly affairs. In this sense, acceptance becomes an

[27] For a discussion of Zhuangzian spiritual freedom as irrelevant to worldly affairs, see Ge Ling Shang, *Liberation As Affirmation: The Religiosity of Zhuangzi and Nietzsche*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 52: '[P]erhaps the best concept we can think of in the book of *Zhuangzi* and his philosophy must be *xiaoyaoyou*, the thesis of the very first chapter and the spiritual destination of his whole teaching.' Michael Saso, "The Chuang-tzu nei-p'ien: A Taoist Meditation," in Victor H. Mair, ed., *Experimental essays on Chuang-tzu*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1984, pp. 140-157; Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian* 中國哲學史新編 (Revised Edition of the History of Chinese Philosophy), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984, p. 119; Jia Zongpu 賈宗普, "Lun qianren dui Zhuangzi 'xiaoyao' de butong jieshi" 論前人對莊子"逍遙"的不同解釋 (A discussion of different interpretations of *xiaoyao* 逍遙), *Nankai xuebao*, Vol. 1 (2002): 34-43; Fukunaga Mitsuji 福光永司, "'No-mind' in the *Chuang-tzu* and Ch'an Buddhism," *Zinbun*, Vol. 12 (1969): 9-45; Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Zhuangzi zhexue jiqi yanbian* 莊子哲學及其演變 (The evolution of Zhuangzi's philosophy), Beijing: Zhongguo zheshui kexue chubanshe, 1987, pp. 153-154, 158; Lee Yearley, "The Perfected Person in the Radical Zhuangzi," in V. Mair, ed., *Experimental Essays on Zhuangzi*, Dunedin, Florida, Three Pines Press, 2010, pp. 126-136. [An augmented reprint of an earlier (1983) piece.]

[28] Liu Xiaogan, ed., *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, New York: Springer, 2015, pp. 193-219.

unconditional submission to uncontrollable situations, desirable or undesirable. Therefore, we may equate this kind of acceptance with being resigned to life.

The second model argues that to accept situations beyond human control is to embody the highest values of the *Dao*/Heaven, therefore enabling one to achieve union with them. For example, Michael Puett argued that in the *Zhuangzi*, to accept what is given is to follow the order of heaven and, accordingly, to become a sage.[29] The relationship between acceptance and being in a union with Heaven is also evident when scholars discuss accepting and being contented with the idea of death, an important aspect of human limitations. For example, Franklin Perkins and Chris Fraser argued that the attitude towards death in the *Zhuangzi* is to accept it as a natural process of change.[30] With the acceptance of death as Heaven's natural process of change, one finds harmony with Heaven. In other words, accepting uncontrollable situations becomes the way to reach union with Heaven. Within this model, uncontrollable situations in the *Zhuangzi* are beyond good or bad; they are only a natural process of change, just like the changing of day into night.

The third, adaptive, model relates acceptance of uncontrollable situations to a relativist point of view, treating acceptance as a convenient practice and skill for avoiding conflicts and reaching spiritual spontaneity.[31] To be specific, this model argues that when one holds a relativist view, not insisting that any one action is better than another, then one can accept any situation without fixed judgements. Accordingly, when one can label

[29] Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, sacrifice and self-divinization in early China,* Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 127-133.
[30] See Franklin Perkins, "Death and Crying: Problems of death in early Confucianism," in Hans-Georg Moller and Gunter Wohlfart, eds., *Philosophieren Über den Tod – Death in Eastern and Western Philosophies,* Cologne: Edition Chora, 2004, pp. 109-119; Chad Hansen, "A Dao of Dao in Chuang-tzu," in Victor Mair ed., *Experimental Essays in the Chuang-Tzu,* Dunedin, Florida: Three Pines Press, 2010, pp. 23-55; and Chris Fraser, "Xunzi Versus Zhuangzi, two approaches to death in classical Chinese thought," in *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* Vol. 8, No. 3 (2013): 410-427.
[31] Robert Eno, "Cook Ding's Dao and the Limits of Philosophy"; and Lee H. Yearley, "Zhuangzi's Understanding of Skilfulness and the Ultimate Spiritual State," *in* Paul Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism and Ethics in the Zhuangzi,* SUNY Press, 1996, pp. 127-151, pp. 152-182.

anything as either good or bad, this allows one to search for skills that are best suited to deal with different circumstances. One can then act spontaneously, in response to different situations, without being bounded by fixed values.

Admittedly, all three models were developed based on valid textual evidence and reveal deep philosophical insights. However, they also share some problems. First, regardless of whether scholars claim a fatalistic, relativistic, or naturalistic view of situations beyond human control, these refer to a view towards 'everything' in the world, but not towards particular events. Is *ming* a category that refers to a general understanding of events in the world, or an idea for understanding particular events? Second, the models only focus on the 'factual' aspect of *ming*, without paying attention to the argument in the *Zhuangzi* that whether or not something is *ming* is sometimes open to argument and can be decided in accordance with one's perspective. Accordingly, when arguing for acceptance, regardless of whether such acceptance is seen as an attitude of resignation, a way to embody the Dao, or an attitude for adapting, these explanations tend to argue for a 'general' attitude towards everything that happens in the world, which may or may not result from assiduous cultivation.

Moreover, there are theoretical difficulties to each of the three reconstructed models discussed above. In model one, the question must be faced whether, apart from spiritual freedom, one can find any value in worldly affairs if one passively accepts everything? This question is proposed because, although Liu Xiaogan argued for accepting given situations in order to attain absolute spiritual freedom, we cannot ignore the argument that within the ultimate value of freedom, acceptance is absolutely irrelevant to worldly affairs.[32] Is that true? This thesis will show that there is a form of free choice in the *Zhuangzi* based on

[32] See Liu Xiaogan, "Zhuangzi's philosophy: A Three Dimensional Reconstruction," in Liu Xiaogan, ed., *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, New York: Springer, 2015, pp. 193-219.

engagement *in* worldly affairs. Model two, in turn, must inevitably address the question of whether we should compromise all of our values to live according to Heaven's values. What would be the value of human thought if we unconditionally accepted everything that was given? As Graham argued, being united with heaven puts heaven in the centre of all things, and human beings at the periphery.[33] Putting heaven in a central position may impair one's reflective thinking and the meaning of one's life. Finally, adaptive values, where one treats everything as either good or bad, are emphasized in model three. While such values clearly reveal an active attitude and the making of a conscious choice to deal with uncontrollable situations in the *Zhuangzi*, they may lead to the Zhuangzian idea of acceptance being merely a tool for achieving the best practical outcome. Moreover, these values do not explain how such choices should be made, and the problem must be faced of having to consciously decide – *ad absurdum* – the implications of every choice. Therefore, this project will further develop these ideas by examining aspects that have been ignored.

Specifically, this project will explore the following questions: What ideas does the *Zhuangzi* try to convey when discussing *ming*? How can we understand the idea of *ming* and its relation to terms such as *xing* 性 (nature) and to situations that are regarded in the *Zhuangzi* as being beyond human control? How are situations that are beyond human control related to one's relationship with family, a crucial problem for early Chinese social beings? How are situations beyond human control to be dealt with, not just spiritually, but also practically? How can spiritual and practical problems be solved by focusing on the specific attitude of acceptance instead of on just actions? How is this acceptance to be distinguished from resignation, inertia, or passivity? How does this attitude deal with emotions? How is the attitude of dealing with situations that are beyond human control

[33] A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1989, pp. 195-199.

expressed in the *Zhuangzi*? How is self-control understood in the *Zhuangzi* when *ming* is discussed?

Focus of the study

In this project, I reexamine the idea of acceptance in the *Zhuangzi* and develop it by reconstructing *an* 安 (contentment) as a fundamental element in dealing with 'human limitations', and accordingly, with things beyond human control. I argue that the question of how to deal with human limitations is central to ideas in the *Zhuangzi* of how one should live in the mundane world. That is to say, the idea of *an* is seen as an important part of self-cultivation for living a good life. In other words, the reason for the discussions on human limitations in the *Zhuangzi* is to arrive at a way of dealing with these limitations, rather than to try to escape from them.

To be specific, this project not only examines debates and discussions regarding human limitations through different terms and stories, but also focuses on actions and attitudes that can be adopted to deal with these limitations. It discusses the following aspects: how the *Zhuangzi* justifies the attitude of *an* (安) as a conscious and active choice through which one can willingly accept human limitations, namely *ming* (命) and nature *xing* (性), and accordingly lead a safe, efficient, and peaceful life; how the idea of contentment allows one to be a filial (*xiao* 孝) child when confronted with a problematic relationship with one's parents; how the idea of *an* is justified in the *Zhuangzi* as a form of courageous (*yong* 勇) behaviour*;* how and why the Zhuangzian sages chose singing (*ge* 歌) as a means of expressing their contentment towards situations that are beyond human control; and how laughing (*xiao* 笑) at the uncontrollable can be transformed into a form of self-control.

Before clarifying the idea of 'human limitations' and '*an*', and how I relate them to solve the above questions, I first discuss my understanding of the *Zhuangzi* as a source-text and my method for reconstructing Zhuangzian ideas.

Sources and Classifications

With regard to the *Zhuangzi*, the question of whether some of the texts were the product of a thinker called Zhuangzi is irrelevant for my project. By the *Zhuangzi*, I refer to the entire anthology totalling 33 chapters edited by Guo Xiang 郭象 (c. 252-312 C.E.).

Admittedly, the best choice of materials to reconstruct the core ideas of the *Zhuangzi* is still hotly debated. Many scholars accept the evidence presented by A. C. Graham and Liu Xiaogan and believe that the inner seven chapters were written by a person called Zhuangzi, and thus are essential chapters to study core ideas in this anthology.[34] However, such an argument is questionable, since it reflects the ungrounded priority given to certain layers of production of the *Zhuangzi* and to the assumption of authorship, which recent studies have shown to be problematic.[35]

In terms of understanding the core arguments and ideas in the *Zhuangzi*, I argue that the outer and miscellaneous chapters are no less important than the inner seven chapters. Such an argument can be justified by examining the reception of this anthology. In recent studies, Wang Shumin 王叔岷, Esther Klein, and Harold Roth have

[34] See Angus Graham, *Chuang-tzu, The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981; Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Zhuangzi zhexue jiqi yanbian* 莊子哲學及其演變 (The evolution of Zhuangzi's philosophy), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987. Eske Mollgaard, *An Introduction to Daoist thought, action, language, and ethics in the Zhuangzi*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007; Robert E. Allison, *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation: An analysis of the Inner Chapters*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989; and Lee H. Yearley, "Daoist presentation and persuasion: Wandering among Zhuangzi's kinds of language," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2005): 503-535.

[35] On the highly composite structure of early Chinese texts, see William Boltz, "The Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts," in Martin Kern, ed., *Text and Ritual in Early China*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005, pp. 50-78.

demonstrated close parallels between Han texts, such as the *Shiji and* the *Huainanzi,* with the outer and miscellaneous chapters of the *Zhuangzi*.[36] Although some of their arguments are problematic,[37] we can still conclude that in the Han dynasty at least, the so-called outer and miscellaneous chapters were crucial to certain knowledge communities. Thus, for a comprehensive study of this anthology, I will take all 33 chapters seriously, without according priority to any chapter.

I take the story as the basic unit of the *Zhuangzi*, not the chapter. This means that this project assumes that it is at the level of stories, instead of chapters, materials within the *Zhuangzi* were rearranged. When using the story as the basic unit, we can examine different ideas based on their contexts. This is different from either reading chapters as consistent and integrated narratives, or attributing certain chapters or stories to certain schools of thought. For example, when reading the conversation between Confucius and his disciples in the chapter 'Qiushui' 秋水 (Autumn Floods), I only read and interpret their conversations within the context of the story itself. In other words, I do not try to link the understanding of this story with other thematic elements appearing within the same chapter and read them as interrelated arguments – a reading strategy proposed by Dirk Meyer and Wim de Reu.[38] Nor will I try to understand the arguments in the *Zhuangzi* as

[36] See Wang Shumin 王叔岷, *Zhuangxue Guankui* 莊學管窺 (A Brief Study of the Thought of *Zhuangzi*), Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1978, pp. 74-81; Esther Klein, "Were there 'inner chapters' in the Warring States? A new examination of evidence about the *Zhuangzi*," *T'oung Pao*, Vol. 96 (2010): 299-369; and Harold Roth, "Who Compiled the Chuang-Tzu?," in Henry Rosemont, ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts*, La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1991, pp. 82-128, see especially p. 118.

[37] Harold Roth pointed out that there are approximately 300 terminological and conceptual parallels between two anthologies, namely the *Huainanzi* and the *Zhuangzi.* But he further argued that, based on the large number of parallel terms and theoretical similarities, as well as on the titles of the inner chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, which frequently occur in the *Huainanzi*, one can conclude that the former text was compiled by the authors of the latter text. Such a deduction itself is a logical fallacy. We also see numerous parallels between the *Dao De Jing* and the *Huainanzi*, but can we therefore conclude that the authors of the *Huainanzi* were also the compilers of the *Dao De Jing*? See Harold Roth, "Who Compiled the Chuang-tzu?" pp. 82-128.

[38] Dirk Meyer, "Truth Claim with No Claim to Truth: Text and Performance of the 'Qiushui' Chapter of the Zhuangzi," in Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer, eds., *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 297-340. A similar attempt was made by Wim De Reu in his chapter "A Ragbag of Odds and Ends? Zhuangzi 26 as Philosophical Collage Writing," in *Literary Forms of Argument in Ancient China*, pp. 243 -296.

belonging to a certain school of thought, as did Graham and Liu Xiaogan,[39] because doing so would result in the imposition of unnecessary pre-conceptions and classifications on certain stories, which may lead to a lack of understanding of its unique discourse.

The reason the story should be used as the basic unit to analyse this anthology is because, first of all, if we follow the chapter divisions as edited by Guo Xiang, it is impossible to detach our perspectives from Guo Xiang's reconstruction. That is to say, by using chapters as the basic unit of thought, we restrict our research to Guo Xiang's construction of this anthology.[40] Second, using stories as the basic units of thought allows us to closely understand the concepts in terms of their own respective contexts – how different concepts function within different contexts, and how the argument is built up using different concepts. This process differs from that of only analysing the concepts as drawn from short phrases and sentences, since without looking at the contexts surrounding the concepts, the core meaning or the attitudes surrounding certain concepts may be overlooked or misunderstood. In short, using the story as the basic unit of thought will not only allow us to approach the concepts in a more proper manner, without overlooking their various connections, but it will also help us understand how those concepts function in building up an argument, without restricting one's interpretations to those put forward in Guo Xiang's construction.

Methodological Issues

When trying to reconstruct the idea of contentment towards situations beyond human control as expressed in the *Zhuangzi,* the aim in this thesis is to avoid the problems

[39] Graham labelled these the 'School of Zhuangzi', see *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, Hackett, 2001, p. 28 (originally published by Allen & Unwin, 1981). Liu Xiaogan called them the 'Transmitters School' (*Shu-*Zhuang-*pai* 述莊派), see Liu Xiaogan, *Zhuangzi Zhexue,* p. 121.
[40] Dirk Meyer, "Truth Claim with No Claim to Truth" takes this as the basis for his "Quishui" reading.

of 'anachronism'.[41] Anachronism refers to putting the *Zhuangzi* into existing (modern) categories, or trying to fit the *Zhuangzi* into established frameworks. For a few decades, a common approach to the study of the *Zhuangzi* was to focus on whether ideas in the *Zhuangzi* could fit into established Western philosophical theories and ideas, such as scepticism, relativism, mysticism, realism, and so on. For example, Chad Hansen argued that the *Zhuangzi* represents radical scepticism and perspective relativism.[42] Huang Yong further defined the *Zhuangzi* as reflecting patient-relativism,[43] while Lisa Raphals ascribed three different kinds of scepticism to the *Zhuangzi*.[44] A. C. Graham saw anti-rationalism in the *Zhuangz*i,[45] while Jung Lee saw mysticism.[46] They have made great contributions to appreciating the philosophical significance of this anthology. But their approach falls into the category of using existing Western frameworks to study early Chinese thinking, sometimes with the result of misrepresenting the thought in the texts.

Coupled with my rejection of the use of existing Western frameworks to categorize the *Zhuangzi,* this project also goes beyond studying the *Zhuangzi* by using existing philosophical paradigms of thinking– another important aspect of the problem of anachronism. For example, in the West, when discussing situations beyond human control, scholars tend to focus on the tension between 'freedom and fate'. Many scholars have argued that the two notions are incompatible, arguing that future events are decided by logical laws, metaphysical necessities, the existence and nature of God, or causal determination. They believe that if situations cannot happen otherwise and actions could

[41]Jerome B. Schneewind, "Globalization and the History of Philosophy," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 66 No. 2 (2005): 169-178.
[42] Chad Hansen, "A Tao of Tao in Chuang-Tzu," in *Experimental Essays on the Chuang-Tzu,* pp. 24-55.
[43] Huang Yong, "The Ethics of Difference in Zhuangzi," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (2010): 65-99.
[44] Lisa Raphals, "Skeptical Strategies in the *Zhuangzi* and *Theaetetus*," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (1994): 501-526.
[45] A. C. Graham, "Reason and Spontaneity," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1990): 389-398.
[46] Jung H. Lee, "Disputers of the Tao: Putman and Chuang-Tzu on Meaning, Truth, and Reality," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1998): 447-470.

not have been done otherwise, then there is no way to argue for one's freedom of choice. Some scholars, searching for compatibilities between freedom and casual determination, have also argued for human freedom under the premise of human limitations. Without a doubt, such a tension is important and worth discussing in relation to the *Zhuangzi.* However, is it true that freedom and fate also share these 'natural' contradictions in the *Zhuangzi*? Can the same logic apply? In the *Zhuangzi* is there an effort made to search for an answer to the question of how one can act otherwise when faced with uncontrollable situations? The answers to these questions, I believe, are negative. What we should not forget is that, if we follow the existing Western philosophical way of thinking and the problems it is concerned with as the only model for studying Chinese philosophy, then we will end up either being excluded from the realm of philosophy or we will miss the point that the Chinese philosophers were interested in when discussing the relevant issues. Only by looking at the idea of human limitations in this anthology in terms of how it is related, what it is related to, and why it is discussed, can we come up with new ideas about the relevant issues, as well as about their importance.

While I reject the application of existing philosophical frameworks and logic to the study of the *Zhuangzi*, my approach certainly does not reject the shared concerns behind these different paradigms. Therefore, this project starts with a concern common to people in both East and West, in ancient and modern times, namely how to deal with situations that are beyond human control, as well as with the problem of one's limited ability to control everything. The focus then shifts to the Chinese anthology, the *Zhuangzi,* regarding how to understand the limited ability of human beings, and what ideas are behind the relevant ideas in that text. To be specific, when discussing human limitations and situations beyond human control, the *Zhuangzi* not only focuses on the tension between fate and freedom of choice, but is also seriously concerned about how the idea of

being content with fate and limitations is expressed and demonstrated; and how it is related to living a better life, such as being filial and being courageous – questions rarely asked in the Western philosophical tradition in relation to the topic of freedom and fate. This is to say, only when analysing the thought of the *Zhuangzi* from its own perspective, using its own terms and ideas, can we reconstruct a new Zhuangzian philosophy that can engage in these shared topics.

It is also worth noting that this is also not a proposal that rejects Western philosophical insights and comparative philosophy. Rather, it advocates a comparison that is first based on a close textual analysis of the *Zhuangzi*. To me, a Zhuangzian philosophy will be more interesting for purposes of comparison when we first see it from a Zhuangzian perspective before engaging in a comparison. This is because new perspectives can be revealed through a closer reading. For example, incorporating Zhuangzian ideas on singing, courage, and laughter will not only open up a new perspective towards Zhuangzian philosophy on the issue of how to deal with human limitations, but will also provide us with new ideas on the connotations of courage, the idea of music and contentment, and the functions of laughter in general – ideas that concern Western philosophers, but not in relation to human limitations. Moreover, with an honest examination of early Chinese philosophical thinking itself, we can then apply the reconstructed ideas into cases that concern modern ethical and philosophical discussions and bring the Zhuangzian philosophy back to life.

In terms of reconstructing a Zhuangzian philosophy on 'being content with human limitations', it is of course impossible to reconstruct the voice of a single author, based on the fact that the received text has been edited and compiled over many generations. However, from the perspective of this anthology as a whole, although the ideas that it contains are not always presented in a unified and connected manner, this does not

preclude the possibility that these ideas are interconnected and have a reasonable degree of coherence.

In fact, this project shows that we can still reconstruct a more or less consistent stream of philosophical thinking in the *Zhuangzi* by examining a topic from different dimensions and perspectives. I therefore employ a corpus-based analysis to study the *Zhuangzi*. This approach focuses on ideas, concepts, and stories within the anthology itself, and on reconstructing a kind of Zhuangzian philosophy based on the texts. It offers the following advantages: First, the concepts that are applied are those that have been drawn from the texts; thus, from the outset the aim of the research is to understand the concepts in their own surroundings. Second, such an approach will enable us to find connections between certain concepts that appear under different contexts. A corpus-based analysis enables researchers to start the conversation with the *Zhuangzi* itself, before broadening it to include certain established philosophical theories and ideas.

However, the focus here is not merely on concepts, but on issues and phenomena that are framed through different concepts, terms, and stories within which typical concepts do not appear. To be specific, when referring to the issue of 'Human limitations', this thesis not only examines fate (*ming* 命), which is the most common term when considering situations that are not immediately and directly under human control, but also other dimensions of uncontrollability in human life, such as *xing* 性 (nature), as the given characteristic tendencies that one finds within oneself, as well as the limitations of one's own mind, perceptions, and choices, due to a fixed mindset. This entire cluster of concepts together constitutes an idea of human limitations. Examining the same topic from multiple dimensions will give us a better understanding of the complexity of certain topics. On the topic of the limited abilities of human beings, apart from discussing situations that are beyond our control, such as death as the end of life, one's own perceptions also come into

play. Our perceptions allow us to attribute certain things as being beyond human control, and the idea of whether a certain event is within or beyond human control is negotiable. Such insights into Zhuangzian ideas on human limitations can only be revealed by examining a cluster of concepts together with stories concerning a similar phenomenon.

When arguing for the reconstruction of a more or less consistent Zhuangzian philosophy, I do not refer to the scholarly attempt to explain away contradictions and look for consistency within a term or a concept in a certain anthology. For example, many scholars have tried to resolve the contradiction that if heaven (*tian* 天) is understood to be morally good, why can it also be a source for predicaments that happen to morally good people?[47] The endeavour to provide a reading that solves the possible contradictions within one term is not the concern of this project. This is because, as stated before, the intention in this project is only to depict one stratum of Zhuangzian philosophy and not the whole of it. Moreover, within a compiled anthology that has been edited by so many different hands throughout the years, certain terms will inevitably be used in an inconsistent and sometimes even contradictory manner. In fact, in early China, the need for (and perception of) conceptual and logical consistency might very well have been different from that of modern scholars.

Thus, when examining certain terms within the *Zhuangzi*, this thesis does not reject the possibility that certain terms and concepts might have multiple and contradictory connotations; for example, there is no unified approach to the idea of death in the *Zhuangzi*.[48] Nor will the possibility that one story can yield various interpretations be

[47] For a detailed analysis of how scholars both East and West have dealt with the problem of evil and the inconsistency between God and the human world, see Franklin Perkins, *Heaven and Earth are not Humane – the problem of evil in classical Chinese philosophy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, pp. 117-119.

[48] See Mark Berkson's chapter on "Death in the Zhuangzi: mind, nature and the art of forgetting," in Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2011, pp. 191-225.

denied.[49] For example, in the *Zhuangzi*, attitudes towards death are varied and sometimes contradictory. There is no preference towards either life or death. As the text says, 'The change of life into death is as natural as the change of day into night.' (死生命也，其有夜旦之常，天也) Such an idea leads to the argument that there is no categorical difference between life and death, and therefore we should see them as different aspect of the same thing, so as to be united with Heaven. (以死生為一條). In this sense, we should not feel pity about someone's premature death. However, we do see that the *Zhuangzi* advocates the protection of one's own body and the need to 'live out one's years' (可以養身，可以盡年).[50]

Also, in contrast to seeing life and death as a natural change, there are also voices in the anthology that prefer death. The *Zhuangzi* treats life as a tiring (*lao* 勞) journey, and therefore death is a rest (*xiu* 休). As expressed in the chapter 'The Great and Venerable Teacher', 'It is argued that the great Mass burdens me with form, labours me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death. So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death.' (夫大塊載我以形，勞我以生，佚我以老，息我以死。故善吾生者，乃所以善吾死也)[51] In the chapter 'Zhi Le' 至樂 (Perfect Happiness), the *Zhuangzi* clearly states that death is a preferred state and that one should not want to return to life, which is tiresome. 'How should I cast away the enjoyment of my royal court when I am dead, and undertake again the labours of life among mankind.' (吾安能棄南面王樂而復為人間之勞乎)[52]

Sometimes, the *Zhuangzi* is not certain about how to approach death, and expresses

[49] As is presented in the edited volume on Zhuangzi's happy fish. See Roger T. Ames and Takahiro Nakajima, eds., *Zhuangzi, and the Happy Fish*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015.
[50] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 115.
[51] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 242.
[52] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 617-619.

a skeptical view towards it. The argument is that since we do not know what it is like after death, we also do not know whether or not it is more desirable, 'How do you know those who died did not regret their desire for living in the beginning?' (予惡乎知夫死者不悔其始之蘄生乎)[53]

In fact, the contradictory ideas contained within one concept cannot cover up the fact that certain voices and ideas did exist, and were transmitted and written down in the *Zhuangzi*. Therefore, as long as one does not argue for *the* ideas of a certain philosopher, but rather a stream and a kind of voice within, the multiple meanings can only reflect on the diverse and vibrant philosophical connotations that exist, instead of damaging their significance. For example, in Chapter Four, I argue that the idea of contentment is expressed through singing. And the performance of singing embodies one's understanding of being content with human limitations, and one's willing acceptance of any given situation. This is a connected idea that I reconstruct from different stories. I also explain why singing can be seen as a better way to express this idea than normal speech. However, this certainly does not exclude the fact that contentment is also expressed through normal speech, or that singing is also used to express other attitudes and meanings. Such a seemingly contradictory argument only reflects different voices addressing the same topic. However, this also does not change the fact that both arguments are valid and truly existed in the *Zhuangzi*.

Key Terms

Having clarified the use of materials as well as the basic methodological issues, I shall now discuss certain key terms, including the idea of 'human limitations', as well as

[53] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 103.

the attitude that one should use to deal with it, namely *an* (安). These two terms relate to different chapters of this thesis.

First, 'human limitations' can be defined as situations that are regarded as not immediately and directly under a human being's control. Instead of being a general claim, the term refers to a particular event. In this project, there are two aspects to human limitations: a factual and a perspectival aspect.

(1) The factual aspect of human limitations refers to those features that one was given by virtue of one's birth, such as the fact that the characteristic tendency (*xing* 性) of a horse is to run, not to fly; as well as situations that are not directly or immediately under human control, namely 'nothing can be done about it' (不可奈何) and 'cannot be stopped' (不得已) by human endeavour. This means that one does not necessarily understand why something happens in a certain way, nor can one directly change it. For example, in the *Zhuangzi* the belief is expressed that when one's body is deformed or damaged, this is a given fact that cannot be changed, as is death. No one can live forever and escape death. In the *Zhuangzi*, these characteristics of human limitations do not convey the fatalistic view that everything in the world is predetermined (by divine will, for example),[54] nor that human action has no influence on the outcome of any event. Nor do they convey the deterministic view that every event in the world is determined because of its unavoidable antecedent cause.[55] Instead, they refer to one's given characteristic tendency, and to encounters and events in life that one cannot directly and immediately control. Put simply, we may say that in the *Zhuangzi*, the belief is that the occurrence of uncontrollable situations and a certain given human characteristic tendency is simply a matter of chance or luck.

[54] For a discussion of "fatalism," see Hugh Rice 2014, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fatalism/.Accessed Nov. 2016

[55] For a discussion of "causal determinism," see Carl Hoefel 2016, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/determinism-causal/ Accessed Nov.2016.

(2) Apart from the factual dimension of human limitations, there are aspects that people regard as uncontrollable and unavoidable, which I describe as perspectival human limitations. To date, this idea has not yet received enough attention in scholarly discussions. The perspectival aspect of human limitations can be further divided into two parts.

(A) On the one hand, it refers to those features and situations that should be treated as if they were unchangeable and uncontrollable. As expressed in the term 'an zhi ruo ming' 安之若命 (being content with X as if it were a situation that is not immediately and directly under one's control), *ming* is the background against which one justifies one's state of *an*. The insight of this expression lies in that it gives the concept of *ming* a special status, allowing one to ascribe other uncontrollable situations X to the category of *ming*, so that a certain attitude can be adopted to deal with a given situation. That is to say, in the *Zhuangzi*, the attitude is that there are certain events that one should not act against, because doing so would probably endanger one's physical and emotional heath, which are crucial for human life. For example, in the *Zhuangzi* the belief is that the people serve the ruler out of propriety, which cannot be erased from the mind. It is not a factual relationship that one cannot break, since one can easily withdraw from society, as did Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi (叔齊), who hid themselves in Mount Shou Yang (首陽).[56] However, the *Zhuangzi* suggests that when not serving would endanger one's life, as well as one's physical health, we should treat serving the ruler as belonging to the category of uncontrollable situations, and regard this situation as *ming*.

(B) On the other hand, it also refers to a situation that others believe to be uncontrollable, but is in fact not necessarily so. In other words, it is about how one restricts oneself in one's mind, and treats certain things as uncontrollable due to self-

[56] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 987-989.

limitations and self-restrictions. For example, when Liezi's wife understands their suffering from hunger to be the result of an uncontrollable and unexplainable situation, Liezi explains that it was actually the result of a rational choice.[57] When Zhuangzi's disciple believes that whether he is useful or useless, it will probably lead him to die, Zhuangzi provides an entirely different way of seeing a situation, changing a seemingly necessary death into an adaptive attitude.[58]

The perspectival dimension of human limitations inevitably leads to the question of how to determine whether or not a situation should or should not be perceived as uncontrollable. How should one determine that certain situations are indeed to be understood and treated as if they were uncontrollable (case A), yet at the same time, that the uncontrollability of other situations should be rejected, because their supposed uncontrollability is the result of self-restriction, and with a proper approach would instead be a controllable situation (case B)? I have reconstructed an approach to this problem based on two aspects.

(1) First, it should be established whether or not a situation or choice will lead to one's unnatural death, whether physically and mentally. To be specific, one does not need to treat a certain event X as uncontrollable, and therefore act in accordance with it when X does not endanger one's life, including one's physical life and emotional health. That is to say, physical and emotional health are crucial for deciding whether certain things should be regarded as beyond human control. One can certainly abandon one's political position when one finds inconsistencies between the values that one holds and those of the ruler. However, when a certain person is appointed to a mission and failing to fulfil it would cost that person his/her life, then this should

[57] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*., pp. 972-973.
[58] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 667-670.

be treated as a case of *ming*. Or, for example, when giving up a relationship, like a parent-child relationship, will lead one to feel emotionally disturbed, one is better to shift to another way of dealing with the relationship instead of giving it up, since fluctuations in emotions can also lead to death.

(2) The second element concerns one's ability and one's awareness of the situation. Certain things are treated as if they were unavoidable only because one does not have enough knowledge about the relevant issues; therefore, whether certain things can be regarded as uncontrollable should be based on a comprehensive understanding of any given situation, and the greater the understanding, the better. Such knowledge is not only related to one's own ability to influence events, but also includes an awareness of one's surroundings. For example, when Liezi rejected an offer from a ruler despite suffering great hunger, his wife claimed that their impoverished situation must be their *ming*. She made such a claim because first, whether they could obtain more money and avoid hunger was not up to her, since the offer was not made to her. Second, she had no understanding of what kind of a person the ruler was, why he made such an offer, and what taking this job would mean. But Liezi considered all of these factors. This is why, without a proper understanding of the situation, and with limited ability, Liezi's could only have treated their situation as a case of *ming*.

When a situation is regarded as being beyond human control, the *Zhuangzi* suggests an important attitude to deal with it, namely *an* 安 (contentment). The Zhuangzian idea of contentment has the following connotations. It is an *active* attitude, not a passive one. Such an active attitude does not result from inertia or submission; rather, it arises from one's deliberate choice not to struggle against the situation that one is given, while at the same time focusing on the cultivation of the heart-mind. How does this work? When one cannot

be content with a situation that should be regarded as beyond human control, one will either fight against it in vain, or hurt one's mind through strong emotional fluctuations. One will resent the situation that one finds to be unfair, or feel sad about a situation that one would have expected not to experience in an ideal world. In a word, not to be content means acting against the situation, as well as holding on the idea that the thing should not happen. Such a combination will eventually endanger one's emotional health, and even one's very life.

By contrast, being in a state of *an* with what should be regarded as a situation beyond human control means the following. First, such an active attitude of contentment is not merely about recognizing a certain fact, such as recognizing that one has a deformed body, but also about feeling contented and willingly accepting it, without further asking such questions as, 'Why am I the one who has webbed toes?' 'Why has this happened?' or 'Why me?' The difference between recognition and contentment is that, when a person with a deformed body fails to recognize this fact, we may see him/her as irrational, while we could not say that a person who fails to accept why he/she is the one with webbed toes is irrational. When people are able to accept the situation, they find themselves in and are content with it, those people cease to question why they were the ones to be put in such a situation in the first place.

Second, when one ceases to ask why such a thing has happened – 'Why me?' – it means that one has abandoned the previous belief that certain things should not happen to one, or that one was supposed to have a certain kind of life. In other words, one has given up one's previous fixed mind-set on how things should be. To be specific, when one stops asking questions such as, why I have a deformed body, one abandons the assumption that one should have a perfect body, and that the existence of a deformed body should not happen. In this sense, one will no longer be emotionally burdened by the fact that one has a deformed body. One stops resenting a given fact and stops feeling sad about it or thinking that it is

unfair, and instead is able to maintain an unperturbed mind.

Third, when one is capable of being *an* with uncontrollable situations and begins reflecting on one's previous values, then one can not only look at uncontrollable situations as a natural process of change, but can also free one's mind from what is not supposed to happen, and instead start focusing on what else one can still do with a given uncontrollable situation. When one stops resenting a deformed body, one can start thinking of what else one can do about or with it.

Last, such an attitude of being in the state of *an* with human limitations with an unperturbed mind is a way to affirm human limitations. In other words, one has participated fully in what one previously viewed as undesirable and uncontrollable. One has found a way to properly deal with situations beyond human control, while at the same time protecting one's inner peace. One can look at a situation as it is and actively think of ways to process it with calm and equanimity. By doing so, one has tried one's best to live with uncertainty and uncontrollability, without either risking one's life or damaging one's inner peace.

By analysing the relationship between '*an*' and human limitations, this project shows the necessity of being content with human limitations and uncontrollable situations, so as to protect oneself while keeping an undivided mind, as well as fully participating in life, an ultimate goal when faced with worldly affairs. It shows how one can cultivate self-control by identifying situations beyond human control, through understanding how things can be changed, instead of treating these two ideas as contradictory. Such an attitude of *an* is not only seen as true courage in the *Zhuangzi*, but is also an important attitude for being filial, ideas that have barely been noticed within this anthology. To the *Zhuangzi,* those who are able to accept what cannot be changed will no longer cry about anything, but instead will sing along with the changing environment. Moreover, through identifying, understanding, accepting, and singing while faced with situations beyond human control,

people who live by these Zhuangzian values will not only be able to protect their physical and emotional life, but will also be capable of gradually taking control of a situation. Through accepting uncontrollable situations and therefore being a good friend, filial son, or loyal minister, one will be able to live a good, long, and healthy life.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter One is 'On Contentment – A Reconstructed Answer to Human Limitations in the *Zhuangzi*'. This chapter demonstrates the value of the state of *an* 安 (contentment) by looking at its relationship to human limitations, namely situations that are regarded as not immediately and directly within human control, through two terms, namely *ming* 命 (fate) and *xing* 性 (nature). It not only asks what these two terms mean, but also pays attention to what the *Zhuangzi* tries to convey through these concepts. I approach this question by focusing on the idea of *an*. To be specific, this chapter shows that *xing* and *ming* are not only associated with human limitations due to human incapability and limited perspectives, but, more importantly, they share a prescriptive dimension that provides a justification for adopting the attitude of *an*. The prescriptive dimension of these terms suggests that we not only should accept, but also willingly accept, what is not fully under human control, and that this will influence one's behaviour. It is an active and conscious choice, as opposed to an attitude of resignation and inertia. Therefore, instead of focusing on human limitations, the *Zhuangzi* uses *xing* and *ming* to convey an attitude of contentment and an affirmation of uncontrollable situations. In other words, this chapter explores how contentment is seen as an ideal attitude to deal with human limitations, both mentally and practically.

Chapter Two addresses 'Contentment with Filial Piety'. A particular situation in society is discussed that is both beyond human control and is unescapable, namely the parent-child relationship. An argument is put forward on the importance of *an* 安

(contentment) together with the idea of *wang* 忘 (forgetfulness) in dealing with the uncontrollable and unavoidable parent-child relationship, and the suggestion is made that in the *Zhuangzi* the idea of *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) is presented in relation to *an*. In other words, the idea of *an* informs us how we should act as a filial child. Previous discussions on *xiao* in the *Zhuangzi* are reviewed and two major problems are pointed out. Based on these problems, this chapter presents a detailed analysis of *wang* and *an* in relation to filial piety in the *Zhuangzi*. Finally, this chapter explores how the Zhuangzian idea of filial piety, presented through acceptance and forgetfulness, resembles and differs from other arguments regarding whether one should 'love and respect' one's parents, whether one should remonstrate with one's parents, and whether filial piety should be seen as a social obligation and moral code. Through such a comparison, we see how *an* serves an important function for worldly affairs, and how it helps to build a Zhuangzian idea of society.

Chapter Three addresses the notion of 'Contentment as Courage'. Relating contentment with the idea of *yong* 勇 (courage) further shows how contentment is an ideal attitude to actively keep one away from fighting and to protect one's mental equanimity. In contrast with normal physical bravery, which can lead to war and turmoil, when contentment is seen as courage, such courage allows one to be free from anxiety towards things unknown; it helps one to affirm situations beyond human control, and to live each moment to the fullest; it is an attitude that one consciously chooses with good reason.

Chapter Four is on 'Singing for Contentment'. It explores how and why the idea of contentment is expressed through the musical expression of singing. Traditionally, the study of music in the *Zhuangzi* has focused on the concepts of *yue* 樂 (music), *sheng* 聲 (sound), and *yin* 音 (voice). This chapter takes a different perspective, focusing instead on the concept of *ge* 歌 (singing). First, from this point, a determination is made that singing in the *Zhuangzi* is frequently used in association with situations beyond human control,

particularly death. Second, the stories in question all share the same tri-partite argumentative structure. Third, all stories advance the idea of *an* 安 (contentment) in dealing with situations beyond human control. Fourth, this chapter examines why understanding situations beyond human control is expressed through singing in the *Zhuangzi*. Finally, it demonstrates how the Zhuangzian use of singing was shared in early China.

Chapter Five is on 'Laughing at Situations Beyond Human Control'. This chapter demonstrates how laughter embodies a person's self-control in the face of situations beyond human control. Through this chapter, instead of treating free choice and human limitations as contradictory, we in fact see how one exercises one's choice by freeing oneself from wrongly regarding things as being beyond human control. First, different types and functions of laughter in the *Zhuangzi* are laid out to examine how 'laughing at situations beyond control' both differs from and resembles other kinds of laughter. Second, through analysing three different stories in the chapters 'Da Zongshi', 'Shan Mu', and 'Rang Wang', this chapter shows how laughter embodies one's self-control towards situations that are beyond human control, by either making full use of what one has been given, or by breaking through the fixed mind and discovering what is possible. Lastly, this chapter summarizes and answers the question of why laughter is advocated in the *Zhuangzi* for dealing with situations beyond human control. Through the unique relationship between laughter and uncontrollable situations in the *Zhuangzi*, we see how one can laugh away what is beyond human control and what limits us; and how one can transform what is beyond human control into a form of choice, by making full of use of a given situation and even laughing at it.

In the 'Conclusion: Applied Studies on Contentment' the circumstances under which one should regard a situation as being beyond human control and therefore be content with it, namely *an*, are examined. The assumed importance of keeping one's life and protecting one's inner peace is explicitly pointed out. Also pointed out is the importance of

understanding both the situation and oneself when making the decision. What it means for someone to take up the attitude of *an* and what it does to them is discussed. In the end, whether or not one sees a situation as being beyond human control, the key point is to take it seriously and deal with it.

Contributions to the field:

With a thorough analysis of contentment in the *Zhuangzi*, this project makes the following contributions. First, the Zhuangzian idea of contentment is re-evaluated by relating it to other questions of philosophical concern, therefore bringing new significance to it. In the *Zhuangzi,* contentment is neither contradictory to human self-control, nor does it result in a kind of submission or inertia. Instead, when one accepts one's human limitations, one is content to participate in life. One finds the courage to face whatever is in front of oneself, without anxiety. One truly participates in life and lives to the fullest. With such an attitude, one sings in the face of human limitations, and laughs away outer restraints. Therefore, this project might be of interest to scholars concerned with 'situations beyond human control', 'filial piety', 'singing', 'courage', or 'laughter'.

Second, this work opens up a new discussion on how and why one can affirm and willingly accept the human limitations within the field of Chinese philosophy, so that one can engage in a topic that is also of concern in religious studies and Western philosophy. As discussed in the beginning, Western scholars have examined the predicaments in life through the perspective of freedom, theodicy, or moral luck. However, they do not think of uncontrollable and undesirable situations in the same way as in the *Zhuangzi*. Therefore, through a careful study of this idea as expressed in the *Zhuangzi*, we will be able to see its connotations, its performative functions, and its relationship to other ethical

ideas, through which we will open up a new way of approaching Chinese philosophy, without being limited by the ideas and frameworks commonly discussed in the West.

Third, through this project, we will be able to appreciate more fully the ways in which Zhuangzian philosophy is related to other works in early China. For example, this project shows how the Zhuangzian idea of filial piety is associated with similar ideas in other texts. We can also see how singing operated as a special language and as a different way to express ethical ideals in early China. Moreover, we will be able to see how Zhuangzian ideas on uncontrollable situations provide a different perspective to current (Western) philosophical debates, such as whether affirming limitations is a denial of self-control, how accepting death can be seen as a form of courage, as well as how laughter shows one's attitude in one's social, political, and ethical life. By examining Zhuangzian ideas in depth on situations beyond human control, we not only see their importance in early Chinese discussions, but also the importance of these ideas in intercultural studies.

Chapter One: On Contentment – A Reconstructed Answer to Human Limitations in the *Zhuangzi*

I. Introduction

Traditionally, discussions on human limitations have focused on the idea of *ming* 命 (fate), which is generally understood as referring to situations that are not immediately or directly under a human being's control. Scholars have provided different arguments to justify the acceptance of *ming* in the *Zhuangzi*.

First, many scholars have argued that human beings have insufficient control over situations that happen in daily life.[59] They believe that, in response, the *Zhuangzi* advocates giving up control entirely and completely withdrawing from social life. Accordingly, they suggest that the *Zhuangzi* supports an escape into a realm of imagination, spiritual freedom, or transcendence of the limitations of a mundane life.[60] This is the argument widely accepted by scholars both in the East and West. Within this model, the idea of accepting *ming* becomes one's surrender and resignation to things that are uncontrollable.

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[59] A large part of this chapter in English has been published under the title "On Acceptance," *Soo Chow Journal of Philosophical Studies* 東吳哲學學報, Vol. 33 (2016): 97-121. A related Chinese version has also been published: "Zhuangzi zhi an zhi ruo ming" 莊子之安之若命 (The idea of contentment in the *Zhuangzi*), *Wuhan Daxue Xuebao*, Vol. 68 (2015): 53-58. And reprinted in Paul Fischer and Lin Zhipeng, eds., *Zhiqi yangshen zhi shu—zhongguo zaoqi xiushen fangfa* 治氣養心之術—中國早期修身方法 (The method of regulating the vital energy and nourishing the mind—Ways of self-cultivation in early China, Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, pp.233-243.

[60] Ge Ling Shang, *Liberation As Affirmation: The Religiosity of Zhuangzi and Nietzsche*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 52: '[P]erhaps the best concept we can think of in the book of *Zhuangzi* and his philosophy must be *xiaoyaoyou*, the thesis of the very first chapter and the spiritual destination of his whole teaching.' Michael Saso, "The Chuang-tzu nei-p'ien: A Taoist Meditation," in Victor H. Mair, ed. *Experimental essays on Chuang-tzu*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1984, pp. 140-157; Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian* 中國哲學史新編 (Revised Edition of the History of Chinese Philosophy), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984, p. 119; Jia Zongpu 賈宗普, "Lun qianren dui Zhuangzi 'xiaoyao' de butong jieshi" 論前人對莊子"逍遙"的不同解釋 (A discussion of different interpretations of *xiaoyao* 逍遙), *Nankai xuebao*, Vol. 1 (2002): 34-43; Fukunaga Mitsuji 福光永司, "'No-mind' in the *Chuang-tzu* and Ch'an Buddhism," *Zinbun*, Vol. 12 (1969): 9-45; Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Zhuangzi zhexue jiqi yanbian* 莊子哲學及其演變 (The evolution of Zhuangzi's philosophy), Beijing: Zhongguo zheshui kexue chubanshe, 1987, pp. 153-154, 158; and Lee Yearley, "The Perfected Person in the Radical Zhuangzi," in V. Mair, ed., *Experimental Essays on Zhuangzi*, Dunedin, Florida, Three Pines Press, 2010, pp. 126-136 [An augmented reprint of an earlier (1983) piece.]

Different from the mainstream understanding of dealing with *ming* through a withdrawal from worldly affairs, we also see another perspective, which treats uncontrollable fate as a natural process of transformation, and therefore argues for the acceptance of fate as a way to act in accordance with the Way.[61] A similar approach is used to explain the adoption of an attitude of contentment towards death. Franklin Perkins and Chris Fraser argued that the attitude towards death in the *Zhuangzi* is to accept it as a natural process of change.[62] Through accepting death as heaven's natural process of change, one finds harmony with *tian* 天 (heaven). In contrast with the first model, which excludes worldly affairs from the spiritual realm, within this model the acceptance of worldly affairs still assumes an important position in acting in accordance with the highest value of harmony with heaven.

The third model suggests taking an 'adaptive' approach to dealing with fate. Angus Graham, when analysing the term *yin shi* 因是 (adaptive that's it), argued for a principle of acting in accordance with the circumstances, which he contrasted with contrived action, in which boundaries and rules are established beforehand.[63] Chris Fraser and Mercedes Valmisa also paid attention to the adaptive attitude, focusing on liberating oneself from a fixed mindset and modifying our responses towards given situations accordingly, and thereby opening up new possibilities to deal with what is beyond control.[64]

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[61] See Michael M. Crandell, "On walking without touching the ground: play in the Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi," in Victor H. Mair, ed., *Experimental Essays on Zhuangzi*, Dunedin, Florida: Three Pines Press, 2010, pp. 99-121, see especially p. 106.

[62] See Chris Fraser, "Xunzi Versus Zhuangzi, two approaches to death in classical Chinese thought," in *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Vol. 8, no. 3 (2013): 410-427; and Franklin Perkins, "Death and Crying: Problems of death in early Confucianism," in Hans-Georg Moller and Gunter Wohlfart, eds., *Philosophieren Über den Tod – Death in Eastern and Western Philosophies*, Cologne: Edition Chora, 2004, pp. 109-119.

[63] Angus Graham, "'Being' in Western Philosophy compared *with shi/fei, yu/wu* in Chinese Philosophy," *Asia Major*, No. 1-2 (1959): 79-112.

[64] See Chris Fraser, "Wandering the Way: A Eudaimonistic Approach to the Zhuangzi," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2014): 541-565; and Mercedes Valmisa, "Beyond our control? Two responses to uncertainly and fate in early China," in Livia Kohn, ed., *New Visions of the Zhuangzi*, Dunedin, Florida: Three Pines Press, 2010, pp. 1-22.

From the previous three arguments, we can see that to accept one's fate contains one of the following three possibilities: it either allows one to attain absolute freedom of spirit; it enables one to be in union with heaven; it makes one adaptive towards the outer environment. Each of these represents different voices that appear in the *Zhuangzi*. However, the Zhuangzian picture of the understanding of human limitations is more complicated than that. There are aspects and ideas of fate and human limitations that have barely been touched upon in previous studies, which I will elaborate upon below.

First, all of the abovementioned three models understand *ming* 命 (fate) as merely expressing the fact that there are things that humans cannot control. But we should not ignore that within the *Zhuangzi*, the expression of accepting fate is expressed as 'an zhi ruo ming' 安之若命 (being content with it as if it were fate). How does the 'as if it were' function in relation to the ideas of *ming* and *an*? How is such an idea different from the more direct expression of *an ming* 安命 (being content with fate)? Second, all of the above models treat the category of *ming* as referring to every situation in the world. But is this true? Is *ming* a general summary of things that are beyond human control or does it refer to particular events in life? Accordingly, shall we treat acceptance as a general attitude towards life or as an attitude for particular events? Third, when discussing the idea of fate, scholars have not paid enough attention to another important aspect that represents human limitations, namely *xing* 性 (nature). However, when we search the *Zhuangzi*, we find that the combination of *xingming* (性命) appears a total of thirty-four times. *Xing*, therefore, has to be analysed along with the term *ming*. Why is the idea of *xingming* repeatedly mentioned? What is the text trying to convey by discussing it?

To answer the above questions, this chapter proceeds in the following way. First, it reexamines the connotations of *ming* and *xing* and their relation to *an*. Second, it elaborates in further detail the idea of *an* in the whole *Zhuangzi*. Lastly, it discusses a reconstructed

Zhuangzian idea on being content with human limitations. The contribution of this chapter lies not only in the presentation of a new classification and interpretation of the two frequently discussed concepts of *xing* and *ming*; more importantly, it draws attention to the often overlooked concept of *an* – an important concept related to the cultivation of the mind.[65]

Admittedly, individual expressions of *an* in correlation with *xing*[66] and *ming*[67] separately are quite rare, but the combination of the terms *xingming* (性命) is not rare. In the whole 33 chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, the combination of *xingming* appears five times in association with the term *an*. However, in all of these five instances, *an* is expressed in a negative manner in relation to *ming* and *xing*, as seen by the use of negative phrases such as: 'Those who are not able to be content with their genuine situations of the *xingming.*' (莫得安其性命之情者) in the chapter 'Tian Yun' 天運 (The Turning of Heaven);[68] 'How can people have the leisure to stay in contentment with the genuine situation of the *xingming.*' (彼何暇安其性命之情哉); and 'cannot be content with the genuine situation of the *xingming.*' (不安其性命之情) in the chapter 'Zai You' 在宥 (Let It Be, Leave it Alone);[69] and 'destroy the genuine situation of the *xingming.*' (决性命之情) in the chapter 'Pian Mu' 駢母 (Webbed Toes).[70] Moreover, the context surrounding these negative expressions is associated with not being at ease with *xingming*, without pointing out what the connotations of *xing* and *ming* are. For example, in the chapter '*Zai You*' 在宥 (Let It Be), we can only

[65] I use the English phrase 'mind' to translate the Chinese character *xin* (心), which refers to what we understand as the seat of cognitive and affective functions.
[66] The attitude of *an* towards *ming* directly appears once in the 'Renjian Shi' (人間世) (In the World of Men); see Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007, p. 155 [first edition, 1961]; and once in the 'De Chong Fu' 德充府 (The Sign of Virtue Complete); see Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 199.
[67] The attitude of *an* toward *xing* appears directly once in the 'Da Sheng' 達生 (Mastering Life) chapter, see Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 658.
[68] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 527.
[69] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 346.
[70] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 319.

see that being at ease with the *xingming* is contrasted with using punishments and rewards as a way of governing. However, there is no mention in the text of what is meant by *xing* and *ming*. What we do know is that using punishments and rewards is not the way to allow oneself to adopt the attitude of *an* towards *xingming*.[71]

We therefore lack direct evidence to answer the above questions by analysing the texts of *an* in relation to compound term *xingming*. However, we do see that *an* and *xing*, and *an* and *ming*, are respectively associated in different stories and argumentative contexts. Because of this, I argue that analysing the attitude towards *an* in relation to *xing* and *ming* separately, and comparing them, is a worthwhile approach to understanding the attitude towards *an* in the *Zhuangzi.*

II. *An* and *ming* in the *Zhuangzi*

(1) The concept of *ming*

The term *ming*, when used as a verb, could be used to name something (*ming* 名/命) by defining it or by describing it. For example, when Zi Gong (子貢) found someone singing because of the death of a friend, Zi Gong found such behaviour to be impossible to name (無以命之).[72] Also, in this anthology, *ming* as a verb can be used in the sense of 'to follow' something, as in 'to follow the transformation of things.' (命物之化)[73] When used as a noun, it can refer to the span of human life, as expressed through the term *shouming* 壽命 (the longevity of life).[74] It can also be used to refer to an order, equivalent to the term *ling* 令 (command).[75] Moreover, it can be used to describe situations that are not fully under a

[71] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangi Ji Shi*, p. 346.
[72] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 267.
[73] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 193.
[74] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangi Ji Shi*, p. 998.
[75] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 972.

human being's control. This last meaning, namely situations that are not under human control, is the one that will be discussed in detail here.

When thinking of how to translate *ming* in relation to uncontrollable situations, for those who do not know Chinese, I tentatively translate it as 'fate'. I define fate as situations that are regarded as not being immediately or directly within one's control.[76] However, when I analyse the term *ming* in the *Zhuangzi*, I try to stick to the Chinese term itself, without resorting to the English translation. This is because, as scholars have recognized, any translations of *ming*, whether as fate, allotment, or destiny,[77] will add connotations that do not necessarily exist fully in the original.[78] For example, when the term fate is used, it bears no relationship to the idea of a pre-determined view decided by a causal agent such as God.[79] Nor does it suggest a fatalistic attitude that allows us to believe that we can do nothing other than what we are doing right now.[80] Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that there is a contradiction between *ming* and free of choice in life.[81]. Therefore, in this chapter, I shall not translate the term *ming* but explain it in each particular instance. When we can *xin zhai*

[76] Fraser also realised that there are differences between *ming* and fate; therefore, when translating *ming* as fate, I added his definition by saying that it refers to a circumstance about which one can do nothing, but simply accept as a brutal fact. See "Xunzi Versus Zhuangzi: Two Approaches to Death in Classical Chinese Thought," in *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2013): 410-427.

[77] Lisa Raphals, "Fate, Fortune, Chance and Luck in Chinese and Greek: A Comparative Semantic History," *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2003): 537-574. Raphals identified six types of *ming* by incorporating the attitude towards it, such as *sui ming* (遂命), following or mastering fate, or *zhi ming* (知命), the possibility of understanding fate.

[78] The difficulty of translating *ming* has been pointed out by Henry Skaja; see "How to interpret chapter 16 of the *Zhuangzi*," in Roger Ames ed., *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 113.

[79] For a general use of the term in Western philosophical discussions, please see the introduction. See also Hugh Rice, "fatalism," Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy, 2014, Accessed: March 10, 2017. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fatalism/.

[80] Liu Xiaogan once defined the Zhuangzian attitude towards *ming* as fatalistic, using the term *su ming lun* (宿命論). See Liu, *Zhuangzi Zhexue Ji Qi Yanbian* 莊子哲學及其演變 (Zhuangzi's philosophy and its changes), Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2010, p. 144. But in his recent publication, he disagreed with this fatalistic view, defining *ming* as referring to 'naturally given situations' referring to situations that are uncontrollable and meaningless to life. See Liu, "Zhuangzi's philosophy, a three-dimensional reconstruction," in Liu Xiaogan, ed., *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, Netherlands: Springer, 2014, p. 201.

[81] This point will be elaborated upon in the last chapter.

心齋 (fasten our mind), we will have a clearer picture of what is being conveyed in the discussions on *ming*.

The concept of *ming* in the *Zhuangzi*， when it refers to situations that are independent of human effort, has two dimensions: a descriptive dimension and a prescriptive one. The descriptive dimension is associated with the fact that there are things that are not fully under the control of human beings. Such a dimension of *ming* also has the characteristics of being unchangeable, unpredictable, and unexplainable. In ancient China, people will call being born with a disformed body *ming*, since this is something that one cannot decide or change, nor can one explain why it happened. The prescriptive dimension of this concept refers to things that can be attributed to/regarded as the unchangeable *ming*, which also gives us a justification for adopting a certain attitude when confronted with it.[82] It refers to situations or relationships that one is in fact capable of changing or escaping from, such as the ruler-minister relationship, although to do so would endanger one's physical and emotional health, and would therefore be unadvisable. Therefore, some situations are regarded as *ming* so that one can adopt a proper attitude to deal with them. *Ming* therefore allows for adopting a certain attitude, namely *an*. A detailed analysis of these two dimensions is presented below.

The descriptive dimension of *ming* in the *Zhuangzi*, where *ming* refers to a situation that is in fact uncontrollable, can be seen in the 'De Chong Fu' 德充府 (The Sign of the Complete Virtue) chapter. When explaining the following different situations, 'life, death, preservation, loss, failure, success, poverty, riches, worthiness, unworthiness, slander, fame,

[82] This concept was revised from Shun's idea of the prescriptive dimension of *ming* in the *Mencius*. Shun argued that, in the *Mencius*, *ming* also contains a prescriptive dimension – namely, that *ming* also refers to the thing that should happen as a moral trial. Moreover, the descriptive dimension and the prescriptive dimension are often not easily distinguished, meaning that *ming* could cover both dimensions at the same time. See Kwong-loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 19-21, 77-83.

hunger, thirst, cold, heat.' (死生存亡，窮達貧富，賢與不肖，毀譽、饑渴、寒暑) it is taken as 'this changing of things is the working of *ming*.' (是事之變，命之行)[83] This phrase demonstrates that the working of *ming* is like the change of day and night – no one can determine its origin and the situation after the alternation. That is to say, one cannot influence the workings of *ming*. Moreover, the occurrence of the uncontrollable *ming* is also unexplainable, in the sense that it is impossible to understand why a given situation happens to an individual. The following example is given in the *Zhuangzi*: If one plays around in front of Archer Yi's target, it would be normal to get in the way of his arrows; however, if one does not get shot, that is *ming*.[84] This example shows that, in the latter situation, the reason for not getting shot in front of Archer Yi's target is unexplainable. The uncontrollability and unexplainability of *ming* also point to its third characteristic, namely that it is unpredictable. This is because when a future event is not within one's control and one cannot understand why it is happening, one will also be incapable of predicting when, how, and why it will happen by either following logical deduction or probing the God's will; thus involving the characteristic of unexplainability.

There are, however, also examples in the *Zhuangzi* where the question of whether situations should be attributed to the category of *ming* is open for debate, and so whether something falls into the category of *ming* is not always so clear. That is to say, for some cases, *ming* is a matter of perspective instead of a factual claim. Let us first look at the theoretical uncertainty towards *ming* in the chapter, 'Yu Yan' 寓言 (Imputed Words):

[83] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 212.
[84] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 199.

> 天有曆數，地有人據, 吾惡乎求之？莫知其所終，若之何其無命也？莫知其所始，若之何其有命也？[85]有以相應也，若之何其無鬼邪？無以相應也，若之何其有鬼邪？」[86]
>
> Heaven has its cycles and numbers; earth has its territory divided by people – how should I still seek them? No one understands its ending – if this is the case, then how [can we say that] it is not *ming*? No one understands its beginning – if this is the case, then how can we say that it is *ming*? There have to be things that respond with one another – if so, then how can we say there is no spirit? There is also something that does not respond – if this is the case, then how can we say there are spirits?

This passage informs us that, given the patterns that heaven has, such as cycles and numbers, there is still no definitive answer on how and when heaven and earth began, neither do we know how and when they will end. Therefore, 'not knowing' the ending and beginning of heaven and earth leads to one to be suspicious of the existence of *ming*. In other words, in contrast to the patterns and principles that heaven and earth has, *ming* refers to things that cannot be measured through rules and principles; and therefore cannot be analysed theoretically, namely 'cannot be understood' (*mo zhi* 莫知).

The above example shows the debatable part of *ming* using theoretical analysis. The following two cases show that from a practical approach too, the *Zhuangzi* argues that whether or not one's situation is *ming* is open for discussion. In the 'Da Sheng' 達生 (Mastering Life) chapter, a debate takes place between Sun Xiu (孫休), and Bian Qingzi (扁慶子) on whether an undesirable situation can be treated as *ming*, or whether it was caused by oneself:

> 有孫休者，踵門而詫子扁慶子曰：「休居鄉不見謂不修，臨難不見謂不勇，然而田原不遇歲，事君不遇世，賓於鄉里，逐於州部，則胡罪乎天哉？休惡遇此命也？」扁子曰：「子獨不聞夫至人之自行邪？忘其肝膽，遺其耳

[85] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp.958- 959.
[86] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp.958- 959.

目，芒然彷徨乎塵垢之外，逍遙乎無事之業，是謂『為而不恃，長而不宰』。今汝飾知以驚愚，修身以明汙，昭昭乎若揭日月而行也。汝得全而形軀，具而九竅，無中道夭於聾盲跛蹇而比於人數，亦幸矣，又何暇乎天之怨哉！子往矣！」[87]

A person named Sun Xiu appeared at the gate of Master Bian Qingzi to pay him a call. 'When I was living in the village, no one ever said that I was not cultivated. When I faced difficulty, no one ever said that I lacked courage. Yet when I worked the fields, it never seemed to be a good year for crops, and when I served the ruler, it never seemed to be a good time for advancement. So I am an outcast from the villages, an exile from the towns. What crime have I committed against Heaven? Why should I meet this *ming*?' Master Bian said, 'Have you never heard how the Perfect Man conducts himself? He forgets his liver and gall and thinks no more about his eyes and ears. Vague and aimless, he wanders beyond the dirt and dust; free and easy, tending to nothing is his job. This is what is called "doing but not looking for any thanks, bringing up but not bossing."' Now you show off your wisdom in order to astound the ignorant, cultivate your good conduct in order to distinguish yourself from the disreputable, going around bright and shining as though you were carrying the sun and moon in your hand! You've managed to keep your body in one piece, you have all the ordinary nine openings, you haven't been struck down midway by blindness or deafness, lameness or deformity – compared to a lot of people, you're a lucky man. How do you have any time to go around complaining against Heaven? Be on your way!'

The debate regarding *ming* is related to Sun Xiu's experience. Sun Xiu believes that his situation must be *ming*, because he believes that his *xiu* 修 (cultivation) and *yong* 勇 (courage) should allow him to be admired and prevent him from being exiled from his hometown. Sun Xiu believes that there is a pattern of good conduct that should have ended

[87] Chen Guying argued that this whole story should be deleted from this chapter for the following two reasons. First, this story does not fit with the main idea of this whole chapter. Second, texts within this story of already appear in other chapters of the *Zhuangzi* as well as in the *Laozi.* See Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi Jin zhu Jin yi* 莊子今注今譯 (Annotations and translations of the *Zhuangzi* in modern Chinese), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, p. 575. With regard to his first reason, I believe that whether or not one agrees with him not only depends on one's interpretation of this chapter, but also on what basic material one uses to analyse the *Zhuangzi*, namely whether chapter-based or story-based. As for his second reason, I argue that we simply cannot use 'non-originality' as a reason to dispute the value of certain texts since this phenomenon is simply the result of the way in which early Chinese texts came into being. We also should not ignore the value of parallel texts and the nature of early Chinese texts. See William Boltz, "The compositional nature of early Chinese texts," in Martin Kern, ed., *Text and Ritual in Early China*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005, pp. 50-78; Paul Fischer. "Intertextuality in Early Chinese Masters-Texts: Shared Narratives in Shi Zi," *Asia Major* Vol. 22 Issue 2 (2009): 1-34; and Rens Krijgsman, "Travelling Sayings as Carriers of Philosophical Debate: From the Intertextuality of the *Yucong 语丛 to the Dynamics of Cultural Memory and Authorship in Early China," *Asiatische Studien / Etudes Asiatiques* Vol. 68, No. 1 (2014): 83-115.

up with a good outcome. Therefore, when that outcome did not happen as expected, he believes it must be his *ming.* That is to say, not only is Sun Xiu unable to comprehend why he ended up like this, but he also feels that it is impossible to improve his situation.

If readers stop reading here, then we must believe that the text agrees with Sun Xiu, however, when we continue reading, we find it clear that what Sun Xiu believes to be the unreasonable, uncontrollable *ming* was actually caused by himself. Bian Qingzi argues against Sun Xiu's complaint about *ming*, saying that not only should Sun Xiu not complain about heaven and his *ming*, but he should also feel lucky that he is alive and well. This is because what Sun Xiu believes to be his cultivation and courage are ways in which he shows himself to be superior to others. When Sun Xiu tries to show off, he causes others to appear to be the opposite, namely ignorant and disreputable. He not only offends others with what he believed to be virtuous, but also makes himself unwelcome and puts himself in danger. This is why Sun Xiu's exile from his town is far from unexplainable. Through Bian Qingzi's comments, readers know that what Sun Xiu believes to be unreasonable and uncontrollable *ming* was actually caused by his own behaviour. A similar debate on whether or not a situation should be seen as *ming* also appears in the following story.

In the chapter, 'Rang Wang' 讓王 (Giving Away a Throne), it is argued in the *Zhuangzi* that some things should not be seen as *ming*, but as the result of a deliberate choice. Let me examine the conversation between Liezi (列子) and his wife.

> 子列子窮，容貌有飢色。客有言之於鄭子陽者曰：「列御寇，蓋有道之士也，居君之國而窮，君無乃為不好士乎？」鄭子陽即令官遺之粟。子列子見使者，再拜而辭。使者去，子列子入，其妻望之而拊心曰：「妾聞為有道者之妻子，皆得佚樂，今有飢色。君過而遺先生食，先生不受，豈不命邪！」子列子笑謂之曰：「君非自知我也。以人之言而遺我粟。至其罪我也，又且以人之言。此吾所以不受也。」其卒，民果作難而殺子陽。[88]

[88] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 972-973.

> Master Liezi was living in poverty and his face had a hungry look. A visitor mentioned this to Zi Yang, the prime minister of Zheng, saying, 'Lie Yukou appears to be a gentleman who has attained the Way. Here he is living in your state, and in utter poverty! It would almost seem that you have no fondness for such gentlemen, does it not?' Zi Yang, [the prime minister of] Zheng, immediately ordered his officials to dispatch a gift of grain. Master Liezi received the messenger, bowed twice, and refused the gift. When the messenger had left and Master Liezi had gone back into his house, his wife, filled with bitterness, beat her breast and said, 'I have heard that the wives and children of men who have attained the Way all live in ease and happiness – but here we are with our hungry looks! His Excellency, realizing his error, has sent you something to eat, but you refused to accept it – I suppose this is what they call *ming*!' Master Liezi laughed and said, 'His Excellency does not know me personally – he sent me the grain simply because of what someone had told him. And someday he could just as well condemn me to punishment, again simply because of what someone told him. That's why I refused to accept.' In the end it did come about that the people rebelled and put Zi Yang to death.

For Liezi's wife, her marriage to the only possessor of the Dao who refuses food and suffers hunger is an uncontrollable situation (*ming* 命). This is because her situation of impoverishment differed from the situation of all others who had attained the Dao. The adverb *jie* 皆 (all) suggests that the wife's argument was based on a general rule. And such a claim is presented as shared knowledge, since she based her claim on what she had heard (*wen* 聞) from other people. Moreover, when her husband rejected the offer from Zi Yang (子陽), the wife thought that she had lost her chance to be relieved from hunger. Therefore, Liezi's wife believes that their situation of impoverishment cannot be changed, since what was seemingly their last chance has passed, and this is unexplainable, since only they are different from the other possessors of the Dao, who live in happiness.

However, this is not true for Liezi. Instead, he believes that there are valid reasons for rejecting the ruler's offer, and therefore for still living a life of poverty. This is because, 'His Excellency does not know me personally – he sent me the grain simply because of what someone had told him. And someday he could just as well condemn me to punishment,

again simply because of what someone told him. That's why I refused to accept' (君非自知我也。以人之言而遺我粟，至其罪我也，又且以人之言。此吾所以不受也). Liezi therefore believes that if the ruler only knows about him from hearsay, then someday he might also be punished or killed by the ruler, again because of hearsay. More importantly, such a ruler cannot be a good ruler, and therefore if one accepts a position in this government, this would not be appropriate. Liezi argued that his rejection of Zi Yang's offer was a reasonable and deliberate choice. In this sense, their long-lasting situation of impoverishment was neither uncontrollable (since it was chosen by Liezi himself), nor unexplainable (since he had valid reasons for justifying his choice).

Through the previous stories, the *Zhuangzi* has presented us with disputes as to whether or not one thing should be identified as *ming*. The texts tell us that although there are people such as Liezi's wife and Sun Xiu, who believe that undesirable situations are *ming*, a different explanation can be put forward for such an understanding. These people believe that their undesirable situations are not within the regular pattern – that they are unreasonable and uncontrollable. In fact, what they believe to be *ming* can also be understood as situations that have arisen from people's own deliberate decisions and should therefore not be treated as *ming*.

Through the debates between Liezi and his wife, we see that the *Zhuangzi* does not regard *all* things as within the category of *ming,* which allows us to distinguish the Zhuangzian view from fatalism. Instead, there are deliberations as to whether a given situation should be seen as *ming*. That is to say, one makes active deliberations before admitting something is *ming*. Now the question comes, why should certain things be regarded as *ming* when situations are not necessarily uncontrollable? In what follows, this chapter examines what the *Zhuangzi* tries to convey when attributing certain situations to *ming*. It argues that the answer lies in the idea of *an* (安). To the *Zhuangzi,* some situations

are treated as if they were *ming* in order to advocate the attitude of *an* for dealing with those situations. To elaborate on this point, let us look at the chapter 'Renjian Shi' 人間世 (In the World of Men).

The text incorporates a story about Duke Xie (葉) receiving a mission to travel to the state of Qi (齊). Once he had accepted this mission, the Duke began to worry about suffering from the judgement of men if he was not able to successfully fulfil his duty, and also from the imbalance of *yin* and *yang*, which might lead to sickness due to his excitement and worry about whether the mission would be successful. When Duke Xie asked Confucius about his opinion on how to resolve his problems, Confucius said:

> 仲尼曰：「天下有大戒二：其一，命也；其一，義也。子之愛親，命也，不可解於心；臣之事君，義也，無適而非君也，無所逃於天地之間。是之謂大戒。是以夫事其親者，不擇地而安之,[89] 孝之至也；夫事其君者，不擇事而安之，忠之盛也；自事其心者，哀樂不易施乎前，知其不可奈何而安之若命，德之至也。為人臣子者，固有所不得已，行事之情而忘其身，何暇至於悅生而惡死！夫子其行可矣！」[90]
>
> In the world, there are two great admonishments: one is *ming* and the other is duty. That a son loves his parents is *ming.* It cannot be untied from the mind. And a subject serves his ruler is duty. There is no place where a subject can go and be without his ruler; there is no place where he can escape to between heaven and earth. These are what I call the great admonishments. Such being the case, to serve your parents, to be content to follow anywhere they are – this is the perfection of filial piety. To serve your ruler, to be content to serve him everything that could be – this is the peak of loyalty. Those who serve their own heart-mind are not swayed in the face of sadness and joy. To understand what you can do nothing about and to be *content* with it as if it were *ming* – this is the perfection of virtue. As a subject and a son, although there are things you cannot avoid, if you act in accordance with the state of affairs and forget about yourself, then how will you have time to be concerned about loving life and hating death? Act in this way and you will be all right.

The character of irreversibility is directly expressed through the words 'to be content with it as it if were fate.' (知其不可奈何而安之若命) From the context, it can be seen that

[89] Different interpretations of this term will be discussed later in this chapter.
[90] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 152-155.

the pronoun *qi* 其 here refers back to the love between father and son, and to the duty between superior and subordinate. And the pronoun *zhi* 之 refers to the pronoun *qi*, namely to *ming* (命) and *yi* (義), which are unchangeable. *Ruo* (若) here can be understood to mean 'as if'. The whole sentence states that as long as things are unchangeable, one *should* treat them as if they were *ming*. That is to say, *ming* describes things that are unavoidable and uncontrollable. More importantly, the prescriptive dimension of *ming* is also vividly present through the previous story stated above in the *Renjian Shi* chapter. It can first of all be demonstrated by placing *ming* under the category of *jie* 戒 (admonishment). Such a classification implies that what is placed under a decree is the thing that one should follow.

The prescriptive dimension of *ming* can also be understood through the expression *an zhi ruo ming* 安之若命 (to be content with it as if it were *ming*). Through this expression, we can see that *ming* is the background against which to justify one's state of *an* (安). The insight of this expression lies in that it gives the concept of *ming* a special status, allowing one to ascribe other uncontrollable situations to the category of *ming* so that a certain attitude can be adopted to deal with a given situation.

Going back to the example cited previously, when Confucius gave suggestions to Zi Gao (子高), in the beginning Confucius directly pointed out that there are two different admonishments, namely *ming* (命) and *yi* (義). The love between a son and a father is presented as naturally inherent and beyond dispute, and therefore it belongs to *ming*; even though duty is presented as a social construct, it can also not be changed, and therefore it is presented as *yi*. However, both forms of *jie* refer to situations that are beyond one's control (不可奈何). Because of this, the text further argues that when one serves one's own mind, one should treat them as if they were *ming*. The phrase *an zhi ruo ming* (安之若命) therefore implies that one subordinates duty (*yi*) under the category of *ming. Ming* thus opens up a

referential framework within which *yi* finds its given place, and what originally belongs to *yi* should now be taken as though it were *ming. Ming* therefore receives its special status as a justification for an individual to adopt the attitude of *an.*[91]

In summary, the previous analysis shows that *ming* has both a descriptive and a prescriptive dimension. The former refers to the fact that there are situations that are uncontrollable, unpredictable, and unexplainable. The latter refers to the uncontrollability of a situation, which functions as a justification for one to adopt a certain attitude. However, given all of the characteristics of *ming* that we can identity through different stories, it is clear that the text did not focus on providing a fixed definition of what *ming* is.

Ironically, this gap does not mean that the idea of *ming* is not an important concern in this anthology. In fact, the lack of a fixed definition of *ming* may be seen as intentional – perhaps to draw the reader's attention to the attitude towards an uncontrollable situation, or to not restrict the term too narrowly by giving it a definition.[92] From the above story, we can also observe that the expression *ming* is used in three parallel structures marked by the particle *zhe* 者, and that whether one serves one's father or one's ruler or one's own heart-mind, the focus is on the attitude that one should take towards those whom one serves, namely, *an* (安). I will now move to the analysis of the attitude of *an* towards *ming.*

(2) The attitude of *an* towards *ming*

[91] The question of how to decide whether certain things should be regarded as *ming* will be discussed in the conclusion.

[92] One explanation is that not offering a definition was a way of opening the term to transmutation, an idea put forward by David Schaberg to explain this feature of historical writings. He identified the fluidity of definitions as suitable for broader rhetorical functions. See Schaberg, *A Patterned Past, Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*, London: Harvard University Asia Center, pp. 45-47. Certainly, this does not mean that in early China, there is no case where clear conceptual definitions are provided. See Dirk Meyer's argument on 'argument-based texts.' See Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China*, Leiden: Brill, 2012.

In the story of Zi Gao's mission to the state of Qi, we see *an* appearing three consecutive times. The interpretations and translations of the previous two instances of *an* 安 in the context of being content in serving the father and ruler differ among interpreters. How do we understand each appearance of *an*? What does the pronoun *zhi* 之 refer to?

Chen Guying understands *an zhi* as referring to making one's ruler and one's father feel content. He therefore believes that the object of *an* merely refers to the ruler and parents.[93] This translation is grammatically problematic though, since the object of *an* should refer to the phrased structured between *fu* and *zhe*, namely *shi qi qin* (事其親) and *shi qi jun* (事其君). In other words, *an zhi* should refer to being content with following one's parents wherever they might be and being content to do anything for the ruler; rather than only making one's parents and ruler content. My understanding is in accordance with that of Burton Watson and A. C. Graham.[94]

This understanding of *an zhi* focuses on two parts. It not only refers to the contentment of the heart-mind, but also emphasizes the practical guidelines of one's action toward one's ruler and parents. After demonstrating that one should serve one's father and ruler, the text goes on to discuss in detail how to serve one's own heart-mind: 'And to serve your own mind so that sadness or joy do not sway or move it; to understand what you can do nothing about and to be content with it as if it were *ming*.' (自事其心者，哀樂不易施乎前，知其不可奈何而安之若命)

Through the context, I argue that the *an* of the heart-mind does not merely refer to the state of mind that requires one to be free from emotional fluctuations, such as sorrow

[93] See Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi jin zhu jin yi* 莊子今注今譯 (Annotations and translations of the *Zhuangzi* in modern Chinese), Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016, p. 150.
[94] Burton Watson, trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, p. 27; and Angus C. Graham, trans., *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu*, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1981, p. 70.

and happiness, when confronted with uncontrollable situations. It also requires one to fulfil the necessary duty of action in the world, such as to serve a ruler and care for one's parents, which are the necessary conditions that one may maintain contentment in one's heart-mind. When Zi Gao is able to *an*, he will be able to act as the ruler asks him to without worrying about the possibility of being put to death if he fails to complete his mission (行事之情而忘其身). This is because only by doing so can his health be preserved. And only by fully doing what the job requires can he can save himself from being punished by the ruler.

Suppose Zi Gao was not able to be *an* with his *ming* because he died from the physical damage he sustained due to his emotional distress or because he failed to act as the ruler demanded, which resulted in immediate punishment. At the moment when the ruler gave the order, which could not be rescinded, the solution provided by Confucius would be the best and the only way to live with the *ming*. That is to say, when the *Zhuangzi* discusses being content with a given situation, we can see that the focus is not on a conceptual analysis of *ming*, but on directing people's attention to how one should adopt a proper attitude towards *ming* and understand how to deal with unchangeable given situations in both their practical and mental dimensions.

III. *An Xing* in the *Zhuangzi*

(1) The concept of *xing*

In comparison with the debates on *ming*, there is comparative little discussion on *xing* 性 itself in the literature in English. I speculate that this is because *xing* does not appear in the Inner Seven Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, which, in most of the cases, are *the* source that scholars focus on when it comes to the *Zhuangzi*. In the Chinese scholarship, there is a tendency to use other terms to interpret *xing*, such as *de* 德 (virtue), *zhen* 真 (authenticity), and so on. For example, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903-1982) argues that in the Inner Seven

Chapters *de* in fact replaces the idea of *xing* in discussions on the foundations upon which things are born.[95] Chen Jing, meanwhile, is of the view that *zhen*, which concerns the human being's natural nature in contrast with the socially constructed nature, is *xing*.[96] Both Xu and Chen tend to focus on why and how *xing* can be replaced by other important ideas. In terms of the analysis of the term *xing* itself, Liu Xiaogan's argument is straightforward. He has argued that *xing* in the *Zhuangzi* is not only inborn, but also completed with certain fixed qualities; it is therefore without doubt not learned and the message is that one should always follow one's nature.[97]

However, the idea that *xing* is 'inborn and completed' is not that clear in the *Zhuangzi*. For example, the expression 'nature is the fundamental characteristics of one's life' (性者生之質), which is quoted to support this idea, only shows that *xing* represents a fundamental part of one's life rather than a fixed, inborn set of qualities.[98] In fact, the idea of *xing* is far more complicated. In what follows, I will examine the following questions: What is nature? Is it a fixed quality that one was given? Is it something that is not learned? Is the *xing* of someone an observable fact or is it something that needs to be discovered by oneself?

Xing is most frequently used to describe the given characteristic tendencies that one has during the process of growth. It refers to the basic needs and desires one has during the

[95] Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo Renxing Lunshi – Xianqin Pian* 中國人性論史—先秦篇 (On Human Nature in China – Early China Chapter), Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1969, p. 373.
[96] Chen Jing 陳靜, *Ziyou de Zhixu yu Kunhuo, Huainanzi Yanjiu* 自由的秩序與困惑，淮南子研究 (The Rules and Confusions of Freedom, the study of the *Huainanzi*), Yunnan: Yunnan daxue chubanshe, 2004, p. 254.
[97] Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Zhuangzi Zhexue Ji Qi Yanbian* 莊子哲學及其演變, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987, p. 251. Burton Watson also translates all instances of *xing* in the *Zhuangzi* as inborn nature; see, for example, Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, p. 199. Chen Guying's view can also be interpreted in this way. See Chen Guying, *Lao Zhuang Xinlun* 老莊新論 (New Disucussions on the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*), Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2008, pp. 271-272.
[98] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 811. Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (608-669) sees nature as a characteristic tendency instead of that which is inborn and perfect.

process of growth, such as for clothing and food,[99] or to the desire to see, smell, hear, and taste, which is shared by all human beings.[100] Also, as described in the text, one cannot change the limits of one's given nature. A horse can gallop 1,000 *li* per day, but when it comes to catching rats, it cannot match the ability of wild dogs and weasels – that is all because of their different given *xing*,[101] namely their different given characteristic tendencies.

However, there is no strong textual evidence in the *Zhuangzi* to suggest that observable characteristic tendencies are not only inborn, but also completed by birth. Conversely, we see that the text suggests that although a certain characteristic tendency of a thing is fixed, this does not imply a necessity for fulfillment and realization. For example, when a hundred-year-old tree that could have lived longer is either cut down and made into a sacrificial vessel or cut up and thrown into a ditch, the nature of this tree is lost, *shi xing* (失性). This does not mean that the nature of the tree has disappeared. Rather, it means that the tree has lost the possibility of living out (realising) its nature, which was supposed to have been developed, and that its characteristic tendency was destroyed by a human action.[102]

Also, not every characteristic tendency should necessarily be endorsed, such as overly strong sensory desires. The *Zhuangzi* suggests that if one subordinates (*shu* 屬) one's nature to the five colours, sounds, tastes, and odours, that means that one has already *shi xing* 失性 (lost one's nature), namely that one has already lost the nature that one should develop as an ideal person.[103]

[99] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 334.
[100] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 453.
[101] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 580.
[102] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 453.
[103] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 453.

More importantly, from the expression *shi xin*g 失性 (losing one's nature) presented above,[104] we can see that *xing* is not limited to biological uses, but refers to a *prescriptive* aspect, that is, it refers to the idea that certain things *should* be developed (and others not). A person *should* realize that there are tendencies within one's nature to which priority should be given in developing (although the *Zhuangzi* never specifies exactly *what* tendencies those are), and others that one should not prioritize in developing, such as sensory desires. By doing so, one can be the person that one should be. Therefore only certain characteristic tendencies should be ascribed to/regarded as the nature that ought to be developed.

In the *Zhuangzi,* the prescriptive dimension of *xing* can be illustrated through the following example from the 'Tian Dao' 天道 (the Way of Heaven) chapter, where Confucius says to Lao Dan that rightness and propriety are the true nature of the ideal person, and that without such a nature, a person cannot grow properly and become a *junzi* 君子 (gentleman).

> 孔子曰：「要在仁義。」老聃曰：「請問：仁義，人之性邪？」孔子曰：「然。君子不仁則不成，不義則不生。仁義，真人之性也，又將奚為矣？」老聃曰：「請問何謂仁義？」孔子曰：「中心物愷，兼愛無私，此仁義之情也。」老聃曰：「意！幾乎後言！夫兼愛，不亦迂乎！無私焉，乃私也。

[104] Apart from *shi qi xing* (失其性), the text also talks about *yi qi xing* (易其性) and *fu qi xing* (復其性). Now the question is, what is meant by the nature that has been changed, lost, and to which one returns if that nature has been given by heaven and is fixed, and can only stop developing or continue growing, but cannot be lost because it never existed? If the argument regarding the *xing* that refers to a state of mind stands, then the descriptions of *xing* refer to something that can be interfered with and disturbed, and that can change. The above three expressions can then be better understood. Namely, what the stories mean by what is lost, changed, or restored is not the factual situation of the loss or restoration of one's characteristic tendencies. Rather, it is about a certain kind of attitude that is lost or recovered. A reasonable answer to the above question is that *yi qi xin* means that one is subordinating one's nature to other things. That is why the *Pianmu* 骈拇 chapter relates the change in one's nature to the damage to one's nature, namely *sun xing* (損性) and *shang xing* (傷性) (hurting one's nature). The text further explains that people who change their nature, who damage their nature, and who hurt their nature are those who *shu* 属 (subordinate) their *xing* to inappropriate sensory desires, which include the five colours, five sounds, five tastes, and five odours. Another text explains that there are five things that lead to the loss of one's nature, namely the five colours, five sounds, five tastes, five odours, and the preferences of the heart-mind that disturb the order of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and the stillness of the heart-mind. But this does not mean that one has lost all ability to see, hear, and smell. Rather, what the text suggests is that one cannot see as clearly as before, that one's vision is disturbed, and that strong sensory desires have hurt one's nature. Thus, one cannot use those abilities properly, since strong desires have caused all of those abilities to be disturbed (*luan* 亂).

夫子若欲使天下無失其牧乎？則天地固有常矣，日月固有明矣，星辰固有列矣，禽獸固有群矣，樹木固有立矣。夫子亦放德而行，循道而趨，已至矣，又何偈偈乎揭仁義，若擊鼓而求亡子焉？意！夫子亂人之性也」

Confucius said, 'The importance is benevolence and righteousness.' 'May I ask if benevolence and righteousness belong to the [true] nature of man?' said Lao Dan. 'Of course,' said Confucius. 'If the gentleman lacks benevolence, he will get nowhere; if he lacks righteousness, he cannot even stay alive. Benevolence and righteousness are truly the nature of man. What else could they be?' Lao Dan said, 'May I ask your definition of benevolence and righteousness?' Confucius said, 'To be glad and joyful in mind; to embrace universal love and be without partisanship – this is the true form of benevolence and righteousness.' Lao Dan said, 'Hmm, it is close – except for the last part. "Universal love" – that's a rather nebulous ideal, isn't it? And to be without partisanship is already a kind of partisanship. Do you want to keep the world from losing its simplicity? Heaven and earth hold fast to natural ways, the sun and moon to their natural brightness, the stars and planets to their natural ranks, the birds and beasts to their natural flocks, the trees and shrubs to their natural stands. You have only to go along with virtue in your actions, to follow the way in your journey, and already you will be there. Why these flags of benevolence and righteousness so bravely upraised, as though you were beating a drum and searching for a lost child? Ah, you will bring confusion to the true nature of man!'

This story informs us of two important points. First, according to the author's understanding of Confucius, in order to become a gentleman, one should give priority to developing *ren* and *yi*, namely one's true nature, which is the necessary condition for a person to be a gentleman.[105] From the context, we see that Lao Dan also agrees that human beings have a true nature that one should give priority to developing.[106] However, to Lao Dan, the difference between *ren* and *yi* and what he thinks is the true nature lies in whether such a nature is what one naturally has, *gu you* (固有). Second, therefore, according to the *Zhuangzi*, one ought to regard and develop as one's *true nature* what one 'naturally has' and not social norms and morals such as *ren* and *yi*. This is because, as Lao Dan says, social norms and morals lead to partisanship and cause people to lose their simplicity, thereby

[105] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 478-479.
[106] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 478-479.

confusing the true nature of man. This is one voice in this anthology. However, it is not the only one.

In the following story, we also see a different kind of voice, which shows that certain characteristics that one should develop should be regarded as falling within the category of *xing*, although they are not necessarily characteristics that one naturally has. In other words, one can attribute something to the category of true nature and treat it as if it were a given characteristic tendency that one should develop. Such a prescriptive connation of *xing* is demonstrated through the following example, where a great sage's ideal mode of governing is to get people to accept a certain ideal way of cultivating themselves as if they were acting from their *xing*, while at the same time being unaware of the reason why they are behaving in this way. As the text says,

> 大聖之治天下也，搖蕩民心，使之成教易俗，舉滅其賊心而皆進其獨志，若性之自為，而民不知其所由然。[107]
> In ruling the world, the great sage stimulates the mind of his people, and he makes people fully practice his teachings and then change their manners. On this basis, the sage points out and wipes out all ideas of treason from people's minds and allowing each to pursue his/her own will, as if people were acting from the inborn nature, and yet the people do not know why they are doing it.

Xing can function as a justification for the people to accept the sage's mode of governing and is therefore a valid reason for them to accept such a way of being cultivated. The text emphasizes that the sage cultivates the people in a certain way, as if the people were *acting from* their own *xing*, while in fact, the sage cultivates people to act *in accordance with* certain ideal behaviours and ways of thinking as if it were from their *xing.* X*ing* here functions as a justification for adopting certain kinds of ideas and behaviour. They are justified by appearing as a given characteristic tendency. It is also worth noting that

[107] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 432.

although *xing* gives a justification for one to act in a certain way, this behaviour is certainly not inborn nor complete. Rather, it is one that was taught and cultivated by the sage.

But what precisely does the development of one's nature mean? How should one develop one's nature without loosing or distorting it? The answer can be found in the chapter 'Da Sheng' 達生 (Mastering Life) which delivers the idea of *an* (安) in relation to the true nature. To be specific, one should willingly accept (*an*) and develop it without sticking to any fixed rule or interrupting it with outer factors. When incorporating the elements of self-realization and self-cultivation to the concept of nature, we can see that *xing* has the connotation of that which needs to be discovered and cultivated by oneself, namely that it is a way of knowing how to decide which part within oneself should be regarded as true nature for development.

(2) *An* towards *xing*

The idea that *xing* needs to be discovered and nurtured is implicitly suggested by Lin Xiyi 林希逸(1193-1271)[108] and Xu Fuguan.[109] The idea of understanding *xing* as a state of mind towards certain characteristic tendencies can be supported by a story in the chapter 'Da Sheng'. The story not only gives us new insights into the connotations of *xing* in the *Zhuangzi*, but also sheds light on the relationship between *xing* and *ming*, as well as *xing* and *an*.

> 孔子觀於呂梁，縣水三十仞，流沫四十裏，黿鼉魚鱉之所不能遊也。見一丈夫游之，以為有苦而欲死也，使弟子並流而拯之。數百步而出，被髮行

[108] In his annotation, Lin says that the three concepts of *gu*, *xing*, and *ming* all refer to following what is natural. See Lin Xiyi 林希逸, *Zhuangzi yan zhai kouyi jiaozhu* 莊子鬳齋口義校注 (Annotations of the *Zhuangzi*), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008, p. 295.

[109] Xu argues that *Dao* (道), *de* (德), and *xing* in the *Zhuangzi* are three different representations of one thing and that *de* and *xing* are exchangeable, although the former represents the embodiment of *Dao* in a more abstract way and the latter represents the embodiment of *Dao* in a relatively concrete way. To be more specific, *xing* refers to the characteristics of the *Dao*, namely it is nothingness, non-action, vacuity, and stillness. And *xing* is different in all human beings. See Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo ren xing lunshi* 中國人性論史 (The discussion of nature in China), Taiwan: Shangwu chubanshe, 1969, pp. 69-73.

歌而遊於塘下。孔子從而問焉，曰：「吾以子為鬼，察子則人也。請問蹈水有道乎？」曰：「亡，吾無道。吾始乎故，長乎性，成乎命。與齊俱入，與汩偕出，從水之道而不為私焉。此吾所以蹈之也。」孔子曰：「何謂始乎故，長乎性，成乎命？」曰：「吾生於陵而安於陵，故也；長於水而安於水，性也；不知吾所以然而然，命也。」[110]

Confucius was observing the sights at Lü Liang. The hanging water falls thirty fathoms, and the racing water boils along for forty *li*. Even the fish, turtles, and other water creatures cannot swim in it. He saw a man swim inside and supposed that the man was in trouble and intended to die. He sent his disciples to follow the man in the water and save him. A few hundred paces downriver, the man came out of the water. He pulled his hair down, strolled along the base of the embankment, and sang. Confucius went up to him and asked, 'At first I thought you were a ghost. Upon observing you, I knew that you are a human being. May I ask if you have your own principle of floating in the water?' The man said, 'No, I have no principle I started with a given cause, grew up with my *xing*, and came to completion with *ming*. I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water goes and never have my own way. That's the reason why I can stay afloat.' Confucius said, 'What do you mean by saying that you began with a given cause, grew up with your *xing*, and let your life come to completion with *ming* (fate)?' The man said, 'I was born on the hill and am contented in the hill – that was the given cause of life. I grew up with the water and am contented in the water – that is my *xing*. I don't know why I am like this but I find this right – that's *ming*.'

Confucius thought that the swimmer wanted to end his life. His assumption was based on his observation that the person was swimming in a dangerous place where even water animals with a natural ability to swim would not survive. In the conversation, the text shows that the swimmer not only has no problems, but that he is content with the process of the growth and development of his *xing*, and finds completion in his life within a situation that is beyond human control, namely *ming*. As such, *xing* is defined here as contentment with the way in which one grows in life. What is meant by *ming* is that one accepts any given situation without insisting on asking why it happened.[111]

[110] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 656-660.

[111] I argue that the second 然 in the sentence '*bu zhi qi suo yi ran er ran*' (不知其所以然而然) can be read verbally with an affirmative function. In fact, the second *ran* can be read in two ways. If it is read as 'as it is' without any affirmative meaning, this sentence means that *ming* refers to the thing that one cannot figure out why it happened, but turns out to be what it is. When *ran* is read with an affirmative function, then it signifies that *ming* is the thing that cannot be changed but also that has a reason for happening, although one cannot figure out the reason behind it. To be more specific, when *ran* is read in the former sense, *ming* is read as

We can see that in this story, *xing* appears amidst text that tells us that one should be aware of one's characteristic tendencies and should discover one's nature by oneself (just like the swimmer who recognizes that swimming in the water is the direction in which he will grow '*zhang yu shui*' 長于水). More importantly, one should also cultivate oneself to adopt an attitude of *an* with one's given characteristic tendency. The idea of *xing* is defined by being able to be at ease with the recognized characteristic tendency. This means that one does not swim with a preconceived idea of how one should swim to survive in such a dangerous place, and therefore one has no fixed principle (*wu dao* 無道). Instead, one follows along with the flow of the water, accepts everything that is in front of oneself, and swims along with it.

Second, one will not be surprised that in such an argumentative story, the text does not focus on the definition of these concepts, namely, *gu*, *xing*, and *ming*. Instead, the descriptions focus on the attitudes toward the situations, which are incorporated into the new definition of these three concepts. To be more specific, in this context, we see that the importance of *gu* and *xing* lies in the attitude with which one deals with the situation into which one is born and the way one grows up, and that what is of importance in the concept of *xing* is to be at ease with any development during one's life. The importance of *ming* lies in the attitude that whatever situation one may have been given cannot be changed, and one should take things as they are and then accept them.

Third, the context suggests that when one is able to be *an* 安 (content) with one's *xing* and *ming*, then one will be able to act properly in both the practical and psychological dimensions. That is to say, one acts in accordance with different situations without sticking to any preconceived opinions. This is like the swimmer who can flow along with the way

descriptive, namely the thing that is not fully under human control; while when *ran* is read as affirmative, *ming* is read as prescriptive, namely the thing that should happen.

of the water. More importantly, one accepts the situations that happen in one's life and approves of their occurrence. This is like the swimmer who, wherever he was born and grew up, cultivated himself to live in that situation and accepted that this is the environment for him to grow. Wherever he was born and grew up, the swimmer regards it as the place that he belongs to and should belong to.

IV. Content with Human Limitations

Through the story of the swimmer's own explanation of how he grew up with his nature and came into the completion of his fate, we can also see an important issue, namely the relation between *xing* and *ming.*[112] This is probably the only text that presents direct clues about the relation between these two important concepts and why there are so many examples in which they are used as a compound word.

As the story suggests, the relation between *xing* and *ming* is one in which a person can come to completion when fulfilling one's *ming*, and growing up with *xing* is the necessary procedure for this completion; thus, *xing* is the necessary condition for one to reach completion by *ming*.

Clearly, *xing* and *ming* are different. First, *ming* refers to different situations, while *xing* is independent of circumstances since it is something that is either inborn or that relies on one's cultivation. Second, *xing* places a greater emphasis on the process of growth, and this can be seen from the term *zhang* 長, which points to a dynamic process, while the concept of *ming* focuses more on the result that is beyond human control during the process

[112] We can see that what is important about *ming* in this passage is not its content or scope, but rather the attitude of acceptance towards *ming*, which is signified through the affirmative adjective *ran.* That is to say, whatever situation one is given, without knowing the reason for why it happened one approves of its occurrence and sees it as the thing that should happen in life. When one is able to be at ease with where one is and with the situation in which one stands starting from the beginning and during the process of life, one can reach completion by accepting any given situation that one has encountered in life and see the situation as one that should happen.

of growth in relation to the circumstances.

These two concepts still share important similarities, as both represent human limitations. A child is incapable of changing the fact that he/she has parents, nor can a horse change its *xing* and become capable of flying. On the other hand, they are both regarded as limitations that one should be content with and willingly accept. One attributes the relationship between the ruler and minister and regards it as *ming* so that one can be content with it without having strong emotions. Only when one can be content with the process of developing one's characteristic tendencies can one regard it as the nature that ought to develop. Through the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of *xing* and *ming,* the attitude of *an* is advocated, which can be summarized as follows.

(1) One should acknowledge that *xing* and *ming* refer to things that are not fully under human control. But the texts are not limited to factual descriptions of what nature and fate are. Rather, the focus is on one's awareness of the fact. (2) One should also understand that such things are not just things that are fully uncontrollable, but that one should adopt a proper attitude towards them, namely one should not let the heart-mind be interrupted, either by emotions or by preconceived ideas. (3) Such *an* also requires one to act appropriately and go with the flow as situations change, without being influenced by emotions or preconceived opinions, just like the swimmer who can swim along with changes in the waves.

Such an attitude differs from that held by many Western philosophers, who might find acceptance repugnant and puzzling since, as Botros summarized, they think that as one values acceptance and contentment, one will give up the chance to fight against unfair situations and human effort will be worthless.[113] I argue that the attitude of contentment

[113] Sophia Botros, "Acceptance and Morality," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 58 (1983): 433-453.

advocated by the *Zhuangzi* – that of actively dealing with a situation – is an alternative to fighting. It allows one to act appropriately with an unperturbed mind and allows one to live in full even in uncontrollable situations. This argument will be elaborated on in the following part of this thesis.

(1) The Zhuangzian contentment is an *active* attitude rather than a passive one. Such an active attitude is not an act resulting from inertia or submission; rather, it is one's deliberate choice not to struggle against the situation that one is given, while at the same time focusing on the cultivation of the heart-mind. As Confucius suggested to Zi Gao, he should willingly accept what fate has given him and fulfil his necessary duties as a son and a subordinate; meanwhile, he should focus on the cultivation of his mind so that emotional fluctuations will not be able to disturb the equanimity of his heart-mind.

(2) Such an active attitude of contentment is not merely about recognizing a certain fact, such as recognizing that one has webbed toes, but also about feeling contented and willingly accepting it without further asking, 'Why am I the one who has webbed toes?' The difference between recognition and contentment is that, when a person with webbed toes fails to recognize that he/she has a total of eleven toes, we may see him/her as irrational, while we could not say that a person who fails to accept why he/she is the one with eleven toes is irrational. When a person can accept the situation that one finds oneself in and be content with it, that person should stop asking why he/she was the one to be put in such a situation. It is like the swimmer who never questions why he was born and grew up in such a dangerous place that even creatures of the water could not survive there. Therefore, one is able to direct one's attention towards something that one can still do.

(3) Such contentment allows one to keep an unperturbed mind. Moreover, in the *Zhuangzi*, the object of contentment is something that one should neither desire nor avoid. This is like the swimmer who feels content that he was born on a hill and grew up in the

water, without regarding these circumstances as either preferable or undesirable. When one stops having a strong preference for some things and distaste of others, one will find equanimity in mind and be content with the situations that one faces, even they are uncontrollable.

(4) Moreover, the Zhuangzian attitude of contentment also focuses on the practical dimension. According to the *Zhuangzi*, one is required and should be able to act appropriately to deal with a situation in which one finds oneself. As Confucius suggested, once Zi Gao accepts his fate, he should be able to fulfil his mission by fulfilling his duty exactly as asked, without any extraneous words and free from changes in emotion. This is also like the case of the swimmer, who, once he accepted his own nature and fate, was able to swim along with the movements of the water without being influenced by preconceived ideas to swim.

(5) When one can act appropriately with an unperturbed mind, one is able to affirm human limitations. In other words, one has lived in full despite one's limitations. One has found the way to properly deal with situations beyond one's control while being able to protect one's inner peace. One can look at situations as they are and actively think of ways to process them calmly and with equanimity. By doing so, one has tried one's best to live with uncertainty and uncontrollability without either risking one's life or damaging one's mental peace. This is just like the case of the swimmer who lives in full in the water. Every moment he swims with the water and lives with the conditions within the water with a peaceful mind. He affirms what is given by the water through dealing with it properly.

Thus, from the above analysis, we can see that the Zhuangzian idea of contentment has both psychological and practical dimensions. It involves working with that which is uncontrollable by actively taking an attitude that will not only allow a person to regard the object of contentment in a neutral manner, but also guide the person into ceasing to beg for

the reason for why it is happening. Moreover, the active attitude of contentment, according to the *Zhuangzi*, will accordingly allow one to behave in an appropriate way without being swayed by emotions and preconceived opinions.

It is worth noting that such an active contentment does not imply advocacy of hegemonic control or any social evil. On the one hand, there is no contraction between human limitations and self-control within the Zhuangzian philosophical framework. There is much in the *Zhuangzi* about transforming one's attitude towards things so as to take situations within one's control. To be specific, when others believe that one is stuck within an uncontrollable situation, the *Zhuangzi* will help to laugh it away and guide others away from the seemingly uncontrollable situation and transform it into a form of action. This idea will be developed in Chapter Four. But first, in the following chapter, I show specific cases of how the idea of *an* is used to deliver a Zhuangzian ideal of the parent-child relationship.

Chapter Two: Contentment with Filial Piety

I. Introduction

Traditionally, *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) has been understood to be a core representative of Confucian values.[114] However, the concept does not merely feature prominently in the so-called Confucian tradition,[115] but also in the Daoist and Buddhist traditions.[116] Developing on these studies of filial piety in China, I argue that the idea of *xiao* in the *Zhuangzi* can also be understood through the idea of *an* 安 (contentment) and *wang* 忘 (forgetfulness). References to filial piety appear a total of 33 times in the *Zhuangzi*, covering different aspects of the concept. Previous scholarship notwithstanding, some questions remain unanswered and need to be addressed. Two main features of previous research on filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* are worth re-evaluating.

First, the Zhuangzian notion of filial piety is often understood through Confucian eyes. This is perhaps because *xiao* is traditionally understood as a Confucian concept. When people believe that the so-called Confucian and Daoist theories are related to some extent, they tend to discuss filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* within the framework of Confucian ideas. For example, there are scholars who argue that Zhuangzian filial piety is a negation of the Confucian idea of filial piety.[117] There are also scholars who argue that the *Zhuangzi* reasons

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[114] This chapter was presented at the European Association of Chinese Philosophy's 'Young Scholar Award' Panel.

[115] Many scholars have contributed to the Confucian idea of filial piety. See for example, Michael Nylan, "Confucian piety and individualism in Han China," The *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (1996): 1-27. Keith N. Knapp, "The Ru Reinterpretation of Xiao," *Early China,* Vol. 20 (1995): 195-222.

[116] For a comprehensive study of filial piety, please see Alan Chan and Sor-Hoon Tan, eds., *Filial piety in Chinese thought and history*, 2004. Routledge. Also, Brashier stated that *xiao* in the early Zhou dynasty was a concrete concept referring to the ancestral cult, namely to a sacrifice of food conducted out of filial respect. Over the course of the Zhou dynasty, it began to evolve into an abstract concept but was still closely related to the ancestral cult. From the Han dynasty, filial piety was accorded privileged status as a virtue. See Kenneth Edward Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011, pp. 37-42. Guan Xing discusses filial piety in the Buddhist tradition in his paper "Filial piety in early Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol. 12 (2005): 82-106. On the political uses of filial piety, please see Hsieh Yu-Wei, "Filial Piety and Chinese Society," in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 9 (1959): 56-57.

[117] Zhao Jinguo 趙金國 and Deng Yuchao 鄧玉超, "Zhuangzi 'wang xiao' sixiang" 莊子"忘孝" 思想 (The

that Confucian virtues can be attained by denying Confucian ritual forms.[118]

However, owing in part to an increased awareness that Daoism and Confucianisn did not exist as a school with a shared lineage of knowledge at the time when the texts and the anthology were composed, it can be argued that the previous discussion of this topic was based on wrong assumptions.[119] In fact, for the early period, *xiao* seems to have been part of the broader cultural and philosophical landscape and not the sole purview (property so to speak) of a single school or lineage. And therefore, as a central concept in early Chinese thought, which was shared and renegotiated across a variety of knowledge communities, the better way to study the idea of *xiao* in the *Zhuangzi* is to first analyse how the concept is treated within specific texts before comparing its use to other texts, instead of constructing mutually incompatible philosophical schools. After conducting a careful analysis of the text itself, we will have a better perspective with which to compare it with ideas that appear in other anthologies.

Another feature of the research on filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* is that it focuses on the question of whether the *Zhuangzi* holds a positive or a negative attitude towards filial

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Zhuangzian idea of the forgetting of filial piety), *Xue Wen* 學問, second volume, (2009.6), see especially section 3. pp.32-42.

[118] See Brook Ziporyn, "Zhuangzi as philosopher," Footnote 5, 2011. The paper can be accessed at: http://www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangziphil; Wang Yong 王勇 and Wu Feng 吴锋, "Zhuangzi Zhong Xiao Guan De Xueli Jiexi" 庄子忠孝观的学理解析 (An analysis of Zhuangzi's idea of filial piety and loyalty), *Xiao Gan Xueyuan Xuebao* 孝感学院学报, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2011): 5-9.

[119] Confucianism and Daoism as textual and intellectual lineages are not appropriate classifications for pre-imperial Chinese texts for the following reasons. First, Confucianism and Daoism as schools with intellectual lineages did not exist in pre-imperial China. For the disputes on Daoism, see Scott Cook, "Classical Daoism – Is there really such a thing?" https://baopu81.wordpress.com/2011/10/16/classical-daoism-is-there-really-such-a-thing-part-1/. On diverse voices attributed to Confucius, see Michael Hunter, *Confucius Beyond the Analects*, Leiden: Brill, 2017. Second, the composite nature of early Chinese texts contradicts the idea of textual unity, identity, and coherence. Therefore, we should not treat certain texts as arguing against others on the basis of where the texts happen to have been collected. See *William Boltz*, "The Composite *Nature of Early Chinese Texts*," in *Martin Kern*, ed., *Text* and *Ritual in Early China*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005, pp. 50-79. Third, according to Lewis, there is no one master behind the texts attributed to that person; instead, the texts should be regarded as a creation of 'author function'. Therefore, there is no reason to assume that a text appearing under certain master's name, such as Confucius, should have consistent and related ideas. See Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China,* 1999, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press. Also Michael Nylan, "Review of Writing and Authority in early China: Textual Authority in Pre-Han and Han," *Early China*, Vol. 25 (2000): 205-58.

piety. Ikeda Tomohisa has argued that most of the expressions of filial piety are negative, and that the only positive one, which is found in chapter 31, expresses only a slightly positive view towards *xiao*.[120] The seemingly ambiguous attitudes toward *xiao* in the *Zhuangzi* were also noticed by Donald Holzman, who argued that chapters 14 and 29 contain a negative attitude towards filial piety, while a different positive attitude towards it appears in chapters 4 and 31. Holzman, however, did not explain this observation and did not provide any further analysis.[121]

Instead of focusing on the abovementioned questions, I believe that in order to understand the idea of filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* on its own, the following, more productive, question can be asked, namely, what aspects and connotations are attributed to the concept of *xiao* in the *Zhuangzi*? Or, to put it another way, how can one be 'filial' according to the *Zhuangzi*? To answer these questions, I will analyse different aspects and connotations of *xiao* in the *Zhuangzi*. More importantly, I will point out how the Zhuangzian idea of filial piety can contribute to our understanding of the larger discussion of this topic in early China.

To demonstrate the connotations of filial piety in the *Zhuangzi*, this chapter examines the following three aspects. First, it discusses how the *Zhuangzi* differentiates internal states from external social standards for understanding filial piety. Second, this chapter focuses on how the ideas of *an* 安 (contentment) and *wang* 忘 (forgetfulness) are associated with filial piety in the *Zhuangzi*. Through analysing these two key concepts, we can understand the association between Zhuangzian ideas of filial piety and debates that took place in early China. For example, how is the relationship between love and respect and filial piety understood in the *Zhuangzi*? What arguments are given in the *Zhuangzi*

[120]Ikeda Tomohisa, "The Evolution of the Concept of Filial Piety (*xiao*) in the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the Guodian Bamboo Text *Yucong*," in Alan Chan and Sor-Hoon Tan, eds., *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 12-28.
[121] Donald Holzman, "The Place of Filial Piety in Ancient China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 118, No. 2 (1998): 185-199.

against those who insist that being filial is necessarily associated with constantly remonstrating to one's parents?

These questions are worth considering for two reasons. First, the understanding of filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* represents a unique and meaningful voice in the debate. For example, it was in the *Zhuangzi* that the ideas of *wang* and *an* were first associated with the understanding of filial piety. Second, the discussions on filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* can further enrich our understanding of relevant issues, such admonishing one's parents. I argue that filial piety did not have a fixed meaning in early China. Questions of whether a filial son can disobey his parents, or of the conflict between being filial and being loyal to the public, were heavily debated across early texts. Therefore, on the one hand, there is no need to assume that the position laid out in the *Zhuangzi* must have specifically targeted Confucian ideas. [122] On the other hand, an understanding of Zhuangzian filial piety through a close reading of the *Zhuangzi* itself allows us to situate its thought more properly within early Chinese intellectual debates.

Let us turn to the first question on filial piety in the *Zhuangzi*, on whether it should be decided by internal or external standards.

II. Forgetting as Being Filial

To gain a general understanding of *xiao*, the first question is: Who decides whether an individual is filial? In chapter 26, 'Wai Wu' 外物 (External Things), the *Zhuangzi* supplies an answer that negates the necessary connection between being filial and the love between parents and children. More importantly, we can see from this that the understanding of being filial in the *Zhuangzi* is closely related to one's internal state rather than decided

[122] In using the term Confucian ideas, I am referring to ideas found within certain anthologies that have been attributed to the Confucian tradition, such as those in the *Analects*, *Mencius*, the *Records of Rituals*, and other works.

by the external evaluation of others.

> 外物不可必，故龍逢誅，比干戮，箕子狂，惡來死，桀、紂亡。人主莫不欲其臣之忠，而忠未必信，故伍員流於江,[123] 萇弘死於蜀，藏其血三年，化而為碧[124]。人親莫不欲其子之孝，而孝未必愛，故孝己[125]憂而曾參[126]悲[127]
> An external response could not be ensured. This is why, Guan Longfeng was executed, Bi Gan was sentenced to death, Prince Ji (feigned) madness, Wu Lai was killed, and Jie and Zhou perished. There is no ruler who does not want his ministers to be loyal, but loyal ministers are not always trusted. This is why, Wu Yuan was thrown into the Yangzi River and Chang Hong died in Shu, where the people stored away his blood, and after three years it was transformed into green jade. There is no parent who does not want his son to be filial, but filial sons are not always loved. This is why, Xiao Ji grieved and Zeng Shen sorrowed.

This paragraph focuses on the observation that responses from outside cannot be ensured. The outcome of things cannot be predicted. Therefore, a person's miserable death is not necessarily related to his or her behaviour and character. To illustrate this argument, the text uses the deaths of Guan Longfeng, Bi Gan, Wu Lai, Jie, and Zhou as examples. The text further elaborates on this main argument by stating that a loyal minister is not necessarily trusted by his subjects, which was the situation faced by Wu Zixu and Chang Hong. Similarly, a filial son is not necessarily loved by his parents, as was the case with Xiao Ji and Zeng Shen. They were either disliked by their parents, despite no misconduct in childhood, or were distrusted because they had been framed by others.

Admittedly, the relationship between being filial and being loved is only a sub-argument in this paragraph. What we should pay attention to is the context, which contrasts

[123] This story describes how Wu Zixu 伍子胥 honestly gave suggestions to the ruler Fu Chai 夫差. However, he was killed by Fu Chai, and his dead body was placed in a sack and floated in the river. See Guo Qingfan, p. 920.
[124] Chang Hong was framed by his peers and was therefore exiled to Shu. Since his loyalty was not appreciated, he killed himself. People in Shu were touched by him, and therefore used a big bowl to collect his blood. After three years, Chang Hong's blood turned into beautiful jade. Ibid., p. 920.
[125] Xiao Ji was the son of Wu Ding 武丁. Xiao Ji had the reputation of being filial, but his stepmother framed him and he was therefore exiled until death. Ibid., p. 920.
[126] Zeng Sheng was extremely filial, but his parents disliked him and frequently beat him almost to death. Ibid., p. 920.
[127] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 920.

the condition of being filial with that of not being loved. To be more specific, we can see that even though the son was not loved by the parents, the text still acknowledges that Xiao Ji and Zeng Sheng were filial. That is to say, the criteria for being filial are not set by external standards. Rather, they are determined by one's internal state. Here, being filial trumps the result of being regarded as filial by one's parents and others. We now ask, 'What are the connotations of *xiao*? What are the criteria for being filial?'

In contrast to external evaluations that cannot be ensured, the *Zhuangzi* focuses on internal states when thinking of filial piety. It argues that *wang* 忘 (forgetfulness) is the ideal state of mind that one should adopt in order to be filial. In fact, forgetfulness as a crucial idea is frequently pointed to in the *Zhuangzi* as referring to an ideal relationship. For example, forgetfulness is used to describe the wearing of a pair of comfortable shoes. The relationship between the shoes and one's feet itself does not vanish, and indeed the shoes are constantly helping the feet to move on. But the crucial part is that, as long as the shoes are comfortable, one forgets about wearing them. 'To forget about the foot is because of the fitness of a shoe; to forget about the waist is because of the fitness of a girdle' (忘足履之適也, 忘要帶之適也).[128] The same logic applies to a swimmer and the water. The chapter 'Da Sheng' 達生 (Mastering Life) contains the following observation, 'Good swimmers are very capable, they forget about water' (善游者数能忘水也).[129] In the chapter 'Tian Yun' 天運 (The Turning of Heaven), forgetfulness is used to describe the ideal relationship between parents and children. With forgetfulness, one is able to be filial. This story begins with a discussion on *ren* 仁 (benevolence).

[128] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 662
[129] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 642.

商太宰蕩問仁於莊子。莊子曰：「虎狼，仁也。」曰：「何謂也？」莊子曰：「父子相親，何為不仁？」曰：「請問至仁。」莊子曰：「至仁無親。」太宰曰：「蕩聞之：無親則不愛，不愛則不孝。謂至仁不孝，可乎？」[130]

Dang, the prime minister of Shang (Song[131]), asked Zhuangzi about benevolence. Zhuangzi said, 'Tigers and wolves – they're benevolent.' 'why do you say that?' Zhuangzi said, 'The sire and cubs are [warm and] affectionate with one another – how could they not be benevolent?' 'If so, may I ask what is perfect benevolence?' 'Perfect benevolence knows no affection,' said Zhuangzi. The prime minister said, 'I have heard that where affection is lacking, there will be no love, and if there is no love, there will be no filial piety. Can you possibly say that perfect benevolence is unfilial?'

莊子曰：「不然。夫至仁尚矣，孝固不足以言之。此非過孝之言也，不及孝之言也。夫南行者至於郢，北面而不見冥山，是何也？則去之遠也。[132]故曰：以敬孝易，以愛孝難；以愛孝易，以忘親難；忘親易，使親忘我難；使親忘我易，兼忘天下難；兼忘天下易，使天下兼忘我難。夫德遺堯、舜而不為也，利澤施於萬世，天下莫知也，豈直太息而言仁孝乎哉！夫孝悌仁義 ，忠信貞廉，此皆自勉以役其德者也，不足多也。故曰：至貴，國爵并焉；至富，國財并焉；至願，名譽并焉。是以道不渝。」

'It is not so', said Zhuangzi. 'Perfect benevolence is a lofty thing – words like filial piety would never do to describe it. And what you are talking about is not something that surpasses filial piety, but something that doesn't even measure up to it. If a traveller to the south turns to look north when he reaches the city of Ying, he will no longer see the dark northern mountains. Why is that? Because he is too far away. Thus it is said, to be filial out of respect is easy; to be filial out of love is hard. To be filial out of love is easy; to forget parents is hard. To forget parents is easy; to make parents forget us is hard. To make parents forget us is easy; to forget the whole world is hard. To forget the whole world is easy; to make the whole world forget us is hard. As a rule, virtue discards Yao and Shun and rests in inaction. Its bounty enriches ten thousand ages, and yet no one in the world knows this. Why all these deep sighs, this talk of benevolence and filial piety? Filial piety, brotherliness, benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, trust, honour, integrity – for all of these you must drive yourself and make a slave of Virtue. They are not worth prizing. Thus it is said, highest eminence scorns the titles of the kingdom; greatest wealth rejects the riches of the kingdom; loftiest desire ignores fame and reputation. It is the Way alone that never varies.'

[130] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 497-499.
[131] Sima Yun 司馬云 said that Shang refers to Song (宋). See Wang Shumin 王叔岷, *Zhuangzi Jiao Quan* 莊子校詮 (The annotations and interpretations of *Zhuangzi*), Zhonghua shuju, 2007, p. 507.
[132] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 497-499.

While the main focus of this story is the concept of perfect benevolence *zhi ren* (至仁), the discussion of *xiao* cannot be dismissed. Through Zhuangzi's words, we can see three levels of *xiao* (孝) delineated by different states of mind, namely, respecting (*jing* 敬), loving (*ai* 愛), and forgetting (*wang* 忘). According to Dang (蕩), the prime minister of Shang, loving is the necessary condition for being filial, '無親則不愛，不愛則不孝' (where affection is lacking, there will be no love, and if there is no love, there will be no filial piety).

In contrast with seeing respecting and loving as necessary conditions for being filial, as was proposed by Dang, the text continues to demonstrate the Zhuangzian understanding of filial piety as being closely related to *wang* (忘). From Zhuangzi's argument, we can see that *jing* 敬 (respecting) is the easiest way for a child to be filial, followed by *ai* 愛 (loving). The most difficult way, and possibly the most ideal way, to be filial is by forgetting.

When forgetfulness is related to filial piety, not only is forgetting about one's parents required, but making one's parents forget about oneself is also necessary. Furthermore, the text argues that such forgetfulness can allow one to forget the whole world and possibly make the world forget about oneself. Admittedly, the text does not give any clear definition of the idea of forgetting. Nor does it give any direct explanation for why forgetting is the highest level of being filial. However, from the context, which refers to the ideal behaviour exhibited by Yao (堯) and Shun (舜), we can indirectly speculate about what the text means by forgetfulness and why it is the highest level of being a filial son. The following are characteristics of forgetfulness that can be derived from the context:

(1) The Zhuangzian idea of forgetfulness is that it is an active choice and requires self-cultivation. It differs from a passive state of mind, which results from ignorance or inertia, such as forgetting one's keys when leaving the house. Such an active, deliberate,

and indeed difficult cultivation to achieve forgetfulness is seen in the expression '忘…難' (forgetting … is difficult). It also requires that one make others reach this level of state of mind ('使…忘我難' making … forget[ting] about me difficult).

(2) This forgetfulness is not the result of being careless or having no regard for one's parents and the world. On the contrary, it is a practical dimension crucial to reaching forgetfulness. Practically, in order to reach the filial level of forgetfulness, the corresponding behaviour is: first, to serve one's parents just as the great sages benefitted the world, and second, to not allow one's parents to become consciously aware of one's filial behaviour, just as the sages did not cause the world to become aware of their great deeds; as a result, one's parents will not feel indebted to you.

(3) Forgetting requires one to make no fixed value judgements constructed by a socially normative and morally codified filial piety. This is because a really filial child will never value filial piety for its name. As the text says, 'Thus it is said, highest eminence scorns the titles of the kingdom; greatest wealth rejects the riches of the kingdom; loftiest desire ignores fame and reputation. It is the Way alone that never varies.' In other words, forgetfulness requires one to act not out of social obligations. This is why the text compares forgetting with respecting and loving. To be specific, on the one hand, the text states that respecting one's parents is easier than loving them, and loving them is again easier than forgetting them. That is to say, there are grounds to argue that both respecting and loving can be seen as aspects of filial piety, although having a lower status than forgetting.[133] However, we can see that Dang refers to a saying that affection and love are the necessary conditions for being filial, Zhuangzi replies that these do 'not even reach of level of being filial'. This is because, for the *Zhuangzi*, when one reaches the ultimate level of

[133] Huang Shengping 黄圣平, "Zhuangzi lun xiao jiqi qishi" 莊子論孝及其啟示 (The discussion of filial piety in the *Zhuangzi* and its significance), *Hubei Gongye Xueyuan Xuebao* 湖北工業學院學報, Vol. 34, No. 5 (2014): 5-14. See especially p. 7.

forgetfulness, what one needs to do is to get rid of the strong feelings and social obligations that one used to have. By doing so, love and respect are no longer how the society sees a particular relation between parent and child.

(4) When one is able to forget about social norms and moral codes while serving one's parents, one will not overtly express filial behaviour or make a big deal of one's behaviour of serving. As the text suggests, 'they are not worth praising', and thus one should not heave deep sighs and talk a great deal about filial piety. The opposite case of overtly expressing one's dedication for serving one's parents as well as making them aware of such behaviour is criticized in the *Zhuangzi.* In the chapter *Tian Di* 天地 (Heaven and Earth), the *Zhuangzi* argues against this by stating, 'to prepare medicine like a filial son and present it to the loving father, [while] wearing a grim and haggard look, this the true sage would be ashamed to do' (孝子操藥以修慈父，其色燋然，聖人羞之). The text explains that the reason that a sage would be ashamed to do this is because a true sage 'moves without leaving any trail behind and acts without leaving any memory of his deeds' (故行而無迹，事而無傳) The seemingly 'filial' son is not truly filial because he/she overtly expresses his/her own feelings, and thus overtly demonstrates his/her own behaviours.

The above analysis suggests that the highest level of being filial is being able to forget and letting other people forget. Such forgetfulness is different from either being passively ignorant or being careless of one's parents. It is an active choice of state of mind. It is also a difficult process of cultivation. Practically and mentally, it includes serving and benefiting one's parents without having strong emotional attachments or necessarily adhering to social obligations. To be specific, it requires one's behaviour to not result in any trace of effort or memories, so that one's parents would not be clearly aware of one's dedication. This in turn, would free them from worry and other emotional burdens. It also requires one to not overly express or demonstrate one's filial behaviour, so that neither party

will be harmed by strong emotions. This is why forgetting is a higher level of *xiao.* It allows one to deliver practical care to one's parents without burdening both parties.

III. Contentment as Being Filial

From the previous discussion, we can see that when people see affection and love as being filial, the *Zhuangzi* argues that being filial out of emotional attachment is not enough and that only by reaching forgetfulness will one be able to be truly filial. In the chapter 'Renjian Shi' 人間世 (In the World of Men), the *Zhuangzi* also proposes a transformation from pure natural love to the level of *an* 安 (contentment) for being filial. The chapter incorporates a story about Duke Xie (葉) receiving a mission to travel to the state of Qi (齊), which we discussed in the first chapter in relation to the idea of *ming* 命 . Once he accepted this mission, the Duke began to worry that he would suffer from the judgement of men if he proved to be unsuccessful at fulfilling his duty, and also about the imbalance of *yin* and *yang*, which might lead to sickness due to his excitement and worry about success. In order to present the relationship between contentment and filial piety, let me go through this passage again. When Duke Xie asked Confucius about his opinion on how to resolve his problems, Confucius said:

> 仲尼曰：「天下有大戒二：其一，命也；其一，義也。子之愛親，命也，不可解於心；臣之事君，義也，無適而非君也，無所逃於天地之間。是之謂大戒。是以夫事其親者，不擇地而安之,[134] 孝之至也；夫事其君者，不擇事而安之，忠之盛也；自事其心者，哀樂不易施乎前，知其不可奈何而安之若命，德之至也。為人臣子者，固有所不得已，行事之情而忘其身，何暇至於悅生而惡死！夫子其行可矣！」[135]
>
> Confucius said: 'In the world, there are two great admonishments: one is *ming* and the other is duty. A son's love to his parents is *ming*. You cannot untie this from

[134] Different interpretations of this term will be discussed later in this chapter.
[135] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 152-155.

> the heart-mind. A subject's serving his ruler is duty. There is no place where a subject can go and be without his ruler; there is no place where he can escape to between heaven and earth. These are what I mean by the great admonishments. Such being the case, to serve your parents, to be content to follow anywhere they are; this is the perfection of filial piety. To serve your ruler, to be content to serve him everything that could be; this is the peak of loyalty. Those who serve their own heart-mind are not swayed in the face of sadness and joy. To understand what you can do nothing about and to be *content* with it as if it were *ming* – this is the perfection of virtue. As a subject and a son, although there are things you cannot avoid, if you act in accordance with the state of affairs and forget about yourself, then how will you have time to be concerned about loving life and hating death? Act in this way and you will be all right.

In this paragraph, we can see the importance of *an* 安 (contentment) as a necessary way of behaving for one to be filial, and thus a necessary condition for one to be filial. In the beginning, a child's natural and unavoidable love is a kind of feeling from which one can never escape. From the context, we can see that relying only on one's natural love to serve one's parents seen as one's unchangeable condition, called *ming* 命. 'A son's love for his parents is *ming.* You cannot untie this from the heart-mind'. It is one of the two most important admonishments (*jie* 戒) that one needs to be cautious in life.

When discussing *jie*, the reference is to one's conscious awareness of certain possible undesirable outcomes. More importantly, it relates to the proper way of conducting oneself. For example, as described in the 'Yangsheng Zhu' 養生主 (the Secret of Caring for Life) chapter, when cook Ding encounters something obviously difficult, he pays conscious attention to *jie*. 'Whenever I come to a complicated place, I size up the difficulties, tell myself to watch out and be cautious.' (吾見其難為，怵然為戒)[136] Such conscious attention is shown by cook Ding reminding himself to 'keep my eyes on what I am doing,

[136] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 119.

work very slowly, and move the knife with the greatest subtlety….' (視為止，行為遲。動刀甚微…)[137]

Therefore, when we treat the notion of unchangeable love towards one's parents as an admonishment, this means that such a love is obvious and one is already aware of its unchangeability. Such a love is seen as an undesirable occurrence because it will influence the balance of *yin* (陰) and *yang* (陽), and therefore will damage one's heath. On the other hand, when the text argues that one needs to be cautious of such a love, it implies that there is a proper attitude that one should adopt to deal with natural love, namely an 安 (contentment). The text says that, 'Such being the case, to serve the parent, when one is able to be content to follow anywhere the parents are, this can be seen as the perfection of filial piety.' By *an*, the *Zhuangzi* points out the highest level of filial piety (*xiao* 孝). Without it, one only deals with one's parents with love, which is seen as an unchangeable *ming* that one needs to be cautious about. With *an*, one is able to serve one's parents as a filial child.

As discussed in the first chapter, such an understanding of *an* focuses on two parts. It not only refers to the contentment of the heart-mind, but also emphasizes the practical guidelines of one's actions toward one's parents. After demonstrating that one should serve one's father, the text goes on to discuss in detail how to serve one's own mind: 'And to serve your own mind so that sadness or joy do not sway or move it; to understand what you can do nothing about and to be content with it as if it were a situation that cannot be changed'. That is to say, although one should do that which makes one's parents happy and follow them wherever they go, in the meantime, one should also transform one's natural love to a kind of equanimity that frees oneself from emotional fluctuations and therefore from

[137] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 119.

disturbing one's mental state. By being able to *an,* one is able to reach the highest state of filial piety.

To summarize, the idea of '*an*' in relation to being filial is one's active choice. To be specific, when one can be filial, one needs to transform oneself from being attached to a natural love that was given, and one needs to be cautious with this admonishment. This is not easy, but involves a process of self-cultivation. Second, *an* emphasizes the equanimity of the mind without being influenced by the sadness and happiness resulting from natural love. Third, *an* involves practical actions, such as following one's parents wherever they go and serving them in whatever way they want. With contentment, one will no longer be bounded by the love that society requires, nor will one be overly emotionally attached to one's parents, which will eventually damage one's health. Instead, one transforms the emotion of love into a form of equanimity, which allows one to be free from emotional disturbances and accordingly to protect one's own physical and mental balance while serving one's parents.

IV. The Ideal Parent-Child Relationship

The idea of forgetfulness and contentment as being filial is again expressed in the chapter 'Ze Yang' 則陽 (Ze Yang). In this passage, the text does not directly relate the idea to the term *xiao*. Instead, the text describes being forgetful and content as the ideal parent-child (*fuzi* 父子) relationship.

> [...]故聖人，其窮也使家人忘其貧，其達也使王公忘其爵祿而化卑。其於物也，與之為娛矣；其於人也，樂物之通而保己焉。故或不言而飲人以和，與人並立而使人化，父子之宜，彼其乎歸居，而一閒其所施。其於人心者，若是其遠也[...] [138]
>
> This is why, the true sage, in hardship, can make his family forget their poverty; in affluence, can make kings and dukes forget their titles and stipends and transform them to be humble. His approach to things is to go take pleasure with them; his

[138] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 878.

> approach to men is to take enjoyment with understanding them, and hold it to his own. This is why there may be times when, without saying a word, he induces harmony in others; by standing alongside others, he can cause them to transform, until the proper relationship between father and son has found its way just like going home. He does it all in a spirit of constant effortlessness – so far is he removed from the hearts of men.

The ideal parent-child relationship is described as 'the proper relationship between father and son has found its ideal way just like going home.' To reach the ideal relationship, one needs to 'act on things with effortlessness' (閒其所施), and this is the result of being able to forget: 'This is why, the true sage, in hardship, can make his family forget their poverty; in affluence, can make kings and dukes forget their titles and stipends and transform the lowly.'

How is it possible for one to make others forget their hardship? Guo Xiang (郭象) says that, in order to make others forget, one needs to forget it oneself first.[139] In other words, when one does not value things such as titles and poverty, one's mind does not occupied by the pursuit of titles and avoidance of the poverty. Therefore one will no longer fight for it or avoid it. Accordingly, one's family will not be influenced by being either poor or rich, whether economically or emotionally, and gradually will forget about their condition. In this sense, forgetting and effortlessness are crucial parts of an ideal parent-child relationship.

Apart from forgetfulness, contentment is another part of an ideal parent-child relationship. The text points out the importance of contentment through having *le* 樂 (enjoyment), and *yu* 娛 (pleasure) with things and people. Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 pays attention to the idea of being comfortable in relation to forgetfulness.[140] He argues that when one takes pleasure in what others are like, when one derives enjoyment from the changing

[139] Wang Shumin 王叔岷, *Zhuangzi Jiao Quan* 莊子校詮, Beijing: Zhonghua shuji, 2007, p. 999.
[140] Wang Shumin, *Zhuangzi Jiao Quan*, p. 999.

of things, it means that not only does one make no distinction between being poor or rich, but that, more importantly, one takes pleasure in every situation that one is in. Therefore, whether one is poor or rich, one can be at ease with that, and accordingly, people around you can likewise be at ease with that.

From the above analysis, we see that forgetfulness and contentment are inseparable parts of an ideal parent-child relationship. Only when one can forget, can one take effortless action to deal with things. And only when one has reached the level of forgetfulness, can one take pleasure and be contented with the changes in life. With forgetfulness and contentment, both parents and children can reach the level of feeling that they are going back home.

V. The Zhuangzian Idea of Filial Piety in Dialogue

The analysis has shown that forgetfulness (*wang* 忘) and contentment (*an* 安*)* share some characteristics that can be seen as special connotations of filial piety in the *Zhuangzi.* Being filial depends on one's internal state. A filial son may not necessarily be loved by his parents, as was the case with Zeng Sheng and Xiao Ji, who were disliked and almost killed by their parents, despite their filial conduct. There are also cases of truly filial children who were thought by the public to have merely been engaging in flattery. Therefore, the *Zhuangzi* pays attention to the internal state of forgetfulness and contentment, instead of to social or ritual judgements. One may argue that in order to reach this level of forgetfulness, one needs to make one's parents forget and not feel indebted; as such, one's being filial is still related to the judgement of others. However, forgetfulness refers to a state of mind that one wants to induce in one's parent, rather than to a judgement. This does not mean that whether or not one is filial is decided by fixed value judgements and social norms. When parents have not been able to forget their child, one would not think that the child had been unfilial;

instead, one would think that the child had not yet reached the highest level of filial piety.

In serving one's parents, the *Zhuangzi* requires one to keep a detached attitude. Forgetfulness (*wang*) and contentment (*an*) express this, each one emphasizing different aspects of being filial. The idea of *wang* focuses on the negative dimension, and argues for getting rid of social obligations and emotional attachment. When one is able to forget, one will be able to make one's parents forget about oneself, as one will not have burdened the parents. The idea of *an* expresses the idea of filial piety from a positive dimension, and argues that one should be at ease and preserve emotional equanimity while trying one's best to serve and follow one's parents. It means that one should not stop at the level of one's inborn love in serving one's parents. Rather, one should transform natural love to the level of contentment, through which one would be able to serve one's parents without experiencing emotional fluctuations. Therefore, one will neither hurt oneself nor burden one's parents with social codes or emotional baggage.

More importantly, we can say that *wang* builds a necessary foundation for the individual to reach the level of *an*. Only by getting rid of the traditional social and moral requirements of being filial, as well as withdrawing from being overly attached to one's parents, can one serve one's parents with an unperturbed mind without hurting oneself or burdening one's parents. From this perspective, we can say *wang* is instrumental for the mental state of *an*. Accordingly, when one can serve one's parents with forgetfulness and effortlessness, one will be able to achieve a feeling of comfort in this relationship. Both parties will therefore take pleasure in it, instead of feeling obligated or emotionally burdened.

From the previous discussion, we have seen how the *Zhuangzi* relates the idea of filial piety to forgetfulness and contentment. I have not only examined the core idea of *xiao* itself, but I have also paid attention to the description of the ideal parent-child relationship. Through examining different texts, we can see how Zhuangzian ideas of filial piety focus

on self-cultivation. Not only is one required to abstain from fixed value judgements towards social norms and moral codes, but it is also suggested that one should enjoy the changes that occur, and be content with wherever one's parents want to go and with whatever they want. In this way, one will give the relationship its most comfortable feeling. More importantly, one will serve one's parents with equanimity, and this is not only important for oneself, but also crucial for one's parents. However, this does not mean that the Zhuangzian idea of filial piety was unique in the sense that it was conceived without reference to other ideas that were being discussed at the time. In fact, the *Zhuangzi* itself contrasts its ideas with those of others.

As stated before, the *Zhuangzi* compares the combined idea of 'love and respect' when discussing filial piety in the chapter 'Tian Yun'. The text says, 'Thus it is said, to be filial out of respect is easy; to be filial out of love is hard. To be filial out of love is easy; to forget parents is hard.' How is the Zhuangzian idea of filial piety to be compared with 'love and respect'? Since no clear definition or discussion of these terms is found in the *Zhuangzi*, we can only deduce that love and respect broadly refer to emotions and social obligations. Another thing we can know is that seeing 'love and respect' as ways of being filial had some currency in early China. The prime minister Dang himself pointed out that he had only heard about (*wen zhi* 聞之) a saying on filial piety. In other words, Dang did not conceptualize it himself. Rather it was presented as an idea on filial piety that was likely shared by certain knowledge communities. If the authors of the *Zhuangzi* were communicating and debating some ideas that were common in society at that time, these ideas would need to be sought in other texts.

First, when some texts associate love and respect with filial piety, they argue that a filial child should serve his parents by loving and respecting what his parents love and respect. The *Zhuangzi* would disagree with this. Compare this example from the *Liji* (禮記):

> 曾子曰：「孝子之養老也，樂其心不違其志，樂其耳目，安其寢處，以其飲食忠養之孝子之身終，終身也者，非終父母之身，終其身也；是故父母之所愛亦愛之，父母之所敬亦敬之，至於犬馬盡然，而況於人乎！[141]
> Zengzi said, 'A filial son, in serving his aged parents, should make their hearts glad, and not to go against their wishes; to please their eyes and ears, and make their living comfortable. One should supply them with their food and drink – such is the filial son to the end of life. By "the end of life", I mean not the end of the parents' lives, but the end of his own life. Thus, what his parents loved he will love, and what they respected he will respect. He will do so even in regard to all their dogs and horses, and how much more in regard to the men.'

Another example can be found in the 'Zhong Yong' 中庸 (Equilibrium and Harmony):

> […]敬其所尊， 愛其所親，事死如事生，事亡如事存，孝之至也.[142]
> They respected those whom they honoured; loved those whom they regarded with affection; served the dead as they would have served them when alive; and served the departed as they would have served them when exist – this is the height of filial piety.

These two examples argue that to unconditionally love and respect the things that your parents loved and respected, even after they have died, is the highest level of being filial.

Based on the idea of filial piety discussed before, we can argue that the *Zhuangzi* would not agree with such a definition of filial piety. To the *Zhuangzi*, it is enough for children to serve their parents in life, without requiring them to share their feelings and value judgements, let alone continuing to do so after their parents' death. As Zi Lai 子来 said in

[141] Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), ed., *Liji Zheng Yi* 禮記正義(Correct Meanings of the *Records of Ritual*) in *Shisan Jing Zhu Shu* 十三經註疏 (Annotations and Explanations of Thirteen Classics), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980, pp. 1467C-1468A.
[142] Ruan Yuan, ed., *Liji Zheng Yi*, p.1629A.

the chapter 'Da Zongshi' (大宗師), a child must listen to whatever his parents require, so to as serve them: 'A child to serve his mother and father, goes wherever he is ordered, east or west, south or north.' (父母於子，東西南北，唯命之從). But here, we do not see the requirement to share the same value judgements with one's parents, but only to listen to them.

Second, the two elements of admonishing one's parents and following their wishes when one's admonishments are not accepted are also associated with loving and respecting one's parents so as to be filial. For example, in the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 (The Elder Dai's Records of Ritual), the text 'Zengzi shi fumu' 曾子事父母 (Zengzi Serves His Parents) states that one has to admonish one's parents and if they do not accept this, then one must follow their wishes, or one will be seen as unfilial:

> 單居離問於曾子曰：「事父母有道乎？」曾子曰：「有。愛而敬。父母之行若中道，則從；若不中道，則諫；諫而不用，行之如由己。從而不諫，非孝也；諫而不從，亦非孝也。」[143]
> Shan Juli asked Zengzi, 'Is there a way to serve one's parents?' Zengzi said, 'Yes, there is. Love and respect them. If the behaviour of one's parents is in accordance with the right way, then follow them; if it is not in accordance with the right way, then admonish them. If they do not take up your admonitions, do their will as if it were your own way. If you follow your parents without giving admonishments, this is not being filial. If you admonish them but do not follow them, this is also not being filial.'

According to Zengzi, there are two points that are important to keep in mind about the way to serve one's parents. First, one needs to give admonishments based on whether their behaviour accords with the right way. Second, when the admonishments are not followed, one needs to follow one's parents and then act as if their way were one's own way.

[143] Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍, *Da Dai Liji Jie Gu* 大戴禮記解詁 (Annotations and Explanations of the Elder Dai's Records of Ritual), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, p. 85.

Both are considered necessary requirements for being filial, according to Zengzi. A response to this argument may be seen in the following passage from the *Zhuangzi*:

> 孝子不諛其親，忠臣不諂其君，臣子之盛也。親之所言而然，所行而善，則世俗謂之不肖子；君之所言而然，所行而善， 則世俗謂之不肖臣。而未知此其必然邪！世俗之所謂然而然之，所謂善而善之，則不謂之道諛之人也。然則俗固嚴於親而尊於君邪！[144]
>
> A filial son does not fawn on his parents, and a loyal minister does not flatter his lord. Those sons and ministers are the finest. If a child finds justifiable with everything his parents say and kind-hearted of everything they do is regarded by popular opinion as an unworthy son; he who agrees with everything his lord says and approves of everything his lord does is regarded by popular opinion as an unworthy minister. But in other cases men do not realize that the same principle should apply. If a man agrees with everything that popular opinion says and regards as good everything that popular opinion regards as good, should not he be called a sycophant and a flatterer. However, popular opinion commands more authority than one's parents, or is more to be honoured than one's lord?

The *Zhuangzi* would probably think it unnecessary to give admonishments so as to be filial. But it is clear that a filial son does not flatter (*bu yu* 不諛) his parents. Regarding 'not flattering', we can say that it would not be a problem for the *Zhuangzi* to allow a filial child to express honest opinions when he or she does not agree with his or her parents. However, the crucial part for a child according to *Zhuangzi*, is that one should also not make admonishments based on certain social and ethical standards, since by doing so, instead of flattering one's parents, one is in fact pandering to popular opinion. It is also worth noting that, to some extent, not flattering does help one to forget about one's parents since one will no longer need to follow certain social codes for appraising the goodness of a ruler or a

[144] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 447.

parent. If Zengzi's Dao of serving one's parents were a fixed social rule, the *Zhuangzi* would certainly disagree with it.

To be specific, when parents do not listen to one's admonishments, Zengzi requires a filial child to follow his/her parents as if their commands came from oneself. This is contradictory to the ideas in the *Zhuangzi*. According to the *Zhuangzi,* to do so would be a form of flattery, namely to agree with and support whatever one's parents say and do instead of just serving them. When one disagrees with a parent's behaviour, a child would give admonishments. When the remonstrance is not accepted, as stated before, one would still serve one's parents without agreeing with them. However, one would certainly not treat such behaviour as stemming from one's own decision. For example, if a parent smoked, a filial child would give suggestions, but would also respect the wishes of his or her parents and help them to fulfil these wishes. However, one does not need to agree with a wish as if it had come from oneself. By doing so, one's social role as a child can be fulfilled. In the meantime, one would not be harmed by one's emotional fluctuations. More importantly, one would be able to respect one's parents' own decisions without placing an emotional burden on them and hurting oneself.

Third, when the *Zhuangzi* disagrees that 'love and respect' are the highest level of filial piety, it negates the treating of filial piety as a social obligation and moral code. Such an idea appears in other texts. For example, in his annotation, Guo Xiang stated that filial piety is not influenced or bounded by social norms or moral codes: 'If one cares about reputation and fame, and is bounded by norms and regulations, then one's filial piety cannot be sincere, and therefore one could not be a true father, son, or brother. If one cheats on one's emotions, this is certainly not the true meaning of ritual.' (若乃矜乎名聲，牽乎形制，則孝不以誠慈，不任實父子兄弟，懷情相欺豈,禮之大意哉)[145]

[145] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 267.

Guo Xiang's idea is in line with what is discussed in the *Dao De Jing* 道德經. Chapter 18 says that the norms of filial piety resulted from disharmony in the six family relationships. 'It is when the six family relationships are disharmonious that filial piety and parental affection appear.' (六親不和，有孝慈)[146] While in this case, *xiao* does not refer to an ideal parent-child relationship but only to a social norm, we can know from chapter 18 that artificial codes such as filial piety arose from disharmony, and that these will not help to bring about the real ideal relationship between parents and children, but only serve to codify it. Therefore, in chapter 19, the text suggests the abandonment of formulaic morality, so that common people can go back to the ideal parent-child relationship. 'Cut off benevolence and get rid of appropriateness, and common people will return to filial piety and parental affection.' (絕仁棄義，民復孝慈)[147] In this argument, *xiao* refers to an ideal relationship, which requires abandoning social norms and artificial codes.

The argument that one should abandon artificial codes to be truly filial was also made by Wang Bi (王弼) when he related filial piety to forgetfulness. In interpreting chapter 18 of the *Dao De Jing*, he stated that, 'If the six family relationships are naturally in harmony, and the state is naturally governed, then the ministers will be filial to their parents, affectionate to their children, loyal to the ruler, and will no longer being aware of the existence of moral codes. When fish forget about each other in rivers and lakes, their virtue of mutual help will arise.' (若六親自和，國家自治，則孝慈忠臣不知其所在矣。魚相忘于江湖之道，則相濡之德生也) Wang Bi's comments inform us that when one is really being filial and loyal, one will forget about the codified form of these virtues and will not care about one's reputation. In other words, one will forget about filial piety.

[146] Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Laozi Gujin* 老子古今 (The new and old debates on Laozi), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2006, p. 218.
[147] Liu Xiaogan, *Laozi Gujin*, p. 230.

From this chapter, we can see how the idea of contentment is linked with social and human relationships, such as with the notion of being a filial child, instead of escaping or withdrawing from having a relationship with one's parents. It is used to redefine the important idea of *xiao* discussed among Chinese thinkers. In the following chapter, I shall discuss another link with contentment found within the *Zhuangzi*, namely the link between contentment and courage. Through this we will see how the *Zhuangzi* affirms the courage of being content with human limitations, and how *an* is an active and conscious choice free from anxiety.

Chapter Three: Contentment as Courage

I. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I explained the attitude of contentment *an* (安) when dealing with human limitations and with situations beyond human control. I take contentment as a necessary and justifiable attitude in the *Zhuangzi* for actively dealing with human limitations. I also justified this argument by pointing out the importance of contentment for one to be a filial child. Through it, I show how contentment helps to transform one's uncontrollable emotion (namely love) into an ideal parent-child relationship. It justifies the importance of contentment in one's family and social life. By 'contentment', I refer to the following characteristics. First, contentment is an attitude for dealing with ease with situations beyond human control. Second, it is one's deliberate choice. When one can be content with something, it means that one willingly accepts the uncontrollability of things, without either fighting against them or trying hard to avoid them. Third, the attitude of contentment focuses on one's mental state and emphasizes one's equanimity of mind, without having emotional fluctuations. Fourth, contentment refers to an affirmation of human limitations by living in full with them.

In this chapter, I argue that the attitude of contentment is regarded as *yong* 勇 (courage) in the *Zhuangzi*. When contentment is seen as courage, such courage allows one to be free from anxiety of things unknown; it helps one to affirm situations beyond human control and live with the moment in full; it is an attitude that one has consciously chosen with due reason. This chapter is divided into three parts. I first explain what characteristics pertain to the idea of courage in Western philosophical discussions. I then examine how the Zhuangzian idea of seeing contentment as courage differs from this mainstream understanding. For example, I discuss how non-action can be seen as courage and how

action is different from participation, and whether the Zhuangzian idea of courage involves being fearless or rather deals with participation without anxiety. Finally, this chapter justifies the Zhuangzian idea of seeing contentment as courage by looking at the relationship between death and acceptance and courage. Throughout this chapter, I show that to the *Zhuangzi*, courage means to accept and be content with uncontrollable situations in life and to affirm one's own situation without anxiety. To the *Zhuangzi*, when one has the courage to accept human limitations, one can participate in life without fighting against it or escaping from it. Instead, such participation allows one to not be anxious about the unknown, and enables one to experience and participate in the uncontrollable moments in life.

In the West, the idea of courage has attracted scholarly attention from Plato to the Stoics, and from Spinoza to Nietzsche.[148] It is an idea closely related to virtue and human well-being.[149] Some characteristics have been ascribed to courage, which have received broad agreement from scholars. First, courage is mostly seen as a good quality and does not tend to reflect a bad character. Second, it is seen as concerned with acting towards fulfilling good ends. We simply do not tend to praise someone as courageous when they commit a crime. Third, courage is closely related to actions instead of merely to ideas. Fourth, courage is closely related to the overcoming of fear and anxiety. Fear and anxiety are different. Fear has an object that can be faced, dealt with, and discussed; while anxiety refers to one's mental state towards something unknown. It has no specific object to avoid or to be anxious about. When one is able to overcome fear and anxiety through courage, one will be able to face difficulties with a calm and peaceful mind, and therefore one will be better deal with

[148] For overviews, see Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1952; and Douglas Walton, *Courage, A Philosophical Investigation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
[149] Christopher J. Keller, "Courage, Psychological Well-being, and Somatic Symptoms," *Clinical Psychology Dissertations*, Vol. 17 (2016); and Nancy L. Schwartz, "Dreaded and Dared: Courage as a Virtue," *Polity*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2004): 341-365.

the situations that one is faced with without dwelling on unnecessary emotional disturbance.[150]

The study of courage in early China is normally a topic discussed within Confucian and military texts. For example, Van Norden analysed the *Mencius's* portrayal of courage (*yong* 勇) as good character, focusing on its relation to actions and fear, as well as virtues.[151] Yearley compared Mencius's courage with Aquinas'.[152] Manyul Im, disagreeing with Van Norden, pointed out the negative side of *yong* and argued that *yong* can possibly lead to unruliness. Because of the inconsistent arguments on *yong* in the *Analects*, we cannot be certain that *yong* refers to courage.[153] Within military texts, Filipiak argued that courage is seen as crucial companion to military knowledge.[154] Different from Filipiak's idea, Edward Lewis in his book *Sanctioned Violence* argued that in the *Wenzi* and *Sunzi,* commanders were urged to block the eyes of soldiers as well as their conscience so that they would blindly follow orders; accordingly, soldiers did not require volition or courage of their own, apart from listening to their commanders' orders.[155]

Without entering into the debates on courage in the Western, Confucian, or military traditions, one may observe that the questions raised in these discussions are relevant to the *Zhuangzi.* To be specific, we may ask, is *yong* a consistent idea in the *Zhuangzi*? Is *yong* necessarily related to actions? Is a Zhuangzian courageous person fearless? What are the

[150] This point will be discussed in detail later.
[151] Bryan Van Norden, "Mencius on Courage," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1997): 237-256.
[152] Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtues and Conceptions of Courage, Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990.
[153] For Manyul Im's opinion, see "Courage---yong 勇, a Confucian Virtue?" https://manyulim.wordpress.com/2008/01/25/courage-yong-%E5%8B%87-a-confucian-virtue/. Accessed Sep.2016.
[154] See Kai Filipiak, "Military Codes of Virtue, aspects of *wen* and *wu* in China's Warring States Period," in Kai Filipiak, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Chinese History*, New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 39-42.
[155] See Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1971, pp. 105-106.

Zhuangzian concerns in relation to *yong*? How is Zhuangzian *yong* justified? As far as I am concerned, we have not seen any specific discussions on the Zhuangzian ideas of *yong*.

II. *Yong* in the *Zhuangzi*

When I argue for a Zhuangzian idea of courage, the first question one may ask is, how do we know that *yong* should be understood as courage instead of as other quality such as rashness? Admittedly, the Zhuangzian *yong* does not neatly match with the common Western philosophical understanding of courage as a positive and virtuous quality. In the *Zhuangzi*, in most cases, being *yong* is closely related to action. It often involves showing one's superiority over others, and therefore it can lead to fighting and resentment. Due to these undesirable consequences, it is not necessarily a good quality to possess. In those cases, I translate *yong* as physical bravery. For example, in the chapter 'Lie Yu Kou' (列禦寇), we are informed that when one demonstrates that one's *yong* is superior to others, the result will be trouble. 'Beauty, a fine beard, a tall stature, brawn, strength, style, bravery, decisiveness – when these are all superior compared to others, one will have trouble.' (美、髯、長、大、壯、麗、勇、敢，八者俱過人也，因以是窮)[156] Even worse, being *yong* leads to resentment: 'People who are brave and active will arouse resentment.' (勇动多怨)[157]

The experience of Sun Xiu (孫休), analysed in the previous chapter, demonstrates the truth of the above argument. In the chapter 'Da Sheng' 達生 (Mastering Life), we see a person, Sun Xiu, who believes himself to have a sufficiency of *yong*: 'When facing trouble, no one has ever said that I am not courageous.' (臨難不見謂不勇)[158] But instead of being

[156] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 1058-1059.
[157] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 1058-1059
[158] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 663-664.

praised, he is exiled by his countrymen. This is because Sun Xiu attempts to show his superiority through *yong*. Moreover, when one believes that one is physically braver than others, one becomes aggressive, which leads to fighting and turmoil. In the chapter 'Dao Zhi' 盜蹠 (Robber Zhi), the text says that, 'Being brave, strong, resolute, and decisive, accumulating people and leading troops, is the lowest level of virtue.' (勇悍果敢，聚眾率兵，此下德也)[159] This means that when one's *yong* is related to war and fighting, *yong* becomes the lowest level of virtue. The reason that *yong* will lead to undesirable consequences is because it comes a characteristic that people use to show off in times of need: 'Those who are brave and valiant exert themselves in times of calamity.' (勇敢之士奮患)[160] This, to the *Zhuangzi*, is pathetic (*bei* 悲).

From the above arguments, we can see that in most of the cases, *yong* is not to be understood as courage at all, but as rashness. It is associated with physical bravery and it reveals an initiative that either leads to fighting and turmoil, or becomes a means of patronizing others and showing off one's superiority. It is neither a good quality nor aimed at a good end. However, in contrast with the physical bravery of *yong*, which is seen as the lowest level of virtue, we also see another kind of *yong*, related to facing human limitations with contentment. This is seen as a good quality and will lead to desirable consequences. It has nothing to do with being superior or acting for outer value judgements. Neither will it result in resentment or turmoil. Instead, it is the courage of the sages. It is a courage that is presented through being content with uncontrollable situations, and being without anxiety. It represents a form of non-purposive action in the face of the unchangeable and uncontrollable. It focuses on equanimity of mind without being anxious of the unknown. Moreover, it aims towards (and enables) participation in life through experiencing the

[159] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 993.
[160] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 834.

uncontrollable and being able to anticipate such incidents with an undisturbed mind. With the courage to accept and affirm uncontrollable moments, one can experience one's life in full even when things happen that are beyond one's control.

II. Contentment as Courage

The true courage that is different from normal physical bravery is presented through the term *da yong* 大勇 (great courage) in the chapter 'Qiwu Lun' 齊物論 (Discussions on Making Things Equal). Then, in the chapter 'Qiushui' 秋水 (Autumn Floods), great courage is specified through the idea of being content with what is beyond human control. Let us first look at the notion of great courage. In the 'Qiwu Lun', we see that to understand great courage is related to other important ideas, including the understanding of great Dao, great disputation, great kindness, as well as great honesty. The argument starts with how common people differentiate and divide things and compete with others either through words or actions. However, the sage not only does not divide, but also embraces all:

> 夫道未始有封，言未始有常，為是而有畛也。請言其畛：有左，有右，有倫，有義，有分，有辯，有競，有爭，此之謂八德。六合之外，聖人存而不論；六合之內，聖人論而不議。春秋經世，先王之志，聖人議而不辯。故分也者，有不分也；辯也者，有不辯也。曰：何也？聖人懷之，眾人辯之以相示也。故曰：辯也者，有不見也。[161]
>
> The Way has never known boundaries; disputation has no constancy. It is through 'that is it' that there came to be boundaries. Let me tell you what the boundaries are. There is left, there is right, there are hierarchies and propriety,[162] there are divisions and discriminations, there are competitions and fights. These are called the Eight Virtues. As to what is beyond the Six Realms, the sage admits its existence but does not debate. As to what is within the Six Realms, he assesses but does not debate. In the case of the Spring and Autumn, the record of the former kings of past ages, the sage debates but does not discriminate. So those who divide

[161] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 83-84.

[162] Here *lun* (倫) should be read as 論 (asseseemtn). See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p.84. *Lun* (論) and *yi* (義), which both Graham and Watson understand to mean assessments and debates. See A. C. Graham, *Chuang-Tzu, The Inner Chapters*, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001 [first edition, 1981], p. 57; and Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013 [first edition, 1968], pp. 13-14.

> end up failing to divide; those who discriminate end up failing to discriminate. What does this mean, you ask? The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate among themselves and demonstrate their discriminations before others. So I say, those who discriminate end up failing to see.

After this description of the eight virtues to show what divisions are like, the following section describes the opposite side of divisions. Here, great courage is proposed:

> 夫大道不稱，大辯不言，大仁不仁，大廉不嗛，大勇不忮。道昭而不道，言辯而不及，仁常而不成，廉清而不信，勇忮而不成。五者园而幾向方矣。故知止其所不知，至矣。
> The great Dao does not name, the great discriminations are not spoken, the great benevolence is not benevolent, the great modesty is not humble, the great courage does not harm. When the Way is made clear, it is not the Way. When speech discriminates, it does not suffice. If benevolence has a constant object, it cannot be complete. If modesty is fastidious, it cannot be trusted. If courage harms, it cannot be complete. These five greats are all round (namely perfect) but they tend toward the square (namely impaired). This is why knowledge stops at what it cannot know, it is the ultimate knowledge.

In this passage, a contrast between great courage and *zhi* 忮 (harm) is made: '大勇不忮.' (great courage does not harm) The text summarizes the nature of these divisions and the reason why they appear. To be specific, as discussed before, superficial courage, is presented through *jing* 競 (competition) and *zheng* 爭 (fighting). However, the issue is not just about competition, but about harming others and oneself. Therefore, the text says that once courage leads to harm, it is far from being complete: '勇忮而不成'. Similarly, once great benevolence appears only as hierarchy and propriety, it is not truly benevolent, since some are preferred and others ignored.

From this passage, we can see three important points. First, we see the important status of *yong* in the *Zhuangzi* and its relationship to Dao. Moreover, once again, we see how the Zhuangzian great *yong* differs from normal physical bravery, which leads to

fighting and harm. Last, we see the relationship between great courage and knowledge (*zhi* 知). Within the text, the limitation of one's knowledge has been emphasized. But how does it relate to one's courage? Also, what kind of courage will allow one to not offend or harm others and lead to success instead? What exactly is great courage? The passage above used a negative linguistic strategy to inform us of what is not true courage. In the Chapter 'Qiushui', we see a direct argument on what true courage is, and how it is related to one's knowledge.

This story begins with a situation of abnormal behaviour – Confucius singing when surrounded by troops from Song, and continues with Zi You's (子由) questioning of this behaviour. The story develops with Confucius' discussion of four cases of courage. With this, Confucius argues that his decision is comparable to the courage of the sages. Finally, the story ends with Confucius' safety. Let us first examine the text.

> 孔子遊於匡，宋人圍之數匝，而絃歌不惙。子路入見，曰：「何夫子之娛也？」孔子曰：「來！吾語女。我諱窮久矣，而不免，命也；求通久矣，而不得，時也。當堯、舜而天下無窮人，非知得也，當桀，紂而天下無通人，非知失也，時勢適然.[163]
>
> When Confucius was passing through Kuang, the men of Song surrounded him with several encirclements of troops, but he was playing his zither and singing without stopping. Zi Lu went in to see him and said, 'Master, how can you still entertain yourself?' Confucius said, 'Come, I will explain to you. For a long time, I have tried to stay out of the way of hardship. That I have not managed to escape it is due to *ming*. For a long time, I have tried to achieve success. That I have not been able to do so is due to the times. If it happens to be the age of a Yao or a Shun, then there are no men in the world who face hardship – but this is not because their wisdom saves them. If it happens to be the age of a Jie or a Zhou, then there are no men in the world who achieve success – but this is not because their wisdom fails them. It is time and circumstance that make it so.'
>
> (1) 夫[164]水行不避蛟龍者，漁父之勇也; (2) 陸行不避兕虎者，獵夫之勇也; (3)白刃交於前，視死若生者，烈士之勇也；(4) 知窮之有命，知通之有時，臨大難而不懼者，聖人之勇也。由處矣！吾命有所制矣。

[163] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 595-596.

[164] Wagner argues that the initial *fu* (夫) should be understood as 'statements and definitions of a general philosophical nature' instead of being treated only as a topical marker. See Rudolf Wagner, "A Building

> To travel across the water without shrinking from the sea serpent or the dragon – this is the courage of the fisherman. To travel over land without shrinking from the rhinoceros or the tiger – this is the courage of the hunter. To see the bare blades clashing before him and to look upon death as though it were life – this is the courage of the man of ardour. To understand that hardship is a matter of fate, that success is a matter of the times, and to face great difficulty without anxiety – this is the courage of the sage. Be at ease with it, Zi Lu. My *ming* has its own limit.

> 無幾何，將甲者進，辭曰：「以為陽虎也，故圍之；今非也，請辭而退。」[165]

> Shortly afterwards, the leader of the armed men came forward and apologized. 'We thought you were Yang Hu, and that was why we surrounded you. Now that we see you aren't, we beg to take leave and withdraw.'

In contrast with the rashness of *yong*, which focuses on actions aimed at showing superiority and therefore resulting in undesirable consequences, in this case, *yong* as courage is seen as a good characteristic shared by the sages. Also, through the presentation of this text, we see that Confucius' courageous behaviour in the end allows him and his disciples to be safe. As the text argues, the leader of the Song troops admitted that they had mistaken Confucius for Yang Hu; realizing the mistake, they set him free. More importantly, where *yong* as rashness focuses on actions and physical bravery, the Zhuangzian idea of *yong* as courage draws attention to non-purposive actions. It discusses how non-action can be related to one's *yong* of dealing with situations beyond human control. Lastly, while normal, brave actions are aimed at showing off one's superiority, courage is about participating in life with full experience and without anxiety.

(1) Courage and Situations Beyond Human Control

To be specific, within this story, we see that courage is about dealing with situations beyond human control. When Confucius chooses to sing and play his zither instead of

Block of Chinese Argumentation: Initial Fu 夫 as a Phrase. Status Marker" in Dirk Meyer and Joachim Gentz, eds., *Literary Forms and Arguments in Early China*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, pp. 37-66.

[165] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 595-596.

fighting or trying to escape, he realizes and accepts the fact of limitations (*zhi* 制) in life. From the description of the passage, we have reason to assume that Confucius did not know why the Song troops were there; otherwise it would have been easy for him to claim that he was not Yang Hu. Therefore, Confucius treated this difficult position as something beyond his understanding and control. This is similar to the *yong* of sages, which focuses on the realization that there are situations of hardship (*qiong* 窮) and success (*tong* 通) that cannot be controlled by humans, but are instead decided by fate (*ming* 命) and timing (*shi* 時).

It is worth noting that Confucius did not come to the realization of his limitations impulsively or rashly, but through deliberating on his own experiences and on historical precedents: 'For a long time, I have tried to stay out of the way of hardship. That I have not managed to escape it is due to *ming*. For a long time, I have tried to achieve success. That I have not been able to do so is due to the times' (我諱窮久矣，而不免，命也；求通久矣，而不得，時也). As for his reflection on history, the text states, 'If it happens to be the age of a Yao or a Shun, then there are no men in the world who face hardship – but this is not because their wisdom saves them. If it happens to be the age of a Jie or a Zhou, then there are no men in the world who achieve success – but this is not because their wisdom fails them. It is time and circumstance that make it so.' (舜而天下無窮人，非知得也，當桀，紂而天下無通人，非知失也，時勢適然) When Confucius claims that an awareness of uncontrollable situations is related to courage, this is not without justification. Through reflecting on personal experience and looking back at historical events, Confucius understands that he is placed in an uncontrollable situation, and that his experience and acceptance of that uncontrollability are crucial for him to be able to deal with it.

That is to say, it took effort for Confucius to stop fighting against hardships and to stop seeking to fulfil his ambitions. This means that his courage to accept and understand

(*zhi* 知) the uncontrollable parts of life was not obtained easily and without cultivation. When one tries hard to seek for things, one also needs to cultivate oneself to let go of this tendency. One needs to engage in long-term reflection and cultivation to obtain the courage to not act. It is not only a matter of knowing, but also a matter of cultivation. This leads to the second element in relation to Zhuangzian courage.

(2) Courage and Non-Purposive Actions

Second, the courage of Confucius and the sages is presented through non-purposive actions, such as *bu bi* (不避) and *bu ju* (不惧). The non-purposive action is certainly different from just lay back and do nothing, namely giving up completely. The courageous non-purposive action is also contrary to purposive actions which aim for reaching fixed targets or overcoming certain difficulties. Instead, courage here is related to non-purposive action which requires one to fully participate *in* what one has been doing *without* being interrupted or interfered by outer factors.[166]

To be specific, as described in the beginning of the passage, when surrounded, Confucius did not choose to actively and purposively fight against the danger. He did not act to resolve this problem. Nor did he think hard about how to escape. Instead he merely did 'not shrink from' (*bu bi* 不避) danger. This is paralleled in the text's representation of the choice of the fisherman, the hunter, or the man of ardour. Their courage does not come from their ability to fight. When the fisherman has to travel across the water to do his job, he does not actively look for serpents to kill; he merely does not avoid the problem when it

[166] This is similar to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi argues for the 'flow experience' which requires one to be fully absorbed and involved in things that people are doing without reflection since it can only disturb people to immerse into the situation and influence people's cultivation of skills. This is because, when people act without questioning the necessity of it or evaluating the reasons for carrying out the action, one can act with optimal satisfaction. see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. NewYork: Harper and Row, 1990, pp.54-55.

arises. He merely chooses to face a situation that cannot be avoided. Similarly, the hunter does not actively choose to fight, but only to deal with a situation that he cannot escape from. Suppose the man of ardour only holds the normal character of *yong* instead of courage; when there is a chance, he will look for the most dangerous mission and seek to bare his blade so as to fulfil his reputation for ardour. In comparison, the courageous man of ardour, while certainly striving to complete his mission, will not seek out glory or challenges for the sake of the challenge itself.

Such non-purposive action, however, does not mean entirely withdrawing from dealing with the problem; instead, it is a form of 'participation'. By anticipating possible dangers and acting without anxiety, one does what is necessary to deal with a problem regardless of the danger, and fully experiences the process. For example, knowing that in the water there will be dragons and water serpents, the fisherman still chooses to work as a fisherman instead of withdrawing from the water altogether. In this sense, when one knows the danger and acts regardless, one has accepted the premise of what it entails to be a fisherman, and participates in life fully as a fisherman. This is similar to the sages' participation in life while acknowledging the possibility of uncontrollable situations decided by fate and timing. They choose not to shrink from living a life full of uncontrollability. Instead, they choose to participate in life and face the dangers without anxiety (*ju* 懼).[167]

[167] One may further question that, isn't the idea of 'participation in life' a kind of purpose? Here I want to use the paradoxical nature of *wuwei* 無為 to shed light on my idea of non-purposive participation. When explaining the idea of *wuwei* in early China and in the *Zhuangzi*, Slingerland draws our attention to its paradoxical nature, suggesting that one does things in a natural manner (intuitive, quick, embodied, and affective) without pre-existing intentions or will, and without focusing on what they are doing. Effortless action of *wuwei* allows one to act with the greatest efficiency and productivity. It is practically paradoxical since once one pays attention to act naturally, one has lost the natural way to perform it. Just as the rainbow, as one gets closer to it, one loses the best vision to appreciate its beauty. Or when we dance, if we focus on dancing spontaneous and smoothly, we may end up dancing like a robot. See Edward Slingerland. *Effortless Action: Wu-wei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. A full participation in life is a participation in every moment of life without thinking of how one can participate in full. What one needs to learn, is to free oneself from emotional and mental interferences. This is the same as participating in a good movie. When one enjoys and participates in a really good movie, one does not focus on how one can better participate in the director's idea, but simply enjoy and appreciate the moments, the feeling and the memory given by the movie, without being interfered by either noise, or

(3) Courage and Anxiety

Now the question is, what kind of *bu ju* (不懼) does this text focus on?[168] When relating courage to fear, the moral philosopher Philippa Foot makes a distinction between acting in spite of fear, and not being afraid at all.[169] In the previous three cases, we have no clear evidence to decide whether the fisherman, the hunter, and the man of ardour decided to act with no fear or in spite of fear. What we can know is that, due to their experience, they can anticipate what kind of danger they will face, even though they do not know exactly when and where the danger will appear.

When it comes to the sage's way of participating free of *ju*, we find that to the *Zhuangzi*, the accent lies not on fear (which is expressed through *kong* 恐), but on freedom from anxiety (*bu ju*). Fear describes an attitude towards a clear object and towards situations that can be analysed, avoided, and tackled. For example, when Confucius discusses Ai Taituo (哀駘它) in the chapter 'De Chong Fu' 德充府 (The Sign of Virtue Complete), he says, 'Ai Taituo has caused people to give him the state, and they only feared that he would not accept it' (使人授己國，唯恐其不受也).[170] What people *kong* has a clear object, namely the rejection from Ai Taituo. When describing the clear worry that human nature will be corrupted, the text uses the term *kong* (恐). 'When I claim "let it be", I am worrying about the corruption of human nature.' (在之也者，恐天下之淫其性也)[171]

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other daily business. When one takes time to think of how to better enjoy the movie, one might have lost the best moment the movie tries to give you.

[168] In the chapter, 'De Chong Fu' 德充府 (The Sign of Virtue Complete), we also see an appraisal of *yong* in relation to being fearless. 'A man is holding fast to the beginning because he is fearless. A courageous soldier will plunge alone into the midst of nine armies' (夫保始之徵，不懼之實。勇士一人，雄入於九軍).

[169] See Philippa Foot, *Virtue and Vices*: and *Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 10. She asks, 'We both are and are not inclined to think that the harder a man finds it to act virtuously, the more virtue he shows if he does act well…. Who shows the most courage, the one who wants to run away but does not, or the one who does not even want to run away?' Bryan Van Norden points this out in his article "Mencius on Courage," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1997): 237-256.

[170] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 210.

[171] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 364.

In contrast with the feeling of fear directed at an object, the term *ju* (懼) in the *Zhuangzi* refers to a feeling of anxiety towards something unknown and uncertain. In other words, there is no specific object to analyse or to tackle. For example, in the chapter 'Tian Yun' 天運 (The Turning of Heaven), the text points out that the reason for one to be anxious is because there is nothing that one can rely on: 'Its constancy is unending, but there is nothing that can be counted on. This is the reason you are fearful.' (所常無窮，而一不可待。女故懼也)[172] One can also feel *ju* towards not being able to obtain X: 'If one cannot obtain (what one feels pleasure about), one will then be greatly worried and anxious.' (若不得者，則大憂以懼)[173] Instead of really feeling anxious about the thing that one cannot obtain, one's anxiousness is related to the uncertainty of not knowing whether one will ever be able to obtain the thing. Such anxiety is related to something that cannot be analysed or predicted.

As with the sage above, freedom from anxiety is therefore only meaningful in relation to things that are uncontrollable, such as hardship and success governed by time and fate. In other words, the courage to participate in life free from anxiety refers to a mental state wherein one calmly faces uncertainty and the unknown. As long as one realizes and accepts that in life there are things beyond one's own control, one can then participate in life without being distracted by anxiety over the what, when, and, how of the things that are beyond one's control or worrying about how bad the situation might be.

The idea of freedom from anxiety is in line with Confucius' teaching of being at ease (*chu* 處) in the story. When Zi You questioned Confucius's reaction of singing and playing zither while surrounded, Confucius told Zi You to be at ease (*chu*) with the limitations in life. Only when one is able to free oneself from anxiety towards unknown and

[172] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 502.
[173] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 609.

undesirable situations, can one be at ease with the current moment. Such an idea of 'being at ease' is in accordance with the expression in the chapter 'Yang Sheng Zhu' 養生主 (The Secret of Caring for Life), when Zhuangzi criticizes those who are crying over the death of Lao Dan: 'Your master happened to come because it was his time, and he happened to leave because things follow along. If you accept the given time and be at ease with the following along of things, then grief and joy have no way to enter in your mind. In the old days, this was called being freed from the bonds of Heaven.' (適來，夫子時也；適去，夫子順也。安時而處順，哀樂不能入也，古者謂是帝之縣解) Here, the idea of *chu* and *an* both emphasize accepting without any emotional attachment the given situation and the given time at which the situation happens.

Moreover, from the behaviour of Confucius, we can further argue that Confucius was not only able to free himself from anxiety and to be at ease with unknown in life, more importantly, he was capable of living what is beyond control in full and affirming it. Confucius chose to face the situation by singing and playing music, which to Zi You seemed almost offensive, but it meant that Confucius was still valuing the moments of life even though faced with a circumstance beyond his control. Although Confucius was facing death, he did not waste his or his disciples' time by fighting or trying to escape. Instead, he affirmed and cherished the moment by doing the only things that could still be done: singing and making music. He accepted the moment with peace and with an unperturbed mind. He directed his attention to things that he could still do and could still enjoy; therefore, even though he was surrounded, he was doing things that he liked and thereby affirmed the moment.

(4) Why *bu ju*?

Now the question becomes, practically, how is it possible that one able to be free from anxiety towards things unknown? How can one relieve oneself from being anxious over uncertainty, and be at ease with it, even when facing death? From the previous descriptions, we can see that all of the cases are related to a typical unavoidable situation, namely death. A dragon or serpent is likely to kill a fisherman; a person of ardour is also likely to be killed in battle. In the case of Confucius, when he was surrounded by Song, he was likely to be killed, since he had been mistaken for Yang Hu. This means that although each must face their own dangerous situation, all of these situations could have possibly resulted in death. To answer the above questions, we need to examine the Zhuangzian attitude towards death as well as the explanations of *bu ju* given in the *Zhuangzi*.

The following passage is found in the chapter 'Rang Wang' 讓王 (Giving Away a Throne):

> 孔子窮於陳、蔡之間，七日不火食，藜羹不糝，顏色甚憊，而弦歌於室。顏回擇菜，子路、子貢相與言曰：「夫子再逐於魯，削迹於衛，伐樹於宋，窮於商、周，圍於陳、蔡，殺夫子者無罪，藉夫子者無禁。弦歌鼓琴，未嘗絕音，君子之無恥也若此乎？」顏回無以應，入告孔子。孔子推琴喟然而歎曰：「由與賜，細人也。召而來！吾語之。」子路、子貢入。子路曰：「如此者可謂窮矣。」孔子曰：「是何言也！君子通於道之謂通，窮於道之謂窮。今丘抱仁義之道，以遭亂世之患，其何窮之為？故內省而不窮於道，臨難而不失其德，天寒既至，霜露既降，吾是以知松柏之茂也。陳、蔡之隘，於丘其幸乎！」孔子削然反琴而弦歌，子路扢然執干而舞。子貢曰：「吾不知天之高也，地之下也。」
>
> Confucius was in distress between Chen and Cai. For seven days he ate no properly cooked food, but only a soup of greens without any grain in it. His face became drawn with fatigue, but he sat in his room plucking the string and singing. Yan Hui was outside picking vegetables, and Zi Lu and Zi Gong were talking with him. 'Our Master was twice driven out of Lu,' they said. 'They wiped out his footprints in Wei, chopped down a tree on him in Song, made trouble for him in Shang and Zhou, and are now besieging him here at Chen and Cai. Anyone who kills him will be pardoned of all guilt, and anyone who wishes to abuse him is free to do so. Yet he keeps playing and singing, drumming the zither without ever letting the sound die away. Can a gentleman really be as shameless as all this?' Yan Hui, having no answer, went in and reported what they had said to Confucius. Confucius pushed aside his zither, heaved a great sigh, and said, 'Those two are picayune men! Call them in here – I'll talk to them.' When Zi Lu and Zi Gong had entered the room, Zi Lu said, 'I guess you could say that all of us are at the time of hardship.'

> Confucius said, 'What kind of talk is that! When the gentleman gets through to the Dao, this is called "getting through". When he is blocked off from the Way, this is called "suffering hardship". Now I embrace the way of benevolence and righteousness, and with it encounter the perils of an age of disorder. Where is there any "being blocked" about this? So I examine what is within me and am never blocked off from the Dao. I face the difficulties ahead and do not lose its Virtue. When the cold days come and the frost and snow have fallen, then I understand how the pine and the cypress flourish. These perils here in Chen and Cai are a blessing to me!' Confucius then turned complacently back to his zither and began to play and sing again. Zi Lu excitedly snatched up a shield and began to dance, while Zi Gong said, 'I did not realize that Heaven is so far above, earth so far below!'

Here, Confucius' freedom from anxiety is due to his persistence with the Dao. Because of this, he treats the occurrence of hardship and success as a natural process of change. One will not be bothered with either death or things unknown as long as one clearly knows that one's mind is not blocked from obtaining the true Dao. Neither will one act against moral values so as to escape from predicament. Confucius find himself lucky (*xing* 幸) to be able to experience this difficult situation, since through such an experience, one can further reflect on what one finds truly valuable and once again affirm that life and death are equally meaningful as long as one lives with moral values and dies without acting against one's true virtues. Accordingly, one feels constant pleasure in being one with one's moral values.[174] His inaction when being surrounded and his enjoyment with life are all due to his obtainment of these moral values. This is one kind of explanation provided by the *Zhuangzi*.

However, in the chapter 'Qiushui', Confucius' behaviour is compared with the choices of fishermen, men of ardour, and hunters. There are no obvious moral connotations present. Therefore, using a moral value to explain away one's feeling of anxiety cannot be justified for the 'Qiushui' chapter. In fact, the most direct answer that Zhuangzian scholars might think of for the justification of being free from anxiety is to refer back to the idea of

[174] For the attitudes towards *ming* in the Confucian tradition, see Kwong-loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 18-21.

treating life and death as natural process of change. There would then be no reason to be anxious towards uncertainty. As Franklin Perkins,[175] and Chris Fraser[176] have argued, the attitude towards death in the *Zhuangzi* is to accept it as a natural process of change. By accepting death, they agree that one can free oneself from sorrow and find equanimity in one's mind. Moreover, through accepting death as heaven's natural process of change, one finds harmony with *tian* 天 (heaven). Without doubt, they have pointed out two significant reasons to justify the acceptance of death in the *Zhuangzi*, namely freedom from sorrow and union with heaven.

However, as Graham pointed out, accepting death as a natural process of change makes oneself less reflective. When reflecting on the reasons to justify the acceptance of death, Graham focused on the importance of human thought. He argued that being united with heaven puts heaven at the centre and human beings on the periphery.[177] Putting heaven in the central position may impair one's ability to reflect and take away from the meaning of life.

This chapter proposes a third way to justify the courage to accept death and the attitude of *bu ju* towards death. I argue that such an acceptance of death without anxiety is a metaphysical experience,[178] through which one understands the reality of the world. When

[175] See Franklin Perkins, "Death and Crying: Problems of Death in Early Confucianism," in Hans-Georg Moeller and Gunter Wohlfart, eds., *Philosophieren Uber den Tod*, Cologne: Edition Chora, 2004, pp. 109-119.

[176] Chris Fraser, "Xunzi Versus Zhuangzi, Two Approaches to Death in Classical Chinese Thought," in *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* Vol. 8, No. 3 (2013): 410-427.

[177] A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1989, pp. 195-199. Graham noticed the prevalence of the priority placed on 'heaven' over 'man' in the *Zhuangzi*. He wrote that, 'There cannot for Zhuangzi be any ultimate discontinuity between the spontaneous and the thinking person. At the centre of himself the sage is spontaneous, belongs wholly to Heaven, does not yet make any distinction between benefit and harm, self and other, even Heaven and man. […] At the periphery he is a thinking man, finding means to the goals towards which Heaven moves him, and collecting the information towards which he is moved to respond. On this periphery he does make distinctions, although only as provisional and relative […] and deliberately pursues what he likes and avoids what he dislikes.'

[178] Shuchen Xiang discusses metaphysical experience through the idea of nostalgia. See Shuchen Xiang, "The irretrievability of the past: nostalgia in Chinese literature from Tang-Song poetry to Ming-Qing *sanwen*," *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2015): 205–222.

one experiences one's own future death or the death of others, one is experiencing the reality of life and the world. With the term metaphysics, I mean the ultimate foundation for things and human life. My analysis is as follows:

1) The *Zhuangzi* believes that death is a natural process of change, and the reality of the world and life. As the text suggests, 'The change of life into death is as natural as the change of day into night.' (死生命也，其有夜旦之常，天也) That is to say, change is the reality of heaven, and living and dying are realities of life.
2) When one tries to think of one's own death, one is situating oneself in the process of change. In other words, one is 'experiencing' the process of change – the foundation for things, the reality of the world.
3) Therefore, one's consideration of death can be argued to be a metaphysical 'experience'. One understands the reality of life through experiencing the reality of death within oneself.

Such a metaphysical experience is dramatically different from the idea of being in a union with heaven, as previous scholars have suggested. Instead of prioritizing the central status of heaven and putting humans on the periphery, understanding the acceptance of death as an epistemological experience prioritizes the status of human beings. To be specific, one's experience of the world's reality comes from experiencing and accepting one's future death as part of the process of change. One's understanding of the world is informed by one's understanding of oneself, instead of reconciling oneself with the idea of heaven.

That is why one does not become inert in the face of uncertainty. Instead, one takes the reality of life seriously without either worrying about it or fighting against it. One treats every uncontrollable situation as the reality of life; because of it, one consciously chooses to live at ease with it and participates in life fully with moments that are beyond human

control. It is one's active decision not to fight, but to follow and to accept. It is through one's own cultivation that one can be free from anxiety.

Conclusion:

From the above, we can see that the courage in this story of the *Zhuangzi* pertains to the following elements. First, similar to contentment, courage is a mental state for dealing with human limitations and situations beyond one's control. Second, Zhuangzian courage does not focus on purposive-action to avoid or change the situation, but on experiencing and consciously choosing to participate in the situation and dealing with it at ease. Third, it focuses on equanimity of mind without being anxious towards things unknown. When one accepts the fact that life is with limitations, one will no longer be bothered by the unknown and uncertain. Fourth, instead of being anxious towards the unknown and uncertain, one lives life in full with a peaceful mind in the experience of uncontrollable moments. One enjoys moments in life even when they are not within one's control. All of the above elements resemble the idea of contentment discussed in the *Zhuangzi*. Therefore, we can make the argument that contentment is seen as courage. Such a Zhuangzian courage will no longer lead to fights, turmoil, or death. Instead, it allows one to keep one's mind unperturbed and even to protect one's life by not actively picking fights.

Based on the four key elements in relation to courage in the *Zhuangzi*, we can see that courage is presented through the attitude of contentment, and that this is different from the mainstream ideas on courage in the West. First, in the West, actions towards a good end are a necessary element for one to be courageous. The focus is not only on the action itself, but also on the moral quality of the results. For example, we would say that one showed courage in saving a child in an extremely dangerous situation. But we would not praise a thief for his courage in stealing things from others. However, to the *Zhuangzi*, being

courageous is not necessarily related to morally good values. Instead, the target is a non-purposive way of behaving that allows one to protect one's life and is a means to maintaining an attitude of acceptance and keeping an undisturbed mind.

This leads to the second difference. In the West, when courage is necessarily related to action, being without fear is only instrumental for fulfilling certain goals. However, for the *Zhuangzi,* keeping an undisturbed mind and being without anxiety has a fundamental value and is a goal in and of itself, instead of merely being instrumental. This makes the Zhuangzian discussions of courage different from most definitions of courage. To the *Zhuangzi*, being able to be at ease with the given situation when facing death shows one's courage.

Moreover, the Zhuangzian idea of courage pays attention to directing one's attention away from what one cannot control and enjoying life through what is still within one's control. However, in the West, people tend to believe that one should challenge oneself and muster up the courage to overcome what is beyond one's duty and beyond what normal people can accomplish.[179] However, to the *Zhuangzi,* what is more important is to face reality with a peaceful mind and to find meaning in it while keeping one's life. Instead of advocating the overcoming of uncontrollable moments, it affirms them.

By now, we have analysed the idea of contentment as referring to an active non-action way of willingly dealing with human limitations. We have also seen how this idea of contentment becomes a necessary part of being a filial child, instead of being limited by social norms and being burdened with overly strong emotions. We have also seen how such an idea of contentment can be treated as courage, which will allow one to affirm human limitations without anxiety and with enjoyment in participating in every moment of life. All

[179] Douglas Walton, *Courage, A Philosophical Investigation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, see the Introduction.

of the previous discussions have enriched our understanding of what contentment is about and how it relates to other important virtues so as to deal with worldly affairs. Throughout the previous discussions, we could not help but notice that a certain kind of performance appeared repeatedly, namely singing. When Zhuangzian masters are in danger, in a situation of desperate poverty, or facing death, they tend to sing. Why is that? What is the relationship between singing and contentment? In the next chapter, I will focus on the topic of how the idea of contentment is expressed and why it is expressed in a specific way.

Chapter Four: Singing for Contentment

I. Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I discussed the idea of contentment *an* (安) in relation to the idea of filial piety and courage. While chapters 1–3 investigate the connotations of contentment, in this chapter I shall focus on its expression through singing in the *Zhuangzi*. I pay particular attention to how such a relationship is structured, as well to why contentment is expressed through singing. I view this issue from the perspective of music, and discuss the possible relationship between the music and the cultivation of contentment. I begin with an examination of previous scholarship on music in early China and the *Zhuangzi.*

Traditionally, studies of music in early China have enabled us to understand early Chinese views on the relationship between music and the social, religious, and cosmological realms. This includes the relationship between music and ritual performance;[180] how music could function as a means of cultivating one's emotions;[181] as well as how it was used to achieve cosmological harmony.[182] For the most part, these studies analyse texts in relation to three key concepts, namely *yue* 樂 (music), *sheng* 聲 (sound), and *yin* 音 (voice). In Anglo-European philosophical traditions, the close relationship between music and the

[180] James Garrison, "The social value of music and ritual in classical Chinese thought," *Teorema*, Vol. 31 (2012): 209-222; Yao Xinzhong, *An introduction to Confucianism*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 211; Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China*, University of California Press, 1994; and Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern, eds., *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, Leiden: Brill, 2009.

[181] Johanna Liu, "Art and aesthetics of music in classical Confucianism," in Vincent Shen, ed., *Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 227-244. This book contains rich studies on the relationship between music, ritual, and emotions; and Ellen Dissanayake, "Ritual and ritualization: musical means of conveying and shaping emotion in humans and other animals," in Steven Brown and Ulrich Voglsten, eds., *Music and manipulation: on the social uses and social control of music*, Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2006, pp. 31-56.

[182] Erica Fox Brindley, *Music, cosmology and the politics of harmony in early China*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2012. As the title suggests, this book contains a very rich analysis of texts, and provides a good picture of music within the cosmological, historical, and religious realms.

expression of emotions has also received much attention.[183] Moreover, David Schaberg has made important observations on the function of songs in early China. He argued that, in addition to preserving memory, songs placed within the context of anecdotes are also used to describe and comment on critical moments in history.[184]

With regard to research on music in the *Zhuangzi* in particular, Scott Cook discussed the importance of music and ethical cultivation in the *Zhuangzi*, focusing, for instance, on the idea of *yue*. Park So Jeong further analysed the importance of cultivating one's sensibility, musical harmony, and musical Dao with reference to the stories 'The Pipes of Heaven' and 'Xianchi (咸池) music', in relation to a criticism of Confucian musical rituals.[185] Park argues that, apart from *yue*, *sheng*, and *yin*, the concept of *ge* 歌 (singing) is crucial to understanding music in early China, especially in the *Zhuangzi*. It is worth noting that in his discussion of music in the *Zhuangzi*, Lin Mingzhao has already paid close attention to the concept of *ge*.[186] Lin discussed *ge* within the Daoist discourse on music and ritual, arguing that singing is a crucial way to directly express emotions and ethical ideals. He focused on the content of songs, relating them to the expression of natural emotions and ethical ideals. Different from Lin's analysis, I shall analyse how *ge* is used within the structure of different stories, and *why* singing is used as a special way to express ideals for living.

Through an analysis of the ways in which the texts make structural use of the concept *ge*, this chapter will demonstrate how and why singing is used as a different way of

[183] Aaron Ridley, "Expression in art," in J. Levinson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 211–27; and J. Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
[184] David Schaberg, "Song and historical imagination in early China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (1999): 305-361.
[185] So Jeong Park, "Musical Thought in the *Zhuangzi*: A Criticism of the Confucian Discourse on Ritual and Music," *Dao, A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2014): 331-350.
[186] Lin Mingzhao 林明照, *Xian Qin daojia de liyue guan* 先秦道家的禮樂觀 (The idea of music and ritual in the Daoist tradition in the Pre-Qin period), Taibei: Wunan tushu chuban youxian gongsi, 2007, pp. 149-198.

expression for the idea of contentment. I shall argue that while, on the one hand, singing is used as a special means to demonstrate certain ethical ideals; on the other hand, only an ethical person is capable of 'singing' when confronted with difficult situations in life. Interestingly, such an expression of ethical ideals through singing can be found not only throughout the *Zhuangzi*, but also in other texts from early China. The importance of this chapter therefore is to enrich the understanding of contentment with human limitations in the *Zhuangzi* by providing a new perspective on singing, and moreover, demonstrating how and why music was treated as a special means to express contentment.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first shows how singing is used to express contentment with *ming* 命 (fate). To be more specific, it will demonstrate the ways in which singing is used within different stories with related themes and related argumentative structures. This chapter also illustrates how singing differs from *song* 誦 (reciting)[187] and *chang* 唱 (chanting) in the *Zhuangzi*. Finally, it answers why singing serves as a special type of way to express and demonstrate contentment with *ming* and the similar functions of singing seen in other texts in early China.

Before discussing how singing is used in the *Zhuangzi*, I first clarify what I mean by singing (*ge* 歌) in this anthology. Singing in early China generally refers to producing musical sounds with the voice, especially words to a set tune, such as the *wusheng* 五聲 (five notes) and *liu lü* 六律 (six pitches).[188] More importantly, singing was a crucial part of

[187] For a discussion of the term *song*, see Wolfgang Behr and Bernhard Fuehrer, "Einführende Notizen zum Lesen in China mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Frühzeit," in Bernhard Fuehrer, ed., *Aspekte des Lesens in China in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart:Referate der Jahrestagung 2001 der Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien (DVCS) [Aspects of reading in China, past and present: collected papers of the 2001 annual meeting of the German Association for Chinese Studies (DVCS)]*, Bochum: Projekt Verlag, 2005.

[188] For example, the following lines are seen in the 'Yue Ji' 樂記 (The Records of Music) of the *Liji* 禮記 (The Records of Ritual): '正六律，和五聲，弦歌詩頌，此之謂德音' (They correct the six accords, and harmonize the five notes. They sing with the zither's string and recite odes to praise. This is what they called the music of virtue). See Ruan Yuan 阮元, ed., *Liji Zheng Yi* 禮記正義(Correct Meanings of the *Records of Ritual*) in *Shisan Jing Zhu Shu* 十三經註疏 (Annotations and Explanations of Thirteen Classics), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980, pp.1540B.

ritual performance.[189] However, this is not exactly the case in the *Zhuangzi*. In the chapter 'Shan Mu' 山木 (The Mountain Tree), we see a description of Confucius's singing, where 'He had his instrument, but what he played was without any fixed rhythm; there was melody, but none that fitted the usual tonal categories of *gong* or *jue*' (有其具而無其數，有其聲而無宮角).[190] This goes to show that to the *Zhuangzi*, following a set pattern of regulated notes is not a necessary condition for singing. This observation is in line with Park's observation on music in the *Zhuangzi*, which suggests that music should not be defined through a human-centred perspective. Instead, one should cultivate one's sensibility towards musical harmony, which can include any natural sound.[191]

If singing is not necessarily related to the regulated patterns of given tunes, then what is singing in this anthology? To answer this question, we should first examine the various uses of singing in the *Zhuangzi*.

II. How is singing discussed in the *Zhuangzi*?

In the *Zhuangzi*, there are seven cases in which *ge* 歌 (singing) is associated with situations that are not immediately under one's control, but instead depend on uncontrollable situations *ming* 命 (fate). In these seven stories, the sages are either dealing with the fact

[189] In the 'Jiao Te Sheng' 郊特牲 (The single victim at the border sacrifices) of the *Liji* 禮記 (The Records of Ritual), singing and ritual performance are related. '賓入大門而奏《肆夏》，示易以敬也。卒爵而樂闋，孔子屢嘆之。奠酬而工升歌，發德也。歌者在上，匏竹在下，貴人聲也。樂由陽來者也，禮由陰作者也，陰陽和而萬物得' (When the guests had entered the great door, Si Xia was played, and they showed a mixture of ease and respect. At the end of the toast, the music stopped, and Confucius praised it several times. When the last cup had been put down, the performers ascended the hall, and sang. The singers were above, and the organists were below – this is about valuing the human voice. Music comes from the *yang*; ceremonies from the *ying*. When the two are in harmony, all things obtain). See Ruan Yuan, ed., *Liji Zheng Yi*, p. 1446C

[190] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 690.

[191] So Jeong Park, "Musical Thought in the *Zhuangzi*: A Criticism of the Confucian Discourse on Ritual and Music," *Dao, A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2014): 331-350.

that their beloved is dead, or are facing their own imminent death. Interestingly, the *ming* of death is the most commonly shared theme when the Zhuangzian sages sing.

The most well-known story about singing in the *Zhuangzi* is likely the story in the 'Zhi Le' 至樂 (Perfect Happiness), in which Zhuangzi sings and drums on a basin to deal with his wife's death.[192] A similar situation is narrated in the 'Da Zongshi' 大宗師 (The Great and Venerable Teacher), in which Meng Zifan (孟子反) and Ziqin Zhang (子琴張) sing after their best friend Zi Sanghu's (子桑戶) death. Also related in the 'Da Zongshi' is a situation in which Zisang (子桑) sings when confronted with his continued impoverishment and sickness.[193]

Another famous 'singer' appearing not just in the *Zhuangz*i, but also in many early Chinese texts, is Confucius.[194] While there are different narratives and arguments built around the basic story of Confucius being surrounded by enemies in Kuang (匡), one element remains the same, namely that Confucius sings while beating his zither. The singing of Confucius is probably one of the most distinct elements within the different stories, especially when we consider that it is Confucius's reaction to hunger and possible death. In the *Zhuangzi*, most of the discussions surrounding this incident specifically concern the singing of Confucius. In the 'Qiushui' 秋水 (Autumn Floods), the discussion starts from a question proposed by Zi Lu (子路), who was curious as to why Confucius could still be so

[192] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 614.
[193] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 266.
[194] For a discussion of the use of verse in Confucian speeches during the Han, see Oliver Weingarten, "The Singing Sage, Rhymes in Confucian Dialogues," to be published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. A draft of the paper can be accessed through https://www.academia.edu/30167963/The_Singing_Sage_rhymes_in_Confucius_dialogues.
For a discussion of different interpretations of Confucius' suffering in Chen and Cai, see Chen Ning, "Mohist, Daoist, and Confucian explanations of Confucius's suffering in Chen Cai," *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. 51 (2003): 37-54. John Thomas Makeham, "Between Chen and Cai: Zhuangzi and the Analects," in Roger Ames, ed., *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998, pp. 75-100.

pleased (*yu ye* 娛也) and actually sing, despite being in such a dangerous situation[195]. In 'Rang Wang' 讓王 (Giving Away a Throne), we see Zhuangzi defending Confucius's singing after Zi Lu and Zi Gong (子貢) criticized Confucius's behaviour as shameless.[196] In 'Shan Mu' 山木 (The Mountain Tree), we see a picture of Confucius sitting at leisure: 'His left hand was propped against a withered tree, his right was beating on a withered branch as he sang the air of the lord of Yan' (左據槁木，右擊槁枝，而歌猋氏之風). Both Confucius's voice and his drumming on the tree 'had a resonance that would strike a man's heart' (犁然有當於人心), although what he sang indicated that 'He had his instrument, but what he played was without any fixed rhythm; there was melody, but none that fitted the usual tonal categories of *gong* or *jue*' (有其具而無其數，有其聲而無宮角).[197]

Moreover, in the 'Da Sheng' 達生 (Mastering Life) chapter, we see an interesting picture of a sage singing in an environment in which others believed was impossible to survive. It relates how a sage was singing beside the river with his hair down, after swimming in a stream where even wild water creatures could barely survive. Such leisurely singing is presented in contrast with Confucius' and his students' mistake of thinking that the sage was troubled and about to commit suicide, when he was actually swimming freely in the water.[198]

From these descriptions of singing in the *Zhuangzi*, it appears that singing is closely associated with a certain theme, namely facing an uncontrollable situation, especially death. This includes the singing of Zhuangzi when facing his wife's death; or the singing of Confucius when facing his own death; or the singing of a swimmer who was mistakenly believed to be committing suicide.

[195] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 595.
[196] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 981.
[197] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 690.
[198] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 656-658.

III. Singing in association with a tri-partite narrative structure

Next to sharing a related theme, we also see a similar tri-partite structure in the stories associated with singing. All of the following stories share the same argumentative structure, consisting of three distinctive parts. The first part begins with a description of singing by the Zhuangzian sages. The theme is either about facing death, or dealing with someone else's death. Second, the stories continue with someone who is either offended or confused about the act of singing in such a hopeless and unchangeable situation. Lastly, the stories end with a detailed reply or explanation by the sage as to why he was singing in such an extreme situation. The structure of the stories can be presented as follows:

A) Beginning of the story: a scene of utter surprise – A description of singing when facing death	B) The development of the story – Offended or confused about the behaviour of singing by others	C) Ending of the story – An explanation of the singing
子輿與子桑友，而霖雨十日。子輿曰：「子桑殆病矣！」裹飯而往食之。至子桑之門，則若歌若哭，鼓琴曰：「父邪母邪！天乎人乎！」Master Yu and Master Sang were friends. Once it rained incessantly for ten days. Master Yu said to himself, 'Master Sang is probably ill,' and he wrapped up some rice and took it for his friend to eat. When he got to Master Sang's gate, he heard something like singing or crying, and someone strumming a zither and saying, 'Father? Mother? Heaven? Man?'	子輿入，曰：「子之歌詩，何故若是？」Master Yu went inside and said, 'Why are you singing a poem like that!'	（子桑）曰：「吾思乎使我至此極者而弗得也。父母豈欲吾貧哉？天無私覆，地無私載，天地豈私貧我哉？求其為之者而不得也。然而至此極者，命也夫！」[199] 'I was pondering what it is that has brought me to this extremity, but I couldn't find the answer. My father and mother surely wouldn't wish this poverty on me. Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears up all without partiality – heaven and earth surely wouldn't single me out to make me poor. I try to discover who is doing it, but I can't get the answer. Still, here I am – at

[199] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 285-286.

		the very extreme. It must be *ming*.'
孔子遊於匡，宋人圍之數匝，而絃歌不惙。 Whe Confucius was passing through Kuang, the men of Song surrounded him with several encirclements of troops, but he went right on playing his zither and singing without stopping.	子路入見，曰：「何夫子之娛也？」 Zi Lu went in to see him and said, 'Master, how is it that you are so carefree?'	孔子曰：「來！吾語女。我諱窮久矣，而不免，命也；求通久矣，而不得，時也。當堯、舜而天下無窮人，非知得也，當桀，紂而天下無通人，非知失也，時勢適然。夫水行不避蛟龍者，漁父之勇也；陸行不避兕虎者，獵夫之勇也；白刃交於前，視死若生者，烈士之勇也；知窮之有命，知通之有時，臨大難而不懼者，聖人之勇也。由處矣！吾命有所制矣。[200] Confucius said, 'Come, I shall explain it to you. For a long time I have tried to avoid hardship. That I have not managed to escape it is due to *ming*. For a long time I have tried to achieve success. That I have not been able to do so is due to the times. If it happens to be the age of a Yao or a Shun, then there are no men in the world who face hardship – but this is not because their wisdom saves them. If it happens to be the age of a Jie or a Zhou, then there are no men in the world who achieve success – but this is not because their wisdom fails them. It is time and circumstance that make it so. To travel across the water without shrinking from the sea serpent or the dragon – this is the courage of the fisherman. To travel over land without shrinking from the rhinoceros or the tiger – this is the courage of

[200] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 595-596.

		the hunter. To see the bare blades clashing before him and to look upon death as though it were life – this is the courage of the man of ardour. To understand that hardship is a matter of *ming*, that success is a matter of the times, and to face great difficulty without fear – this is the courage of the sage. Take it easy, Zi Lu. My *ming* has limitations.'
莊子妻死，惠子弔之，莊子則方箕踞鼓盆而歌。 Zhuangzi's wife died. When Huizi went to convey his condolences, he found Zhuangzi sitting with his legs sprawled out, pounding on a tub and singing.	惠子曰：「與人居長子，老身死，不哭亦足矣，又鼓盆而歌，不亦甚乎！」 Huizi said, 'You lived with her, she brought up your children and grew old and died. It should be enough simply not to weep at her death. But pounding on a tub and singing – this is going too far, isn't it?'	莊子曰：「不然。是其始死也，我獨何能無概然！察其始而本無生，非徒無生也，而本無形，非徒無形也，而本無氣。雜乎芒芴之間，變而有氣，氣變而有形，形變而有生，今又變而之死，是相與為春秋冬夏四時行也。人且偃然寢於巨室，而我噭噭然隨而哭之，自以為不通乎命，故止也。」[201] Zhuangzi said, 'It is not. When she first died, how could I not have grief like anyone else? But I looked back at the beginning and there was originally no life. Not only was there no life, but there was originally no form. Not only was there no form, there was originally no vital force. In the midst of the jumble of wonder, a change took place and there was the vital force. Another change and there was a body. Another change and there was a life. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the four seasons, spring, summer, fall, winter. Now she's

[201] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 614-615.

		going to lie down peacefully in a vast room. If I were to follow after her bawling and sobbing, it would show that I don't understand anything about *ming*. So I stopped.
孔子觀於呂梁，縣水三十仞，流沫四十里，黿鼉魚鱉之所不能游也。見一丈夫游之，以為有苦而欲死也，使弟子並流而拯之。數百步而出，被髮行歌而游於塘下。Confucius was seeing the sights at Lü Liang. The hanging water falls thirty fathoms, and the racing water boils along for forty *li*. Even the fish, turtles, and other water creatures cannot swim in it. He saw a man swim inside and assumed the man was in trouble and intended to die. He sent his disciples to follow the man into the water and save him. The man had gone a couple of hundred steps when he came out of the water. He pulled his hair down, strolled along the base of the embankment, and sang.	孔子從而問焉，曰：「吾以子為鬼，察子則人也。請問蹈水有道乎？」Confucius followed him and asked, 'At first I thought you were a ghost. Upon observing you, I knew that you are a human being. May I ask if you have your own way of floating in the water?'	曰：「亡，吾無道。吾始乎故，長乎性，成乎命。與齊俱入，與汩偕出，從水之道而不為私焉。此吾所以蹈之也。」…曰：「吾生於陵而安於陵，故也；長於水而安於水，性也；不知吾所以然而然，命也。」[202] The man said, 'No, I have no way. I started with what I was used to, grew up with my nature, and came to completion with *ming*. I go under the water and I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way that the water goes and never have my own way. That's the reason why I can stay afloat.' Confucius said, 'What do you mean by saying that you began with what you were used to, grew up with your nature, and come to completion with *ming*?' The man said, 'I was born on the high land and am contented in the high land – that was what I was used to. I grew up with the water and am contented in the water – that is my nature. I don't know why I am like this but I find this right – that's *ming*.'

[202] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 595-597.

The above examples show a shared tri-partite narrative structure related to singing in the face of *ming*, especially death. Through the first two structural elements, we see that singing is not seen as a normal reaction to the death of a beloved one. The act of singing is considered to be abnormal, even shocking, behaviour. This shock is clearly displayed in the questions and judgements of the observers who witnessed the act of singing.

For example, when Zhuangzi was singing over his wife's death, Huizi commented that such behaviour was outrageous and unacceptable: 'When a wife has lived with her husband, and brought up children, and then dies in her old age, not to wail for her is enough. When you go on to drum on this basin and sing, is it not an excessive (and strange) demonstration?' (與人居長子，老身死，不哭亦足矣，又鼓盆而歌，不亦甚乎!)[203] In fact, Huizi's critique seems to reflect a common orthodox norm in early China. When confronted with a situation such as death, the act of singing is exactly opposite to what one ought to do.

In the *Liji* (禮記) it is pointed out that 'When seeing at a distance a coffin with the corpse in it, one should not sing' (望柩不歌) and 'when going to a burying ground, one should not sing; on the day when one has wailed (with mourners) one should not sing' (適墓不歌。哭日不歌).[204] The prescriptive behaviour of not singing in the face of death helps us to realize that in early China, the act of singing in the face of death was officially seen as outrageous and shocking.

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[203] In the chapter, 'Da Zongshi' 大宗師 (The Great and Venerable Teacher) a similar critique was made when Meng Zifan 孟子反 and Zi Qinzhang 子琴章 sang before their friend's corpse. Zi Gong criticized the behaviour of singing in front of the corpse as not in accordance with the rituals: 'I venture to ask whether it be according to the rituals to be singing thus in the presence of the corpse?' (敢問臨尸而歌，禮乎？)

[204] The problem of using 'The Records of Ritual' as textual evidence is that it is the official record, and is not necessarily applicable to the real social and cultural history of the time at which the text was produced. Barend Ter Haar pointed out that vernacular Daoist ritual is full of poems that are more like songs and have melodic rather than strict rhythmic music. We might speculate this is derived from singing. He questioned whether singing was Zhuangzian or instead normal, or even normative. This is a question that I have not yet been able to answer since it needs a more complete survey on the function of singing in early China.

Also, when Ziyu (子與) hears Zisang (子桑) singing as if he were crying, he criticized and questioned why Ziyu was singing in such a way. Ziyu's critique also comes from the common understanding that one should not sing while crying. For example, in the *Analects* we see the words, 'On a day when the master had wept, he did not sing' (子於是日哭，則不歌).[205] The rule that one ought not cry and sing at the same time also indicates that the act of singing by Zhuangzian sages was seen as both surprising and outrageous by the majority, who lived within accepted social norms.

In the previous two cases, the critique resulted from the fact that the act of singing in the face of death violated ritual propriety, and therefore, prevailing social norms. The other two cases listed in the chart above focus on how the act of singing in difficult situations flies in the face of people's common understanding. For example, when Confucius sang while he was surrounded by the men of Song (宋), Zi Lu found this action confusing. However, none of the cases was as surprising or dramatic as the story in which Confucius mistakenly assumed that the man who swam in a deep river where water creatures could not survive was about to commit suicide. When Confucius finally saw this man with dishevelled hair, walking along the bank and singing, he commented that he thought that the man was a ghost. Confucius asked how the man could swim in such a dangerous place. Through such a description, we can see that what surprised Confucius was not only the man's ability to swim in a dangerous place, but also his act of singing.

Through the above analysis, not only can we discern a tri-partite structure in the stories, but we can also understand why they were all structured in such a way. We see that when singing occurs, it is an action that either goes against social norms, such as singing in the face of death, or that is different from the common understanding, such as singing while

[205] Cheng Shude 程樹德 (1877-1944), *Lunyu Ji Shi* 論語集釋 (Collected Annotations of the *Analects*), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008 [first printed, 1990], p. 449.

in a dangerous place or when suffering from hunger. Due to the abnormal situations in which one sings, other people who witness this are either offended or confused. Therefore, the stories naturally continue with critiques or questions from others. This will then lead to explanations as to the reason why people sing in abnormal situations. Such a tri-partite structure allows us to see how singing is framed within different stories. In other words, these stories are deliberately designed in this way in order to make a point about being content with *ming*.

In what follows, we will examine the explanations given in the *Zhuangzi* of why people sing under abnormal situations, so as to further explore how singing is used.

IV. Singing as a way to demonstrate the contentment of *ming*

After explaining to the audience that the act of singing is considered abnormal and ought not happen in certain situations, the text adds a number of arguments as to why this act was carried out in such an unusual situation. Through these elaborations, it becomes clear that the reason why people performed the seemingly abnormal act of singing was because it 'demonstrated' an attitude of contentment towards *ming*. It is worth noting that singing is not the only way to express the idea of being content with *ming*. As was discussed in Chapter One, statement and normal speech could also be a way to express the same idea. But this does not negate the fact that singing was frequently used. Nor does it negate the meaningfulness of exploring why singing was often used in relation to contentment.

By 'demonstrating', I mean that only those who are content with their *ming* are capable of singing when faced with an uncontrollable situation. They thus identify and perform their understanding of contentment through singing while facing situations beyond human control. This means that through deliberate choice, they willingly accept the facts as they are, without adhering to pre-existing values, such as the desire for life or the wish to

avoid death. In this manner, they will act in accordance with the changing situation, without struggling against it. Because of this, they will not hurt their emotional or physical health. The Zhuangzian type of contentment is therefore an *active* attitude rather than a passive one. Such contentment is not an act of inertia or submission by focusing on the cultivation of the heart-mind.

Let us first look at the 'Zhi Le' (至樂) chapter, where Zhuangzi's act of singing in front of his wife's coffin is a striking image, in stark contrast to the weeping of the common people in the face of death. When Zhuangzi's wife died, he at first grieved for his loss and cried, like everyone else. After a period of reflection, Zhuangzi stopped weeping and began singing, since he began to realize that 'he had not understood *ming*' (自以為不通乎命). It became clear to Zhuangzi that death relates to one's *ming*, which is not only unavoidable, but is also a natural process, much like the progression of the four seasons. 'In the midst of the jumble of wonder, a change took place and there was the vital force. Another change and there was a body. Another change and there was a life. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the four seasons, spring, summer, fall, winter' (雜乎芒芴之間，變而有氣，氣變而有形，形變而有生，今又變而之死, 是相與為春秋冬夏四時行也).[206] Upon reflection, Zhuangzi understood that there was no categorical difference between death and life. Instead, death is only one change among others, and therefore presents no cause for weeping. Once Zhuangzi gave up his former belief about the desire for life and the hatred of death, and once he started to understand the natural changes of life, Zhuangzi chose to sing. When Zhuangzi shifted from crying to singing, it meant that he had come to understand that one should accept the changes in the process of life, much as one accepts the changes of the four seasons, and be content with them. Death should

[206] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 614-615.

therefore not be a thing that one cries about. It follows that singing was a demonstration of Zhuangzi's abandonment of his pre-existing beliefs, and an expression of his newfound contentment with changes in life as an uncontrollable and natural process.

The same idea is presented in the 'Da Zongshi', where we see Master Sang (子桑) strumming a zither and singing in the face of his poverty. When Master Yu (子輿) heard his voice, he could not determine whether Master Sang was singing or crying. After Master Yu went inside and confirmed that Sang was not crying, he asked Sang why he sang a song like that. Master Sang replied that he understood that being put in such an extreme situation was his *ming.* This was caused by no one, and there was no reason that could explain it. 'I was pondering what it is that has brought me to this extremity, but I couldn't find the answer. My father and mother surely wouldn't wish this poverty on me. Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears up all without partiality – heaven and earth surely wouldn't single me out to make me poor. I try to discover who is doing it, but I can't get the answer. Still, here I am – at the very extreme. It must be *ming*' (吾思乎使我至此極者而弗得也。父母豈欲吾貧哉？天無私覆，地無私載，天地豈私貧我哉？求其為之者而不得也。然而至此極者，命也夫).[207] In this story, instead of crying about finding himself in an impoverished situation, Master Sang sings despite his poverty, not blaming either his parents or heaven. He accepts that it is his *ming* to be living in such dire poverty. It is not the result of anyone wanting him to be poor; therefore no one is to blame. It is simply a situation that cannot be influenced.

Moreover, singing demonstrates one's acceptance of *ming* without fighting against it. The 'Qiushui' chapter contains a story describing Confucius as carefree and singing when surrounded by enemies in Kuang (匡). When Zi Lu (子路) asked how he could remain so

[207] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 285-286.

carefree and sing when caught in such a situation, Confucius explained that he had long been trying to fight against his *ming* by seeking to escape from hardship and searching for success, but his efforts were of no use, and therefore he understood that 'hardship is a matter of *ming*, success is a matter of the times, and to face great difficulty without fear – this is the courage of the sage' (知窮之有命，知通之有時，臨大難而不懼者，聖人之勇也).[208] According to this story, we know that when Confucius chose to sing upon finding himself in a dangerous place, he was deciding not to fight any longer against an unchangeable situation, as he had previously done; nor did he live in fear when surrounded by enemies. Instead, he was singing because he realized that his *ming* had its own limitations that he was willing to affirm this without anxiety (吾命有所制矣).

In the previous stories, when one sings, this is related to accepting one's *ming*, and to not acting against an unchangeable situation. For example, it is about not being sad about death, not being angry about being poor, and not fighting against difficult and unchangeable situations. In the following story, when one sings, this changes one's focus towards living with the unchangeable situation, so as to live well. In the chapter, 'Mastering Life' (達生), when the old man explains to Confucius why he could swim in a deep river where water creatures could not survive, and why he could sing in a relaxed way, the old man stated that, 'I have no [fixed] Way. I began in accordance with what I was used to, grew up with my nature, and I come to completion with *ming*. I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water goes and never thinking about myself. That's how I can stay afloat' (吾無道。吾始乎故，長乎性，成乎命。與齊俱入，與汩偕出，從水之道而不為私焉。此吾所以蹈之也).[209] He further told Confucius, 'I was born in the hills and felt safe on the hills – that was what I was used to. I grew up with water and felt

[208] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 595-596.
[209] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 614-615.

safe in the water - that was my nature. I don't know why I do what I do – that's *ming*' (吾生於陵而安於陵，故也；長於水而安於水，性也；不知吾所以然而然，命也). The swimmer stated that the reason that he could easily survive in this dangerous place was because, on the one hand, he could live his life without having a fixed way; on the other hand, he willingly accepted that which is given in life and went along with it, as he sometimes went under the swirls and sometimes came out with the eddies. When the text relates the swimmer's action of singing in contentment with what has been given, and contrasts it to the thought held by others that he might be committing suicide because of their assumption that there is a fixed *Dao* that a swimmer must adhere to, we can argue that the unusual behaviour of singing along the way can be seen as a demonstration of the swimmer's contentment with that which is given. Only with an attitude of contentment, is the swimmer able to live well in this dangerous place, and is therefore capable of singing.[210]

Based on a discussion of these different stories, we can now see the shared contextual and structural similarities in the previously quoted passages, namely the common argumentative structures, the shared topic of *ming,* and singing as an expression of the acceptance of *ming*. Admittedly, the above stories emphasize different dimensions of 'accepting' *ming*. Some stories focus on being content with death as a natural change without dwelling on sorrow, such as in the case of Zhuangzi and his friends, who dealt with the death of a beloved one (death as an uncontrollable situation is seen as a crucial part of *ming* that one needs to deal with on a psychological level). Some stories focus on the discussion of willingly accepting extremely difficult situations without fighting against them or blaming others, as Confucius or Master Sang did. Some stories discuss being content with what is given so as to actively follow along with the changes that are

[210] We can speculate that singing here is possibly being contrasted with sighing, crying, or escaping from a dangerous place.

uncontrollable in life, as in the story of the swimmer who explained to Confucius how he came to 'completion with his *ming*' (成于命). When these figures express their contentment with *ming*, their attitude is different from the understanding of other people, in that they willingly accept their situation, which is illuminated and literally, performed, through the act of singing.

V. Why Singing and not Reciting or Chanting?

Through the previous analysis, we can see that the act of singing carried out by Zhuangzian sages was their way of expressing an acceptance of *ming*. Through explanations of why a person would sing in situations when such behaviour would typically be seen as uncommon and outrageous, the texts propose the idea that when confronted with an unchangeable situation, one should accept it and be at peace with it, rather than fight against it in sorrow or anger. Now the question is, why is the demonstration of the understanding of *ming* better expressed through singing than through the common act of reciting (*song* 誦) or chanting (*chang* 唱), when all of these terms refer to forms of melodic voicing? How are *song* and *chang* different from singing?

Song in the *Zhuangzi* refers to the behaviour of reciting and memorizing a text with incomplete understanding. For example, in the chapter 'Rang Wang' 讓王 (Giving Away a Throne) Confucius said to Yan Hui:

> 「回來！家貧居卑，胡不仕乎？」顏回對曰：「不願仕。回有郭外之田五十畝，足以給饘粥；郭內之田十畝，足以為絲麻；鼓琴足以自娛；所學夫子之道者足以自樂也。回不願仕。」孔子愀然變容曰：「善哉回之意！丘聞之：『知足者不以利自累也，審自得者失之而不懼，行修於內者無位而不怍。』丘誦之久矣，今於回而後見之，是丘之得也。」[211]

[211] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 978-979.

> ‘Come here, Hui. Your family is poor and your position very lowly. Why don’t you become an official?’ Yan Hui replied, ‘I have no desire to become an official. I, Hui, have 50 *mou* of farmland outside the outer wall, which is enough to provide me with porridge and gruel, and I have ten *mou* of farmland inside the outer wall, which is enough to keep me in silk and hemp. Playing my zither suffices to amuse me, studying the Way of the Master suffices to delight me. I have no desire to become an official.’ Confucius became stern and his face took on a sheepish expression and he said, ‘Excellent, Hui, is this determination of yours! I have heard that the one who understands what is sufficient, will not let himself be entangled by thoughts of gain; the one who really understands how to find satisfaction will not fear loss; and the one who practises the cultivation of what is within him will not be ashamed because he holds no position in society. I have been reciting these ideas for a long time, but now for the first time I see them realized in you, Hui. This is what I have gained.’

In this story, the term *song* is used to express the action of memorizing and reciting as a kind of incomplete understanding. The term *song* is used in comparison with *jian* 見 (seeing): ‘but now for the first time I see them realized in you’ (今於回而後見之). Through seeing how Yan Hui dealt with his poor situation, how Yan Hui embodies what Confucius has been reciting, Confucius transforms what he had heard of (*wen zhi* 聞之) into a deeper level of understanding.

To the *Zhuangzi* reciting (*song*) without proper understanding easily leads to meaningless debate. In the chapter, ‘Tian Xia’ 天下 (The World), *song* is again used in opposition to real understanding.

> 相里勤之弟子五侯之徒，南方之墨者苦獲、已齒、鄧陵子之屬，俱誦《墨經》，而倍譎不同，相謂別墨，以堅白、同異之辯相訾，以觭偶不仵之辭相應，以巨子為聖人，皆願為之尸，冀得為其後世，至今不決。[212]
>
> The disciples of Xiangli Qin, the followers of Wu Hou, and the Mohists of the south, such as Ku Huo, Ji Chi, Master Deng Ling, and the like, all recite the Mohist canon, and yet they quarrel and disagree in their interpretations, calling each other ‘Mohist factionalists’. In their discussions of ‘hard’ and ‘white’, ‘difference’ and ‘sameness’, they attack back and forth; in their disquisitions on the incompatibility

[212] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 1079.

> of 'odd' and 'even' they exchange volleys of refutation. They regard the Grand Master of their sect as a sage, each sect trying to make its own Grand Master the recognized head of the school, in hopes that his authority will be acknowledged by later ages, but down to the present day the dispute remains unresolved.

The example in this story confirms the notion of *song* brought up in the previous story, namely that if people only recite without any real understanding, although they seem to recite the same texts, they will only adhere to what they believe to be true, without really understanding others, and thus will only end up engaging in endless debates.

The term *chang* 唱 is often used together with the term *he* 和 (response). For example, in the chapter 'Qi Wulun' 齊物論 (Equalizing the Debates on Things), the chanting of the wind and the responding of different hallows come together. 'Those in the lead calling out yeee! Those behind calling out yuuu! In a gentle breeze they answer faintly, but in a full gale the chorus is gigantic' (前者唱于而隨者唱喁。泠風則小和，飄風則大和).[213] In the chapter 'De Chong Fu' 德充府 (The Sign of Virtue Complete), the Zhuangzian sage Ai Taituo 哀駘它 is described as a man who only responds but never chants (和而不唱).[214] These are two examples of the term *chang*, which usually assumes a responder who replies to the chanter.

In contrast to reciting, which results in debates because of limited understanding, and chanting, which normally requires a response, I argue that the act of singing in the *Zhuangzi* is used to express ideas without any target audience or responder. The function of singing can be seen in the following stories in the *Zhuangzi*.

In the chapter 'Zhi Beiyou' 知北遊 (Knowledge Wandered North), the function of singing in contrast to the act of stating something is clear:

[213] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 46.
[214] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 206.

齧缺問道乎被衣，被衣曰：
「若正汝形(*ɢˤeŋ)[215]， 一汝視[*gijʔ-s)，天和將至(*tit-s]； 攝汝知 (*tre)，一汝 度(*dˤak-s)，神將來舍(*l̥aʔ)。德將為汝美(*mrəjʔ)，道將為汝居(*ka)，汝瞳焉(*ʔan)，如新出之犢(*lˤok)，而無求其故[*kˤa-s)」
言未卒，齧缺睡寐。被衣大說，行歌而去之，曰：
「形若槁骸(*gˤrə)，
心若死灰(*hmâ),[216]
真其實知(tre),
不以故自持(*drə)，
媒媒(*C.mˤə)晦晦(m̥ˤək-s)，
無心(*səm)而不可與謀 (*mə)，
彼何人哉！ (tsˤə)] [217]
Nie Que asked Pi Yi about the Way. Pi Yi said, ‘If you correct your body and equalize your vision, the harmony of Heaven will come to you. Control your knowledge, equalize your ways of measures, and the spirits will come to dwell with you. Virtue will be your beauty; the Way will be your home. Your eyes will be like those of a newborn calf, and you will not seek for reasons.’ Before he had finished speaking, however, Nie Que fell sound asleep. Pi Yi, immensely pleased, left and walked away, singing this song: ‘Body like a withered corpse, mind like dead ashes, true in the realness of knowledge, not to restrain oneself due to (the search for) reasons. Dim dim, dark dark, mindless, you cannot consult with him. What kind of man is this?’

In this story, statements following *yue* 曰 and ‘行歌而去之曰’ (Pi Yi left Nie Que while singing a song, which says)[218] express similar ideas. To be specific, both discuss the

[215] All of the phonological reconstructions are taken from Jeffrey R. Tharsen’s *Digital Etymological*、*Dictionary of Old Chinese* Website. The main reconstruction follows that of Baxter-Sagart’s old Chinese. See the website: http://edoc.uchicago.edu/edoc2013/digitaledoc_linearformat.php.
The phonological reconstruction also works with Schuessler Axel’s reconstruction. Schuessler reads *shi* 視 (*gi^{B}), *zhi* 至(*tits), *zhi* 知 (*tre), *du* 度 (*dâkh), *she* 捨 (*lhah), *mei* 美 (*mrəiʔ), *ju* 居 (*ka^{A}), *du* 犢 (*lôk ʔ), *gu* 故 (*kâh). They do not rhyme perfectly either.
[216] This phonological reconstruction is based on Schuessler.
[217] Schuessler’s reconstruction is mainly in line with that of Baxter: *Hai* 骸 (*grə), *zhi* 知 (*tre), *hui* 晦 (*hmâʔ !). Except for the reconstruction of *mou* 謀 (*mo), where Baxter’s reconstruction rhymes with (*mə), I follow that of Baxter.
[218] One could ask why we should treat the second statement as containing the words of the song, namely why we should read ‘xing ge er qu zhi yue’ (行歌而去之曰) as ‘Pi Yi left Nie Que while singing a song, which says’, instead of only referring to the act of singing, and then making a separate speech (‘Pi Yi left Nie Que while singing a song, and *said* in departure’). The expressions after *ge* are carefully rhymed, yet the instructive sayings after *yue* do not rhyme, suggesting that the former is a song.

same themes of *xing* 形 (body), *zhi* 知 (knowledge), and not seeking the *gu* 故, as well as freedom from a pre-existing way of thinking.

However, in terms of modes of expression, the style varies greatly. When Nie Que asked Pi Yi about the *Dao*, Pi Yi first gave Nie Que a series of prescriptive instructions on how one should act when pursuing the Dao. Terms such as *zheng* (正), *yi* (一), and *she* (摄) are *prescriptive* suggestions on how to pursue the Dao. The expressions following the word *ge* (歌) are *descriptive* rather than prescriptive. The words describe the greatness of Nie Que without putting into words how one *should* act; rather, they refer to his ideal state of being. In other words, they lack prescriptive statements, but are descriptive narratives.

What changes the mode of expression from prescriptive to descriptive? It is the act of singing. Only after the act of singing does the statement on similar ideas become descriptive instead of prescriptive. For example, the instruction on 'correcting your body' (正汝形) becomes a descriptive narrative of 'body like a withered corpse' (形若枯骸). What, then, made Pi Yi so happy that he started singing? Interestingly, it was when Nie Que fell asleep.

On this basis, I argue that singing is used as a way to express an audience-neutral argument. When Nie Que fell asleep, the audience, namely Nie Que, accordingly disappeared. Thus, whatever Pi Yi was singing, Pi Yi had no audience to hear it. The act of singing by Pi Yi was an audience-neutral behaviour and therefore not mired in the subjectivity inherent in a debate. This stands in contrast with an audience-specific expression at the beginning of this story, which was marked only with *yue*. When Pi Yi first gave his insights, he was assuming that Nie Que was the audience. This is the reason why two types of expression are also related to two different modes of making arguments. When

the argument is audience-targeted by means of stating an argument, it is prescriptive. When the utterance is audience-neutral by means of singing, it is more descriptive.

The above distinction is important, because to the *Zhuangzi* normal speech (*yan* 言) generally causes divisions and debates that harm both body and mind.[219] And the reason that endless debates are caused by normal speech is that one always adheres to one's predetermined value judgements to communicate ideas through normal speech.[220] In contrast to normal speech, singing as an audience-neutral form of communication becomes important in the *Zhuangzi*. Without an intended target and pre-existing ideas in mind, one can avoid debates. As a result, one will not hurt one's body or mind.

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[219] In the chapter 'Qi Wulun', the text points out that many small and great speeches lead to one's mental and physical damage. '大知閑閑，小知閒閒；大言炎炎，小言詹詹。其寐也魂交，其覺也形開，與接為構，日以心鬬。縵者，窖者，密者。小恐惴惴，大恐縵縵。其發若機栝，其司是非之謂也；其留如詛盟，其守勝之謂也；其殺如秋冬，以言其日消也；其溺之所為之，不可使復之也；其厭也如緘，以言其老洫也；近死之心，莫使復陽也。' (Great knowledge is wide and comprehensive; small knowledge is partial and restricted. Great speech is exact and complete; small speech is (merely) so much talk. When we sleep, the soul communicates with (what is external to us); when we awake, the body is set free. Our intercourse with others then leads to various activities, and daily there is the striving of mind with mind. There are hesitancies, deep difficulties, reservations, small apprehensions causing restless distress, and great apprehensions producing endless fears. Where their utterances are like arrows from a bow, we have those who feel it their charge to pronounce what is right and what is wrong; where they are given out like the conditions of a covenant, we have those who maintain their views, determined to overcome. (The weakness of their arguments), like the decay (of things) in autumn and winter, shows the failing (of the minds of some) from day to day; or it is like their water which, once voided, cannot be gathered up again. Then their ideas seem as if fast bound with cords, showing that the mind has become like an old and dry moat, and that it is nigh to death, and cannot be restored to vigour and brightness.) See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 51.

[220] Also in the chapter 'Qi Wulun', the text points out that many words and speeches come from a fixed mind-set and delivered for fixed purposes. '夫隨其成心而師之，誰獨且無師乎？奚必知代而心自取者有之？愚者與有焉。未成乎心而有是非，是今日適越而昔至也。' (If we were to follow the judgements of the predetermined mind, who would be left alone and without a teacher? Not only would it be so with those who know the sequences (of knowledge and feeling) and make their own selection among them, but it would be so as well with the stupid and unthinking. For one who has not this determined mind, to have his affirmations and negations is like the case described in the saying, 'He went to Yue today, and arrived yesterday.') Also, debates on words will not lead to the truth of right and wrong.) '夫言非吹也。言者有言，其所言者特未定也。果有言邪？其未嘗有言邪？其以為異於鷇音，亦有辯乎，其無辯乎？道惡乎隱而有真偽？言惡乎隱而有是非？道惡乎往而不存？言惡乎存而不可？道隱於小成，言隱於榮華。故有儒、墨之是非，以是其所非，而非其所是。欲是其所非而非其所是，則莫若以明。' (Words are not just wind. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, then do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds, but is there any difference, or isn't there? What does the Way rely upon, that we have true and false? What do words rely upon, that we have right and wrong? How can the Way go away and not exist? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Mohists. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right. But if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity.) See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 63.

A similar instance of singing serving as an audience-neutral form of communication is expressed through a story in the chapter 'Shan Mu' 山木 (Mountains and Trees).

> 孔子窮於陳、蔡之間，七日不火食，左據槁木，右擊槁枝[221]，而歌猋氏之風，有其具而無其數，有其聲而無宮角，木聲與人聲，犁然有當於人心。顏回端拱還目而窺之。仲尼恐其廣己而造大也，愛己而造哀也，曰：「回！無受天損易，無受人益難。無始而非卒也，人與天一也。夫今之歌者其誰乎？」[222]
>
> Confucius was in great distress between Chen and Cai, and for seven days he ate no cooked food. His left hand propped against a withered tree, his right hand beating time on a withered limb, he sang the air of the lord of Yan. He had his instrument, but what he played was without any fixed rhythm; there was melody, but none that fitted the usual tonal categories of *gong* and *jue*. The drumming on the tree and the voice of the singer had resonance that would strike a man's heart. Yan Hui, standing with hands folded respectfully across his chest, turned his eyes and looked inquiringly at Confucius. Confucius, fearful that Yan Hui's respect for him was too great, that his love for him would result in sadness, said to him, 'Hui! It is easy to be indifferent to the afflictions of Heaven, but hard to be indifferent to the benefits of man. No beginning but has its end, and man and Heaven are one. Who is it, then, who sings this song now?'

The story once again borrows from the theme of Confucius singing while surrounded by enemies between Chen and Cai. Different from Nie Que's falling asleep while listening to the ultimate knowledge, in this story, when Yan Hui listened to Confucius singing, he showed great respect and attention: 'Yan Hui, standing with hands folded respectfully across his chest, turned his eyes and looked inquiringly at Confucius'. However, this great attention caused Confucius to worry that Yan Hui's respect and love for him gave Yan Hui too strong a subjective judgement: 'Confucius feared that Yan Hui's respect for him was too great, that his love for him was too tender'. This means that, given that Confucius's singing was of

[221] For a discussion of vegetal metaphors, please see Albert Galvany's analysis on its political, ritual, and inter-personal relations confronting regularity and uniformity. See Galvany, "Discussing Usefulness – Trees as Metaphor in the Zhuangzi" in *Monumenta Serica*, No. 57 (2009): 71-97.
[222] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 690-601.

great influence, Confucius had not been singing intentionally, since his music did not conform to traditional notions of good music. Confucius's singing was free of rhythm or common patterns of melody. None of his utterances fitted the usual tonal categories of *gong* and *jue*.

Through the above presentation, we can see through Confucius's critique of Yan Hui's attention and respect towards Confucius's singing, as well as from the manner in which Confucius was singing the song, that the act of singing was not *meant* to target anyone. Confucius here not only takes away the subjectivity when he sings, but also requires Yan Hui to jettison his subjective respect and love for his master. Yan Hui should not listen to the song because of his respect to Confucius. Rather, what the song tries to convey is the impersonal and impartial wisdom that distances oneself from attaching emotions to others.

From the previous two examples, we can see that singing is not only different from other forms of melodic utterance, such as reciting or chanting, but also from normal speech. This is because singing in the *Zhuangzi* is seen as a way to express audience-neutral arguments. As such, it avoids goal-oriented arguments and meaningless and endless debates that could eventually harm one's body and mind. More importantly, in this way, by removing the songs from argument, debate, or dialogue, the content of the songs is elevated above that which is open to discussion, making it a 'truth claim with no claim to truth'.[223] This is also why singing as a form of communication is ideal for expressing ideals for living a good life.

It is worth noting that when I use the term 'audience-neutral', this does **not** refer to the audience of text readers as well as oneself. Audience-neutral refers to a third party that one can identify within the texts. It is for differentiating a type of expression from arguing

[223] For another example of a 'truth claim with no claim to truth', see Dirk Meyer, "Truth Claim with no Claim to Truth: Text and Performance of the 'Qiushui' Chapter of the Zhuangzi," in Dirk Meyer and Joachim Gentz, eds., *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, pp. 297-340.

against a specific person, or making an argument while having a pre-existing idea in mind. However, when we think of the audience as composed of ourselves or other readers of the text outside of the narrative, singing serves a different function. Singing to express certain ideas is a conscious act and choice of medium. Pi Yi consciously chooses to sing when Nie Que falls asleep. Confucius intentionally chooses to sing alone. That is to say, the performance of singing, when thinking of it as singing to oneself, is an act that one intentionally adopts to express oneself truly and fully.

Accordingly, when the readers of the text understand the underlying reasons for singing without themselves being seen as a targeted audience, they are uniquely placed to share in the values conveyed through the songs. They are targeted without intentionally being targeted. As a text, the *Zhuangzi* therefore employs singing as a means to draw the 'clever reader' in to its discourse, and make him/her share in and identify with its message. As for those who are unable to understand why someone would sing and what they would sing about, whether within or beyond the texts, they are excluded from the group within which certain values are shared and expressed through singing. In the following discussion, I will further explore why singing is always related to the ideal attitude of contentment.

V. Singing for Contentment

In the previous discussion, I argued that singing in the *Zhuangzi* had an important function to play in expressing understanding of situations beyond human control, especially *ming*. Singing is placed within the same tri-partite narrative structure in different stories. Through this structure, we can see that singing was seen as a surprising act; accordingly, it was used to express a liberated mind. In contrast to reciting, ideas expressed through singing do not hold on to fixed value judgements. Different from chanting, agreement is not the expected response to ideas expressed through singing. The feature of audience-neutrality

within the text made singing a special way of expressing ideas with truth value, while avoiding problems of argument and subjectivity.

As a result, through these features of acceptance and singing, we can understand why singing has been used to express the idea of acceptance of *ming.*

(1) Contentment means to be at ease within a given situation, without having any pre-existing value judgements. It indicates that one has no more desire for a change towards other situations, either through action or speech. By way of accepting uncontrollable situations, one will be able to act in accordance with such changes, without having pre-existing divisions and judgements in mind.

(2) Normal speech (*xiao yan* 小言) is presented in the *Zhuangzi* as causing exactly those divisions and debates that harm body and mind. Debating (*bian* 辯) using normal speech generally means that one already holds a predetermined set of ideas before deliberating,[224] and that this will therefore necessarily cause *shi-fei* debates that might harm both body and mind (*jin si zhi xin* 近死之心).[225]

(3) In contrast to normal speech, ideas expressed through singing are audience-neutral and target-free. As such, they are not intended to reach an audience with a fixed idea in mind, or a fixed value judgement with clear divisions in mind; hence, singing can express ideas that are no longer subject to debates and arguments, thus providing a claim to truth.

(4) In this sense, singing embodies the very notion of contentment as an ideal way to deal with *ming*, an attitude that has no pre-existing value judgements or targeted goals. Thus, we frequently see singing associated with contentment with the *ming*.

[224] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 63.
[225] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 51.

(5) When facing death and other situations beyond human control, people who are capable of singing or who understand that they have a choice to sing, do so because it represents their shared idea of being content with it. They identify their shared values through singing, and such a performance becomes a way to include people within certain shared values. Accordingly, those who cannot understand the choice of singing are excluded from their shared values and lose a medium for identifying themselves within this circle.

VI. The Zhuangzian idea of singing shared in early China

In what follows, I argue that the use of singing to express a certain understanding of *ming* in the *Zhuangzi* does not come from nowhere. I argue that the following features of Zhuangzian singing can also be found in other early Chinese texts.

First, singing is used to express an understanding of *ming*. For example, in the 'Yinlü' 音律 (The Musical Tunes) chapter of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (The Annals of Lü Buwei), it is recorded that when Kong Jia realizes that disaster may be the *ming* of his adopted son, he composes the song of Po Fu (破斧). Thus, the creation of a new song is based on the realization that a person's *ming* cannot be changed – even though that person is the son of the ruler.

> 夏后氏孔甲田于東陽萯山，天大風晦盲，孔甲迷惑，入于民室，主人方乳，或曰「后來是良日也，之子是必大吉」，或曰「不勝也，之子是必有殃」。后乃取其子以歸，曰：「以為余子，誰敢殃之？」子長成人，幕動坼橑，斧斫斬其足，遂為守門者。孔甲曰：「嗚呼！有疾，命矣夫！」乃作為破斧之歌，實始為東音。[226]
>
> Once, when Kong Jia – the sovereign of the house of Xia – was hunting at Mount Fu in Dongyang, there was a great wind and the sky darkened. Kong Jia, lost and confused, entered the house of a commoner. At that very moment the woman of the house was giving birth. Someone said, 'When the sovereign comes, it is a lucky

[226] See Xu Weijue 許維遹, *Lü Shi Chunqiu Ji Shi* 呂氏春秋集釋 (Collected Annotations of *The Annals of Lü Buwei*), Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2009, p. 139.

day. Your son is certain to enjoy extraordinarily good fortune.' Another person said, 'He is not equal to it. Your son is certain to suffer some catastrophe.' The sovereign thereupon seized the child and returned home with him, saying, 'If I make him my son, who will dare harm him?' When the boy grew to maturity, it happened that a tent shifted, causing its supporting spot to split, and a falling axe chopped off his foot. The boy was fit only to become a gatekeeper. Kong Jia cried, 'Alas! Suffering affliction is a matter of fate after all!' He then composed the song entitled, 'Grinding an Axe'. This marked the beginning of tunes in the eastern style.[227]

In the 'Li Ming' 力命 (Effort and Destiny) chapter of the *Liezi* (列子), although the term *ming* does not appear in the story, through the narratives we can still see that this story associates singing with an understanding of the limitations of human beings.

楊朱之友曰季梁。季梁得疾，十日大漸。其子環而泣之，請醫。季梁謂楊朱曰：「吾子不肖如此之甚，汝奚不為我歌以曉之？」楊朱歌曰：

「天其弗識(*tək-s)，
人胡能覺(*kˁruk-s)？
匪祐自天(*l̥ˁin {*l̥ˁi[n]})，
　弗孽由人(*niŋ)。
我乎汝(*naʔ)乎(*ɢˁa)！
　其弗知(*tre)乎(*ɢˁa)！
醫乎巫　(*C.mo {*C.m(r)[o]}) 乎(*ɢˁa)！
　其知之 (*tə)乎(*ɢˁa)？」[228]

其子弗曉終謁三醫。一曰矯氏，二曰俞氏，三曰盧氏，診其所疾。矯氏謂季梁曰：「汝寒溫不節，虛實失度，病由飢飽色欲。精慮煩散，非天非鬼，雖漸，可攻也。」季梁曰：「眾醫也，亟屏之！」俞氏曰：「女始則胎氣不足，乳湩有餘。病非一朝一夕之故，其所由來漸矣，弗可已也。」季梁曰：「良醫也，且食之！」盧氏曰：「汝疾不由天，亦不由人，亦不由鬼。稟生受形，既有制之者矣，亦有知之者矣，藥石其如汝何？」季梁曰：「神醫也，重貺遣之！」俄而季梁之疾自瘳。[229]

Yang Zhu had a friend called Ji Liang, who had an illness. In ten days' time his illness had greatly worsened. His sons stood weeping around him and requested physicians. Ji Liang said to Yang Zhu, 'The lack of talent of my sons is thus grave, why don't you make a song on my behalf so as to enlighten them?' Yang Zhu then sung the following words: 'If heaven cannot know about it, how could men understand it? It is no blessing from heaven, nor evil wrought by men. O! Me and

[227] John Knoblock and Jeffery Riegel, trans., *The Annals of Lü Buwei,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 160-161.
[228] The first two lines do not rhyme but the others rhyme. The reconstruction is in line with that of Schuessle.
[229] Yang Bojun 杨伯峻, *Liezi Ji Shi* 列子集釋 (Collected Annotations of *Liezi*), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979, pp. 214-216.

> you, how could we not understand that? O! Physicians and shamans, would they understand it?' His sons, however, did not understand, and finally called in three physicians. The first was master Jiao, the second Master Yü, and the third Master Lu. They diagnosed the reason for Ji Liang's illness. Master Jiao told Ji Liang that, 'The hot and cold elements in your body are not regulated, and the empty and full parts are disproportionate. Your illness is due to hunger, satiation, and sexual desire. Your energy and thinking are disturbed and scattered. It is not because of heaven, men, or those who are dead, and even though your illness has worsened, it can still be treated.' Ji Liang said, 'He is only a common physician. Quickly send him away.' Master Yü said, 'In the beginning you lacked fetal Qi, and were too freely fed with mother's milk. Your illness is not one that has developed within one day and one night; the causes that have led up to it are of gradual growth. The illness is unstoppable.' Ji Liang replied, 'This is a good physician. Quickly give him some food.' Lastly, Master Lu said, 'Your illness is neither because of heaven, nor because of men, nor because of the people who were dead. You were endowed with life and received your body. When you are thus limited and you understand that, what good would medicine and drugs do?' 'He is a divine physician indeed. Send him away laden with gifts.' It was not long before Ji Liang's illness recovered of its own accord.

When Ji Liang asked Yang Zhu to sing in order to enlighten his sons, the act of singing once again assumed the function of demonstrating proper attitudes and behaviours that one should adopt. What Yang Zhu sang to the sons of Ji Liang represents the idea that there are things that happen neither as a result of the intentions of heaven, nor the behaviour of human beings, and therefore it is not up to humans to change them. This story further presents this idea through the persona of the physician Master Lu. He once again points out that human beings have limitations (*zhi* 制). Understanding (*zhi* 知) human limitations and therefore not blaming others is what one should know. As suggested by the above two examples, the act of singing as a way of presenting certain understandings towards *ming* was widely employed in early China, and the concept had currency far beyond the text of the *Zhuangzi*.

Also, the function of singing as an audience-neutral form of communication is not limited to the *Zhuangzi.*[230] For example, the *Mencius* contains just such an example of audience-neutral singing:

> 孟子曰：「不仁者可與言哉？安其危而利其菑，樂其所以亡者。不仁而可與言，則何亡國敗家之有？有孺子歌曰：
>
> 『滄浪之水清(*tsʰeŋ) 兮，
> 可以濯我纓 (*ʔeŋ),
> 滄浪之水濁(*N-tˤrok)兮，
> 可以濯我足(*tsok {*[ts]ok})。』[231]
>
> 孔子曰：『小子聽之！清斯濯纓，濁斯濯足矣，自取之也。』夫人必自侮，然後人侮之；家必自毀，而後人毀之；國必自伐，而後人伐之。《太甲》曰：『天作孼，猶可違；自作孼，不可活。』此之謂也。][232]
>
> Mencius said, 'Is it really possible to speak with those who are not benevolent? Their perils they count as safety, their calamities they count as profitable, and they have pleasure in the things by which they perish. If it were possible to talk with them who so violate benevolence, how could we have such destruction of states and ruination of families?' There was a boy singing,
>
> 'When the water of the Cang Lang is clear,
> It does to wash the strings of my cap;
> When the water of the Cang Lang is muddy,
> It does to wash my feet.'
>
> Confucius said, 'Hear what he sings, my children. When clear, then he will wash his cap-strings; and when muddy, he will wash his feet with it. These different applications are brought by the water on itself.' A man can only despise himself first, and then others will despise him. A family can only destroy itself first, and then others will destroy it. A state can only smite itself first, and then others will smite it. This is illustrated in the passage of the Tai Jia, 'When Heaven sends down calamities, it is still possible to escape them. When we occasion the calamities ourselves, it is not possible any longer to live.'[233]

Admittedly, in terms of the presentation of the text, we are not sure whether Mencius

[230] This certainly does not mean that singing always requires audience neutrality.
[231] The phonetical reconstruction is from Jeffrey R. Tharsen's *Digital Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* Website. The main reconstruction follows that of Baxter-Sagart's Old Chinese. The phonetical reconstruction also works with Schuessler Axel's reconstruction. Schuessler reads *qing* 清(*tsheŋ or *k-seŋ ?) and *zu* 足 (*tsok).
[232] See Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763-1820)，*Mengzi Zheng Yi* 孟子正義 (Corrected Meanings of the *Mencius*). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009 [first edition 1987], pp.498-499.
[233] The English translation follows that of James Legge. Legge's transation in this passage, I believe, is better than that of D.C.Lau. For the translation of Legge, see James legge, trans, *The Works of Mencius*, 'Li Lou Shang', New York: Dover Publications, 1895, pp.298-299. D.C.Lau, see *Mencius*. London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp.80-81.

was quoting children's ballads, Confucius, or Tai Jia; or whether Mencius was quoting Confucius' comments on the boy singing and adding a line of Tai Jia; or whether the story was in fact compiled over time from all of those different elements.

However, the words sung by a little boy are still crucial for supporting audience-neutral singing. After Mencius made his point, the argument follows the song sung by the boy expressing and repeating Mencius's point, namely that if it is impossible to talk to a person who is not benevolent, the person is the main problem; the person does not make the conversation work. Just as the child sings, it is only because the water gets dirty that people have started to use it to wash their feet instead of washing a cap. That the song was presented as though it had been circulating among children, allows us to consider it to be an argument made not specifically towards a specific audience (a ruler or high officials) but an argument that carries a shared truth, especially among children.[234] And the following argument, built upon the song sung by the child, further proves that the target-free song is a useful argumentative tool for rhetoric. With Confucius's elaboration of what the song means, and how to further understand the song and broaden its application, we realize that the song carries a claim to shared truth agreed on by great masters. Moreover, Confucius's explanation also demonstrates that he is not making this argument himself, but is only transmitting what he has also heard from others, thus realizing and sanctioning its truth value.

In the 'Tian Rui' 天瑞 (Heaven's Auspicious Omen) chapter of the *Liezi* (列子), there is a description of Rong Qiqi (榮啟期) singing alone in a wild field: 'Confucius was travelling over a great mountain and saw Rong Qiqi roaming in the wilds of the Shu area.

234 Children's ballads containing indirect political criticism were often used to prognosticate the overthrowing of the political establishment. For a detailed discussion, see Hisaharu Kushida, *Chūgoku kodai no utai to yogen* 中国古代の「謡」と「予言」(Social Thought in Ancient China based on Yao and Prognostication), Chuangwenshe: Dongyang Xue Congshu 創文社東洋學叢書, 2002.

Rong Qiqi was clothed in a deerskin and girded with a rope. He played on a zither while singing' (孔子遊於太山，見榮啟期行乎郰之野，鹿裘帶索，鼓琴而歌).[235]

From the above discussion, we see that singing was often an audience-neutral act that was related to the understanding of *ming*. These features are combined within the *Zhuangzi*. In this chapter, we see the idea of being content with human limitations, especially with situations that are beyond human control, such as death, expressed through the performance of singing, an audience-neutral and target-free form of expression. Through singing, Zhuangzian masters not only demonstrated their willingness to accept situations beyond human control, but also their understanding of the role of contentment in dealing with situations beyond human control. In relation to singing to express certain ideas through performance, in the *Zhuangzi* when situations beyond human control are discussed, another performance also frequently appeared, namely laughter. In contrast to singing of one's willing acceptance and contentment towards human limitations, when Zhuangzian masters laughed in relation to situations beyond human control, this draws us to another important issue, namely how one laughs away the pre-existing mind-set and transforms what seems to be beyond human control into a form of action. This subject takes us to the last chapter.

[235] Yang Bojun 杨伯峻, *Liezi Ji Shi* (Collected Annotations of *Liezi*), Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979, pp.22-23.

Chapter Five: Laughing at Situations Beyond Human Control

I. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I discussed the idea of contentment in relation to filial piety and courage, as well as to the performance of singing. I argued that an attitude of contentment is prescribed through the use of the concepts of *xing* and *ming*. These concepts are not only associated with situations that are not fully under human control, but, more importantly, share a prescriptive dimension that provides people with a justification for adopting the attitude of *an*. Therefore, instead of suggesting that an individual should merely passively submit to what is beyond his or her control, the *Zhuangzi* suggests that we should not only *accept*, but also *willingly* accept human limitations, and accordingly influence one's behaviour. Such an attitude of contentment is therefore not an act result of inertia or submission; rather, it is one's deliberate choice to not struggle against a situation that one is given, while at the same time focusing on the cultivation of the mind. Therefore, it does not imply passive acceptance of hegemonic control or social evil.

However, in the previous chapter, one problem seems to have remained unsolved, namely the tension between the idea of 'willingly accepting uncontrollable situations' and taking 'the choice within one's control'. One might ask, if one should willingly accept things that are beyond human control (as suggested in the previous chapter), how could one still exercise self-control and act differently? Or, when we should be content with what is given and willingly accept it, does that not mean that we understand that we are governed by the objective situation and have become fatalistic? One tends to search for a justification for self-control after acknowledging situations that are beyond human control, and it is a fair question to ask how one might act differently under the premise of uncontrollable situations.

Such a critique is in accordance with the debate regarding 'freedom and fate' in the West. To be more specific, when dealing with the contradiction between uncontrollability

and human free choice, many scholars have argued that the two are incompatible. They argue that future events are decided by logical laws, metaphysical necessities, the existence and nature of God, or causal determination. They believe that if situations cannot happen otherwise and actions could not have been performed otherwise, then there is no way that one could have exercised freedom of choice.[236]

Despite the different ideas that have been attributed to freedom and fate in the literature, there is the following shared underlying logic: first, acknowledgement of the premise that because events are all inevitably unchangeable in life, the only space for self-control lies in concrete action. In other words, scholars generally treat the acknowledgement of uncontrollable events as a denial of self-control. They perceive a possibility for control only through concrete actions. They focus on how one could have acted differently.

The question of how one could act differently to exercise human freedom of choice makes sense within the philosophical framework of 'freedom and fate'. However, it may not be a fair question to ask in relation to the *Zhuangzi*. If we apply the frameworks developed in Western philosophies, the question we should ask in relation to the *Zhuangzi* is how one could exercise one's self-control by acting differently. However, as discussed in the first chapter, the idea of *ming* and uncontrollable situations in the *Zhuangzi* do not categorically refer to *every* situation in life. Rather, one *chooses* to attribute certain situations to the category of *ming*, such as the relationship between ruler and subordinate for example. Whether certain things are beyond one's control is therefore decided by one's own perception and resulting choice, instead of by logical deduction based on a fixed

[236] Baron Holbach, "The Illusion of Free Will," in D. Kolak and R. Martin, eds., *The Experience of Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 176-181; and Daniel Wegner, *The Illusion of Conscious Will*, MIT Press: Bradford Books, 2003. In philosophical discussions, many people have argued that determinism and free will are compatible. See, for example, A. J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity," in his *Philosophical Essays*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954, pp. 3-20; Ishtiyaque Haji, *Incompatibilism's Allure*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2009; and Ishtiyaque Haji, *Moral Appraisability*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

premise. Seen in this way, the *Zhuangzi* has already demonstrated the possibility for exercising one's self-control by placing the acts of recognition, attribution, and acceptance of things under the category of situations that are uncontrollable to the person involved. When one treats service to the ruler as a situation beyond human control, one serves with contentment and without struggle. When one does not think of service as being beyond human control, the subordinate has the option of leaving the official post and giving up political service. We should be aware of the fact that there is no textual evidence in the *Zhuangzi* to support the view that an effort must be made to 'solve' the problem of how to act otherwise. Instead, the *Zhuangzi* focuses on the attitude and state of mind involved in deciding whether or not the situation lies within one's control.[237] The Western logic of searching for freedom cannot be applied to the *Zhuangzi.*

Instead, this chapter shows that to the *Zhuangzi*, one's self-control is exercised by coping with uncontrollable situations, and the idea of self-control focuses on attitudes instead of actions. To be more specific, what is pondered in the *Zhuangzi* is, first, the question of whether certain things are indeed beyond control; and second, the issue of how to deal with a situation once it is acknowledged to be a situation that cannot be changed. Self-control is exercised by either rejecting what others believed to be uncontrollable and transforming it into a form of action, or by making full use of what is given and giving it its best value.

Moreover, we find that in the *Zhuangzi* one's self-control is often related to, and expressed through, laughter. How does laughter embody one's self-control? Why the focus

[237] Note here that in the 'Qiushui' 秋水 (Autumn Floods) chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, there is a famous example of Zhuangzi fishing along the river Pu, where he clearly has no problem with denying service to the ruler of Chu, and in his answer to the two grandees gives a whole narrative about the attitude underlying this choice, namely he does not want to be *burdened* by government and shorten his life accordingly. See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 603-605.

on laughter in the first place? How does laughter differ from other kinds of reactions in the face of unsolvable and unchangeable situations?

II. Laughter in the *Zhuangzi*

This chapter will be divided into the following parts. First, it lays out the types and functions of laughter in the *Zhuangzi* to examine how 'laughing at situations beyond control' both differs from and resembles other kinds of laughter. Second, through analysing three different stories in the chapters 'Da Zongshi' 大宗師, 'Shan Mu' 山木, and 'Rang Wang' 讓王, this chapter shows how laughter embodies one's self-control towards situations beyond human control from different aspects. Lastly, this chapter summarizes and answers the question of why the *Zhuangzi* advocates laughter when dealing with situations beyond human control. Through the unique relationship between laughter and uncontrollable situations in the *Zhuangzi*, it is shown how one can laugh away what is beyond control and thus limiting us; how we can transform what is beyond human control into a form of choice; how one can make full of use of a given situation and even laugh at it.

Let us now first look at the practice and functions of laughter in the *Zhuangzi.*

Laughter has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, especially in relation to humour. Most scholars tend to focus on the question of why we laugh when we are tickled or hear a joke, namely what *causes* laughter? The theories advanced to answer this question can be divided into the following three groups. First, there is the superiority theory, which argues that laughter is a form of derision, with a person always laughing at others in order to assert superiority over them.[238] Second is the incongruity theory, which treats laughter as

[238] Roger Scruton, "Laughter," in John Morreal, ed., *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, pp. 156-171.

a response to illogical things and situations that violate expectations.[239] The third is the relief theory, which argues that laughter is a physical sign of the release of nervous tension.[240]

The study of laughter also goes beyond theories of humour. Apart from asking what causes laughter and attempting to theorize it, there are also studies that discuss the history of laughter itself, in particular with regard to ancient Greece and Rome.[241] Moreover, the relationship among laughter, freedom, and tragedy is regularly emphasized.[242] These works have provided us with more possibilities to interpret the meaning of laughter in early Chinese texts under the premise that we do not distort the meaning of the texts itself. [243]

With regard to laughter in early China, Harbsmeier was probably the first to pay attention to this subject with a focus on humour.[244] A recent edited volume on laughter in Eastern and Western philosophies has taken our understanding of laughter to a new level by pointing out different aspects of laughter, although still with a focus on humour.[245] However, laughter in the *Zhuangzi* is not only about humour.

How do I define laughter and differentiate it from humour? The idea of humour in its basic sense refers to a type of behaviour that consciously arouses amusement for its own sake, normally manifested through practices such joking, bantering, telling anecdotes, and

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[239] Thomas Schultz, "A Cognitive—Developmental Analysis of Humor," in Tony Chapman and Hugh Foot, eds., *Humor and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications*, New York: Wiley, 1976, pp. 12-13; and Jerry Suls, "A Two-Stage Model for the Appreciation of Jokes and Cartoons: An Information-Processing Analysis," in Jeffrey Goldstein and Paul McGhee, eds., *The Psychology of Humor*, Academic Press, 1972, pp. 81-99.

[240] Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten*), James Strachey, trans., New York: Penguin, 1905 [1974].

[241] See Mary Beard, *Laughter in ancient Rome, on joking, tickling and cracking up*. London: University of California Press, 2015, pp. 29-36. Stephen Halliwell, *Greek Laughter, A study of cultural psychology from Homer to early Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2008.

[242] Horace Meyer Kallen, *Liberty, Laughter and Tears, Reflections on the Relations of Comedy and Tragedy to Human Freedom*, DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968; Guan Ziyin 關子尹, *Saying or Silence with No Constancy – Searching For Philosophical Reflections through Orientations* 語默無常—尋找定向中的哲學反思, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2009, pp. 342-359.

[243] In this chapter, I will also show how the *Zhuangzi* relates a kind of self-control with laughter, which is different from other Western discussions of laughter.

[244] Christoph Harbsmeier, "Humor in Ancient Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 39, No.3, (1989): 289-310. See also his "Confucius Ridens: Humor in the *Analects*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1990): 131-161.

[245] Hans-Georg Moeller and Günter Wohlfart, eds., *Laughter in Eastern and Western Philosophies: Proceedings of the Académie du Midi*, Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2010.

engaging in mimicry.[246] The study of humour refers to the clarification of this concept *per se*. However, this is not the intention in this chapter; instead, the aim is to reveal the social, political, and ethical concerns that laughter generates and is generated by.[247] In this chapter, I will limit my focus to the use of the key term *xiao* 笑 ('laughter') in the *Zhuangzi*. We can see that it not only refers to vocal-facial laughter ('face the sky and laugh long' 仰天長笑),[248] but also to facial smiling, as well as to metonymic laughter, which does not relate to the manifestation of bodily signs. One can be laughed at purely conceptually, without any outward manifestation. ('I would have been laughed at for a long time by the masters of the great methods' 吾長見笑於大方之家).[249] I use the above three different types of laughter to come to a basic framing of laughter that works well in the context of this chapter: laughter can be seen as a way to express and transform states of mind when faced with political, ethical, personal, and social concerns.

The term *xiao* 笑 (laughter) in the *Zhuangzi* frequently results from great confidence, or is used to show disdain and contempt. In other words, one laughs at someone in order to demonstrate superiority. In the story 'Xiaoyao You' (逍遙游), the cicada (蜩) and dove (學鳩) laughed at (*xiao*) Peng's (鵬) ambition to rise 90,000 li (里) and make for the south (奚以之九萬里而南為). The cicada and dove did not believe that one could fly at such a height and for such a long distance. They found Peng's argument absurd. Therefore, when they heard about Peng's ambition to fly towards the south, they laughed contemptuously at Peng for saying something ridiculous. Their contempt, in part, stemmed from their self-belief and self-confidence. Due to their own physical and perspectival limitations, they could only

[246] See Stephen Halliwell, *Greek Laughter, A study of cultural psychology from Homer to early Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 6-8.
[247] The differentiation between humour and laughter does not exclude an analysis of humorous elements within different stories or of the jokes that appear throughout the texts of the *Zhuangzi*.
[248] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 597.
[249] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 560.

understand what was within their own world, deriving confidence from their 'mastery' of this small area. Therefore, what they believed to be ridiculous was a result of their arrogance, built on their own world views.[250]

A second use of laughter is as a weapon to challenge power, authority, and mainstream social values. In the chapter 'Rang Wang' 讓王 (Giving Away a Throne), a story presents Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi (叔齊) meeting with King Wu (武) to enter into a covenant (*meng* 盟). The king, who was believed to possess the Dao, offered them wealth and rank only for their service, upon which they looked at each other, laughed, and said (相視而笑曰):

> 「嘻！異哉！此非吾所謂道也。昔者神農之有天下也，時祀盡敬而不祈喜；其於人也，忠信盡治而無求焉。樂與政為政，樂與治為治，不以人之壞自成也，不以人之卑自高也，不以遭時自利也。今周見殷之亂而遽為政，上謀而下行貨，阻兵而保威，割牲而盟以為信，揚行以說眾，殺伐以要利，是推亂以易暴也。吾聞古之士遭治世不避其任，遇亂世不為苟存。今天下闇，周德衰，其並乎周以塗吾身也，不如避之以絜吾行。」 [251]
>
> 'Haha – how peculiar! This is certainly not what we would call the Way! In ancient times, when Shen Nong held possession of the state, he performed the seasonal sacrifices with the utmost reverence, but he did not pray for blessings. In his dealings with men, he was loyal and trustworthy and observed perfect order, but he did not seek anything from them. He delighted in ruling for the sake of ruling, he delighted in bringing order for the sake of order. He did not use other men's failures to bring about his own success; he did not use other men's degradation to lift himself up. Just because he happened along at a lucky time, he did not try to turn it to his own profit. Now the Zhou, observing that the Yin has fallen into disorder, suddenly makes a show of its rule, honouring those who know how to scheme, handing out bribes, relying on weapons to maintain its might, making blood oath for trust,[252] lauding its achievements in order to seize gain – this is

[250] Paul D'Ambrosio points out that the figure of Zhuangzi himself does not laugh in this pompous or derogatory manner. See "From Foolish Laughter to Foolish Laughter: Zhuangzi's Perspectivism Leads to Laughter, in Hans-Georg Moeller and Günter Wohlfart, eds., *Laughter in Eastern and Western Philosophies: Proceedings of the Académie du Midi*, Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2010, pp. 49-62.

[251] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 980-981. The English translations have been adapted from those of Burton Watson and Angus Graham. See Angus C. Graham, trans., *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu*, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1981; and Burton Watson, trans., *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

[252] For a discussion of blood convenant in Chinese society, see Barend Ter Haar, *The Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads*, Leiden: Brill, 1998, pp.151-180.

> simply to push aside disorder and replace it with violence! We have heard that the gentlemen of old, if they happened upon a well-ordered age, did not run away from public office; but if they encountered an age of disorder, they did not try to hold on to office at any cost. Now the world is in darkness and the virtue of the Zhou in decline. Rather than remain side by side with the Zhou and defile our bodies, it would be better to run away and thus protect the purity of our conduct!'

First, we need to pay attention to the setting wherein laughter is generated. King Wu's Minister, the Duke of Zhou, is present to offer official status from the king. In other words, it describes an event where power is exercised, when Bo Yi and Shu Qi were given official status under the rule of King Wu. Second, it is also an event where the values of the ruler are presented. King Wu shows his possession and understanding of the Dao by inviting Bo Yi and Shu Qi, and bestowing wealth and social status upon them so as to show respect. Third, it is a site of ritual. Under these circumstances, Bo Yi and Shu Qi laughed, both facially and vocally *xi* 嘻 (haha). Did they intend to laugh directly at the Duke of Zhou? Because the comment quoted above shows no accusation or sarcasm towards the Duke, I do not think this be a likely explanation. Did they try to arouse humour? There is also no indication that Bo Yi and Shu Qi were intending to arouse amusement. How, then, should we understand their laughter?

In this official and public context, we see that laughter is used as a weapon to show strong disagreement with social values, the practice of ritual, and the idea of ruling by power. It is used as a weapon by Bo Yi and Shu Qi to show their disagreement with, and contempt of, those in power, who rule for the sake of wealth and status, use rituals to ask for blessings instead of performing them with proper respect, and who abuse the misfortune of others for their own profit. Through laughter, the power of the ruler is subverted, contempt is shown, and the reverent atmosphere is broken, even the honour of receiving wealth and status are laughed away. With their laughter, the values that ought to underlie both the power of the ruler and the rituals of the state are shown to be lacking.

The third type of laughter is used to show inclusion and exclusion. This can be seen in the case of the chapter 'Da Zongshi' 大宗師 (The Great and Venerable Teacher):

> 子桑戶、孟子反、子琴張三人相與友，曰：「孰能相與於無相與，相為於無相為？孰能登天遊霧，撓挑無極，相忘以生，無所終窮？」三人相視而笑，莫逆於心，遂相與友。莫然有閒，而子桑戶死，未葬。孔子聞之，使子貢往侍事焉。或編曲，或鼓琴，相和而歌曰：「嗟來桑戶乎！嗟來桑戶乎！而已反其真，而我猶為人猗！」子貢趨而進曰：「敢問臨尸而歌，禮乎？」二人相視而笑，曰：「是惡知禮意！」…[253]
>
> Master Sang Hu, Mengzi Fan, and Master Qin Zhang made friends with one another, saying, 'Who can join with others without joining with others? Who can do with others without doing with others? Who can climb up to heaven and wander in the mists, roam the infinite, and forget life forever and forever?' The three men looked at each other and smiled. They laughed with each other, found no disagreement in their hearts and so they became friends. After some time had passed without event, Master Sang Hu died. He had not yet been buried when Confucius, hearing of his death, sent Zi Gong to assist at the funeral. When Zi Gong arrived, he found one of the dead man's friends weaving frames for silkworms, while the other strummed a zither. Joining their voices, they sang this song: Ah, Sang Hu, Ah, Sang Hu, You have gone back to your true form, while we remain as men, O! Zi Gong hastened forward and said, 'May I be so bold as to ask what sort of ceremony this is – singing in the very presence of the corpse?' The two men looked at each other and laughed. 'What does this man know of the meaning of ceremony!' …

In the passage quoted above, we see two appearances of laughter. The first example may simply show the idea of mutual understanding. This is correct, but not complete. If we look at the two examples together, we find that laughter here is a strong mechanism for identification and exclusion in terms of ethical values. The first act of laughter united those who found friendship in shared ethical values, values that to other people might have appeared absurd and irrelevant. To the average reader, I assume, hearing of the idea to 'Climb up to heaven and wander in the mists, roam the infinite, and forget life forever and forever' is not particularly humorous or laugh inducing. However, because the three laugh with one another, their shared values and understanding are affirmed. If anyone is also able

[253] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 269-271.

to laugh as the three friends did, it means that person too shares the same values as the three masters, and therefore laughter becomes an act of inclusion and identification.

The second instance also uses laughter to indicate shared values. More importantly, it presents an act of exclusion. When Zi Gong expresses strong disagreement about their singing at a ceremony for a recently deceased best friend, he accuses them of wrongdoing. Confronted with Zi Gong's accusation of ritual impropriety, the two remaining friends laughed. With this laughter, they isolate Zi Gong as the one who does not share their values, and present him to the audience as one who does not understand the fundamental value of the Dao. With laughter, one can include and identify those who share the same values, and as such, exclude others who do not.

Fourth, laugher allows one to keep a distance from certain emotions and feelings and therefore leads to clear thinking. In the chapter 'Tiandi' 天地 (Heaven and Earth), a gardener laughs at Zi Gong (子貢). When Zi Gong saw the gardener, he found him to be inefficient, and therefore suggested that the gardener use a contrivance called *gao* (槔) (a gardening tool). Faced with Zi Gong's 'expert' advice, the gardener flushed with anger, before laughing and expressing his ideas (為圃者忿然作色而笑曰),

> 吾聞之吾師：『有機械者必有機事，有機事者必有機心。』機心存於胸中，則純白不備；純白不備，則神生不定；神生不定者，道之所不載也。吾非不知，羞而不為也。」[254]
> I have heard from my teacher that, where there are ingenious contrivances, there are sure to be subtle doings; and that, where there are subtle doings, there is sure to be a scheming mind. But, when there is a scheming mind in the breast, its pure simplicity is impaired. When this pure simplicity is impaired, the spirit becomes unsettled, and the unsettled spirit is not the proper residence of the Dao. It is not that I do not know (the contrivance which you mention), but I should be ashamed to use it.

[254] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 438-439.

How should we understand this kind of laughter immediately after strong anger? Such laughter can be understood from different perspectives.[255] Undoubtedly, the gardener's reply itself is quite witty. Through playing on the multiple meanings of *ji* 機, a pun reinforced through assonance, the gardener equates the use of a contrivance with subtle doings and a scheming mind, directed of course at Zi Gong himself: '有機(*kəj)械(*kˁrək-s)者必有機(*kəj)事(*m-s-rəʔ-s)，有機事者必有機(*kəj)心(*səm.)'[256] (I have heard from my teacher that, where there are ingenious contrivances, there are sure to be subtle doings; and that, where there are subtle doings, there is sure to be a scheming mind). Laughter is a signifier for the gardener's use of humorous language to ridicule both Zi gong and his suggestion.

Also, the gardener is able to distance himself from the angry emotions aroused by Zi Gong. Instead, he comes up with a clear argument that shows that it is in fact Zi Gong who does not possess the Dao. When laughter appears, the gardener dispels the anger towards a person like Zi Gong, who because of his higher position in society and self-asserted authority presumes himself to be in a position to lecture anyone, whether or not he

[255] The function of laughter, mentioned previously, can also be justified within this story. For example, the act of laughing signals a transformation of authority and power. Originally, as a disciple of Confucius, Zi Gong is supposed to be the one who understands the Dao – especially in comparison with a common gardener. Regardless of Zi Gong's social status, it is clear that the gardener is presumed to know more about growing plants. Zi Gong's attempt to teach a professional how to do a better job is laughed away by the gardener and exposed for its silliness, but what is more, the gardener takes on the role of an expert on the Dao and argues that Zi Gong's clever method in fact leads one away from the Dao. As such, authority and expertise are reversed and put back, the text suggests, in its proper place. Laughter here presents a subversion of social status and moral authority. The simple gardener is shown to be the true possessor of the Dao, practitioner of practical knowledge, and worthy of our respect. Also, it functions as inclusion. The change of atmosphere marked by laughter allows readers to connect themselves with the story. When the gardener laughs, it includes the laughing readers who understand the silliness of Zi Gong and the clever and humorous speeches of the gardener. Readers can identify themselves with the values of the gardener, the wit of the puns, and the clever role reversal. It sets them apart from those who do not understand the laughter of the gardener and the values that this story tries to convey. Appreciative readers are brought together in a reading community, while excluding others.

[256] The reconstruction of rhymes follows that of Baxter-Sagart, 2011. See http://edoc.uchicago.edu/edoc2013/digitaledoc_linearformat.php

actually has a clue about gardening. After laughing, the gardener diverts himself from his anger, speaks calmly, and presents his ideas in a constructive manner.

In this story, we may say that laughter is necessary for the gardener not only for the sake of delivering arguments clearly, but also because of the difference in social status between him and Zi Gong. As with the laughter of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, the laughter of the gardener shows how confrontations between people of different social and political status can be mediated. Laughter therefore marks the difference in hierarchy and facilitates a conversation between people of different social status. Through laughter and wit, people of lower status are able to express subversive opinions without obviously violating social protocol, or offending those in power and therefore endangering their life. Laughter is a weapon to challenge power without direct confrontation. Laughter also helps to change the atmosphere and keeps the conversation moving without conforming to authority. In the *Zhuangzi*, the laughter of people from a lower social status allows them to express counter opinions in a humorous and acceptable way without harming themselves.

To conclude, in the *Zhuangzi* we can see how laughter operates beyond humour and is practised in ethical, political, and social spheres of life for a variety of reasons instead of merely for arousing amusement. From the perspective of readership, laughter is used to draw the readers' attention and include them into a group of those who share the same values. It signals a change of atmosphere and allows readers to connect with the story, laugh along, and identify themselves with the shared values conveyed in the story. Laughter also serves a rhetorical function, which facilitates interactions between people of different social status. It is used as a non-verbal weapon to express anger and to challenge power and the values that it represents.

Apart from the functions of laughter mentioned above, most importantly, we find that many examples of laughter in the *Zhuangzi* are closely related to one particular type of

situation, namely 'situations beyond human control'. These are either situations that are in fact uncontrollable, or cases that are believed to be uncontrollable because of a fixed mindset. In all cases, laughter indicates an ability to transform situations and how they are perceived. It allows one to laugh away what is beyond human control and redirect our attention to what *can* be controlled, thereby transforming one's mindset and directing it towards a new way of thinking. Laughter is therefore related to self-control either by being adaptive and making use of what is given, or by transforming what others believe to be uncontrollable into a form of choice. In other words, laughter embodies the overcoming of limitations and presents one's deliberate choices and actions. In the following part, I show how and why laugher embodies one's self-control from different dimensions.

III. Laughter and Self-Control

When taking the discussion of laugher beyond humour, Galvany made an important contribution regarding the relationship among laughter, death, and friendship in the *Zhuangzi*, arguing that 'laughter should be interpreted as a mechanism that shatters the conventional, rigid, and cloying routines of Confucian ritual courtesy'.[257] This chapter will also discuss passages closely related to death, but divert attention to the relationship between laughter and situations beyond human control. Galvany argued that laughter shows one's spontaneous and irrepressible expression, which is free from Confucian moral codes.[258] While this may be an insightful point, Galvany does not solve the problem of why and how laughter can be used to free oneself from those rules. This chapter answers this question by arguing that laughter embodies one's self-control. One can laugh because one is confident

[257] Albert Galvany, "Distorting the rule of seriousness: laughter, death and friendship in the Zhuangzi," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2009): 49-59.
[258] Albert Galvany, "Distorting the rule of seriousness: laughter, death and friendship in the Zhuangzi," 53.

that one has transformed what is beyond control into something under one's control.[259] Also, such laughter is not irrepressible but rather requires cultivation. It is only spontaneous when one has obtained such an ability. In what follows, I will use three examples to show how laughter embodies self-control from different aspects.

(1) Adaptive Control towards Given Situations

First, let us look the chapter 'Da Zongshi' 大宗師 (The Great and Venerable Teacher). The story begins with a description of four people who share the same values and who decide to become friends. When they realize that they can be friends, they laugh with each other.

> 子祀、子輿、子犁、子來四人相與語曰：「孰能以無為首，以生為脊，以死為尻，孰知生死存亡之一體者，吾與之友矣。」四人相視而笑，莫逆於心，遂相與為友。[260]
> Master Si, Master Yu, Master Li, and Master Lai were all four talking together. 'Who can look upon nonbeing as his head, on life as his back, and on death as his rump? Who knows that life and death, existence and annihilation, are all forming one body? I will be his friend!' The four men looked at each other and laughed. There was no disagreement in their minds and so the four of them became friends.

One may argue that laughter here is only a sign of mutual understanding. However, it is still worth asking why laughter and not some other form of expression was chosen to convey this mutual understanding. Also, one may treat such laughter as a sign of humour, since what they agree upon is humorous. When the text says that they agree to treat nonbeing as the head, and even treat death as the rump, the expressions are bizarre and beyond normal understanding and therefore arouse humour. This is true. However, we should not neglect the point that they are also discussing a shared idea that not everyone can understand (*zhi*

[259] By which we can see how laugher is not spontanesou carefree, and uncotrollalbe, namely how one does not burst out into laughter, but plan, reason and judge laughter.
[260] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 258-263.

知) and that represents the ability (*neng* 能) to treat one's life and death as parts of one's own body. It is worth asking how laugher is related to their ideas of life and death, namely 'life and death, existence, and annihilation all form one body' (知生死存亡之一體). In the following passages, the text further explains how they understand the idea of 'forming one body' and why such a shared value would allow them to laugh.

> 俄而子輿有病，子祀往問之。曰：「偉哉！夫造物者，將以予為此拘拘也！曲僂發背，上有五管，頤隱於齊，肩高於頂，句贅指天。」陰陽之氣有沴，其心閒而無事，跰足而鑑於井，曰：「嗟乎！夫造物者，又將以予為此拘拘也！」子祀曰：「汝惡之乎？」曰：「亡，予何惡！浸假而化予之左臂以為雞，予因以求時夜；浸假而化予之右臂以為彈，予因以求鴞炙；浸假而化予之尻以為輪，以神為馬，予因以乘之，豈更駕哉！且夫得者時也，失者順也，安時而處順，哀樂不能入也。此古之所謂縣解也，而不能自解者，物有結之。且夫物不勝天久矣，吾又何惡焉？」[261]
>
> Suddenly, Master Yu fell ill. Master Si went to ask how he was. 'Amazing,' said Master Yu. 'The Creator is making me all crooked like this! My back sticks up like a hunchback and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my pigtail points at the sky. It must be some dislocation of the yin and yang!' Yet his mind is calm and unconcerned. Dragging himself haltingly to the well, he looked at his reflection and said, 'My, my! So the Creator is making me all crooked like this!' 'Do you resent it?' asked Master Si. 'No, what would I resent? If the process continues, perhaps in time he'll transform my left arm into a rooster. In that case I'll keep watch on the night. Or perhaps in time he'll transform my right arm into a crossbow pellet and I'll shoot down an owl for roasting. Or perhaps in time he'll transform my buttocks into cartwheels. Then, with my spirit for a horse, I'll climb up and go for a ride. What need will I ever have for a carriage again? I received things because the time had come; I will lose them because of the course of things. Be content with this time and live with this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called the "freeing of the bind". There are those who cannot free themselves, because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever win against Heaven – that's the way it's always been. What would I have to resent?'

The text further explains 'seeing life and death as forming the body' through the idea of 'being content with the times and being at ease with the course of things' (安時而處順).

[261] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 258-263.

This explains why the four masters looked at each other with laughter when thinking of their shared values. When people can be content with what is given, as Master Yu could accept his deformed body, one will be free from resentment – a feeling that one would normally have in this type of situation (*wu* 惡). He knows his body is crooked but is not upset about it. Instead, his mind is 'calm and unconcerned' (閒而無事) without being emotionally influenced due to preferences or resentment, From this, the text tells us that Master Yu agrees to laugh and therefore holds no resentment, since when one is not concerned by a deformed body, nor has a preference about what it should be, but accepts the fact as it, one can laugh away the changes that happen to the body and transform what one might be resentful into something that one can be at ease and content with. When one laughs, it breaks through the negative atmosphere and opens up a new perspective to look at a given situation.

Second, the idea of 'living with the course of things' (*chu shun* 處順) requires one to be adaptive and take the given situation under one's control.[262] The way that Master Yu lives with the changes is to make full use of what was given and to be adaptive towards it. He cultivates his new abilities based on what is given. If his arm is transformed into a rooster, he does not reject it but instead accepts it as a part of his body, and adapts in order to make full use of it. When one can live with the course of things and make full use of a given situation, one will no longer be bothered or limited by an uncontrollable fact of life. Instead, one can laugh, as one is capable of transforming what is given into something that is under one's own control. Here, laughter shows a certain level of confidence in self-control through adaptation.

From this part, we see that the laughter of these four friends shows one's adaptive control towards given situations. The occurrence of a certain situation cannot be changed.

[262] For a more detailed analysis of the attitude of adaptation in the *Zhuangzi*, see also Mercedes Valmisa, "Beyond Our Control? Two Responses to Uncertainty and Fate in early China," in Livia Kohn, ed., *New Vision of the Zhuangzi*, St. Petersburg, Florida: Three Pines Press, 2015, pp. 1-23.

One's response to it and the attitude one adopts to deal with it is, however, well within one's control. When one laughs towards the unchangeable case, it means one is not holding resentment and one's mind is not unsettled. Moreover, one laughs away the sorrow and allows for a new perspective different from resentment. When one laughs, one will no longer be limited by outer things; instead, one takes control through actively dealing with the given situation.

The following passage shows that active laughter for an adaptive attitude can also be employed against fixed social ritual. Adaptive laughter as an active performance is contrasted with the fixed ritual code of wailing (*qi* 泣) and jumping (*yong* 踊) in the coming death of Zi Lai (子來).

> 俄而子來有病，喘喘然將死，其妻子環而泣之。子犁往問之曰：「叱！避！無怛化！」倚其戶與之語曰：「偉哉造物！又將奚以汝為？將奚以汝適？以汝為鼠肝乎？以汝為蟲臂乎？」子來曰：「父母於子，東西南北，唯命之從。陰陽於人，不翅於父母，彼近吾死而我不聽，我則悍矣，彼何罪焉！夫大塊載我以形，勞我以生，佚我以老，息我以死。故善吾生者，乃所以善吾死也。[263]
>
> Suddenly Master Lai grew ill. He was gasping and about to die. His wife and children gathered around and wailed. Master Li, who had come to ask how he was, said, 'Shoo! Get back! Don't fear for the transformation!' Then he leaned against the doorway and spoke to Master Lai. 'How marvellous the Creator is! What is he going to make of you next? Where is he going to send you? Will he make you into a rat's liver? Will he make you into a bug's arm?' Master Lai said, 'A child, obeying his father and mother, goes wherever he is told, east or west, south or north. And the yin and yang – how much more are they to a man than father or mother! Now that they have brought me to the verge of death, if I should refuse to obey them, how perverse I would be! What fault is it of theirs? The Great Clod burdens me with form, labours me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death. So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death.'

[263] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 258-263.

This passage begins with the wailing (*qi* 泣) of Master Lai's wife.[264] When Master Lai was seriously ill and about to die, his wife showed great sadness, which implies a desire for life and sadness about death. It shows that when one has certain fixed desires, one cannot live with the given situation, and therefore when encountering something undesirable, one certainly cannot laugh about it, but reside in sorrow instead. When one is haunted by negative emotions, one will not be able to react to what is happening. Without acceptance, one certainly cannot face the situation and deal with it. This is why the text points out that the action of wailing is what Master Lai and Master Yu oppose. To them, following the changes made by the Creator is the same as following the orders of one's parents. What one should do is accept the transformation (*hua* 化) without fear (*dan* 怛). These two friends can accept and follow the transformation; as friends therefore, they share in laughter.

Laughter is also a way to act against fixed social codes. Albert Galvany pointed out that wailing is criticized by the *Zhuangzi*. Since wailing can be interpreted as a codified gesture that occupied a central position in funerary rites in early China, the *Zhuangzi* disagreed with its performative dimension, given its close association to ritual. Such an argument is further supported by the argument against *yong yue* (踊躍).[265] Traditionally, *yong* has been seen as a fixed ritual performance for a funeral service. *Ku*, *qi*, and *yong* are frequently used together to express a ritualized performance for a funeral service. The performance of jumping and beating the heart was strictly regulated according one's social status, time, and venue.[266]

[264] See Albert Galvany, "Death and Ritual Wailing in Early China: Around the Funeral of Lao Dan," *Asia Major*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2012): 15-42.
[265] We can also read the argument against *yong yue* as a way of arguing against fixed rituals, since *yong* as an action is also used for the funeral service.
[266] Yang Hua 楊華, *Xin Chutu Jianbo yu Lizhi Yanjiu* 新出土簡帛與禮制研究 (Studies of Ritual through Newly Excavated Manuscripts), Taipei: Taiwan guji chubanshe, 2007, pp. 258-281.

From the previous discussion, we see that laughter can express the idea of 'being content with the times and living with the order'. It shows that one can accept and adapt to any given situation. When one can laugh about changes in life, one will neither resent the unusual and cry about loss, nor follow the fixed ritual or moral codes to act, but only laugh at them. Accordingly, one will live with the changes and take the given situation under control by adapting to the uncontrollable situation and making full use of it. When one cannot live with the given situation but sticks to fixed values, one can no longer laugh since one will cry over one's loss and resent the undesirable occurrence. Accordingly, one's mind cannot be calm and at ease, since one will constantly be thinking of fighting the uncontrollable situation. When emotions and desires are influenced by fixed values, one becomes unsettled and can no longer laugh away problems, not to mention take things under control. In a word, from this story, we see how laughter embodies an attitude of acceptance and self-control. Such self-control is associated with situations that are in fact unchangeable. Therefore, such self-control is represented as adaptive. It means that one makes full use of what is given and transforms what cannot be changed into something useful. The relationship between laughter and self-control can be further analysed in the following stories from a different perspective.

(2) Claiming Self-Control by Rejecting its Uncontrollability

Let us now turn to the story in the chapter 'Rang Wang' 讓王 (Giving Away a Throne). In this story, we can see how the *Zhuangzi* transforms what others believe to be an uncontrollable situation into a form of choice that is within one's control, and how such an idea is expressed in association with laughter.

> 子列子窮，容貌有飢色。客有言之於鄭子陽者曰：「列御寇，蓋有道之士也，居君之國而窮，君無乃為不好士乎？」鄭子陽即令官遺之粟。子列子

> 見使者，再拜而辭。使者去，子列子入，其妻望之而拊心曰：「妾聞為有道者之妻子，皆得佚樂，今有飢色。君過而遺先生食，先生不受，豈不命邪！」子列子笑謂之曰：「君非自知我也。以人之言而遺我粟。至其罪我也，又且以人之言。此吾所以不受也。」其卒，民果作難而殺子陽。[267]
> Master Liezi was living in poverty and his face had a hungry look. A visitor mentioned this to Zi Yang, the prime minister of Zheng, saying, 'Lie Yukou appears to be a gentleman who has attained the Way. Here he is living in your state, and in utter poverty! It would almost seem that you have no fondness for such gentlemen, does it not?' Zi Yang immediately ordered his officials to dispatch a gift of grain. Master Liezi received the messenger, bowed twice, and refused the gift. When the messenger had left and Master Liezi had gone back into his house, his wife, filled with bitterness, beat her breast and said, 'I have heard that the wives and children of men who have attained the Way all live in ease and happiness – but here we are with our hungry looks! His Excellency, realizing his error, has sent you something to eat, but you refused to accept it – I suppose this is what they call *ming*!' Master Liezi laughed and said, 'His Excellency does not know me personally – he sent me the grain simply because of what someone had told him. And someday he could just as well condemn me to punishment, again simply because of what someone told him. That's why I refused to accept.' In the end it did come about that people rebelled and put Zi Yang to death.

For Liezi's wife, her marriage to the only possessor of the Dao who refuses food and suffers hunger is an uncontrollable situation (*ming* 命). This is because her impoverished situation was different from all others who had attained the Dao. The adverb *jie* (皆) (in principle) means that the wife's complain was based on a general principle. Such a claim is presented as shared knowledge, since the claim is what she had heard (*wen* 聞) from other people. Moreover, when her husband rejected the offer from Zi Yang (子陽), the wife believes she has lost her chance to be relieved from hunger. Therefore, Liezi's wife believes their impoverished situation cannot be changed, since their seemingly last chance was gone, and it is unexplainable, since only they are different from most of the other possessors of the Dao, who live in happiness. Liezi's wife looks at this uncontrollable situation with desperation and sadness. When she questions Liezi, she 'beats her breast' (*fuxin* 拊心). This

[267] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 972-973.

is because they are both suffering greatly from hunger and will probably die soon unless they get more food. More importantly, at this point she saw Liezi rejecting the last chance that could have allowed them to survive. The possibility of their dying could be seen from the description, 'their faces had a hungry look' (容貌有飢色[268]).[269]

When confronted with his wife's complaint and worry, Liezi laughed – laughter in the face of hunger and death, and other people's pains. How can we understand it? Liezi explains that 'His Excellency does not know me personally – he sent me the grain simply because of what someone had told him. And someday he could just as well condemn me to punishment, again simply because of what someone told him. That's why I refused to accept' (君非自知我也。以人之言而遺我粟，至其罪我也，又且以人之言。此吾所以不受也).[270] In other words, he treats their exceptional hunger and impoverishment as a situation that was chosen with reasonable thought. Liezi believes that if Zi Yang only knows about him from hearsay, then someday he will also be punished or killed by him, again because of hearsay. Liezi argued that his rejection of Zi Yang's offer was a reasonable and deliberate choice. In this sense, their long-lasting situation of impoverishment was neither uncontrollable (since it was chosen by Liezi himself), nor unexplainable (since he had valid

[268] We know from other texts that when one's hunger can clearly been seen from the face (*ji se* 飢色), the situation is extreme and people are approaching death. For example, in the *Mencius*, we see the following description: 'People have the look of hunger, and on the wilds there are those who have died of famine' (民有飢色，野有餓莩). The hungry face is related to mass starvation. In the *Xunzi*, we see that a hungry look appears when one has starved for seven days. 'Confucius was going south to the Chu area and, stuck between Chen and Cai, for seven days he did not eat anything or drink anything. All of his disciples had hungry looks' (孔子南適楚，厄於陳蔡之間，七日不火食，藜羹不糝，弟子皆有飢色). Due to their uncommonly desperate situation and the loss of their last hope, Liezi's wife regards such an uncontrollable situation with bitterness. See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi Jijie* 荀子集解 (Compilation of Annotations on the *Xunzi*), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010 [first edition, 1988], p. 526.

[269] Cheng Xuanying accused the wife of Liezi as not knowing the mandate from the heaven. See *Zhuangzi jishi*, p.973. However, from the following explanation of Liezi, readers need to realize that it is not about how this situation is a heavenly mandate, but within human's conscious choice.

[270] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p. 972.

reasons for justifying his choice). The text in the end supported Liezi's deliberation by mentioning that Zi Yang was eventually put to death by his people.[271]

With this, we know that laughter embodies Liezi's self-control by transforming what his wife treated as *ming* into a form of rational choice. Admittedly, in this text, Liezi did not directly reject the argument that it is their *ming* that cannot be explained and cannot be changed. This is because if Liezi thinks of the situation from the perspective of his wife, it is still *ming*. She has no power to change it and she certainly cannot understand why Liezi made such a choice. We may guess that up to the last, Liezi's wife would still think of her situation as *ming* unless we assume that she divorced him. However, to Liezi, when he chose to reject the ruler's offer, his impoverished situation was no long his *ming*, but a rational choice, which he believed would save them from future misery. That is why he did not

[271] One may argue that the choice of Liezi can be extremely selfish and careless since he does not care the hunger and pain of his wife. And what he cares is whether *he* is sincerely appreciated by the ruler. This idea may appear to be reasonable since we may assume that if Liezi takes the job temporarily, he and his family may no longer need to suffer from hunger and possible death. However, if we think deeper, the complain of the wife is not only about physical pain, but also the fear of death that results from hunger. So according to Liezi's reasoning, if he takes the job, it is certainly not easy to quit, not to mention the extreme danger of being punished and killed by the ruler. So if Liezi only takes the short sighted solution, he then sincerely becomes irresponsible. As for how they can deal with the problem of extreme huger, this goes beyond the author's imagination. My understanding of Liezi's choice as reasonable and fair is supported by texts compliers. For example, in 'Jie Shi' 節士 (Virtuous Officials) of *Xin Xu* 新序 (New Preface), the text helped to justify the choice of Liezi by appraising his *yi* 義(righteous). It argues that, 'As for the acceptance nourishment from other person but do not die for him when he is in trouble, then it is not moral. But if you die on account of his troubles, then you die for a person who lacks the Dao. How can this be moral then?' (且受人之养，不死其难，不义也；死其难，是死无道之人，岂义哉！)see Li Nianhua 李華年 edited, Liu Xiang 劉向, *Xin Xu* 新序 (New Preface), Taipei: Taiwan Guji chubanshe, 1997, pp.121-122. we may also see the respectful view towards Liezi by referring to him as Master Liezi instead of calling his given name Yu Kou 御寇. In the 'Shi Guan'世观 (Observing the Age) of *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (*The Annals of Lü Buwei*), the text further comments the choice of Liezi as 'if you accept nourishment from another person but do not die for him when he is beset by troubles, then you are not moral; but if you die on account of his troubles, you die for a person who lacks the Dao. To die for one who lacks the Dao contravenes nature. Master Liezi removed the immoral and adjured anything that contravened nature---was he not far distant for such men! Furthermore, even when he was suffering from hunger and cold, he would not indecorously accept the gift because he foresaw how things might change. He acted only after having foreseen how things might change----how well-versed he was in the essential qualities of inborn nature and the workings of fate.'(受人之养，而不死其难则不义，死其难则死无道也。死无道，逆也。子列子除不义、去逆也，岂不远哉！且方有饥寒之患矣，而犹不苟取，先见其化也。先见其化而已动，远乎性命之情也。) For the English translation, please see John Knoblock and Jeffery Riegel, trans., *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, pp.380-381. For the Chinese text, please see See Xu Weijue 許維遹, *Lü Shi Chunqiu Ji Shi* 呂氏春秋集釋 (Collected Annotations of *The Annals of Lü Buwei)*, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2009, pp.403-404.

appear to be as miserable as his wife, but laughed. He laughed because he had acted to decide their future instead of passively following the general rule. Liezi's laughter shows his confidence in looking at his own situation carefully and making a reasonable decision for himself. Moreover, when Liezi laughed, he laughed the uncontrollability away. This allows us to regard the issue from a different perspective than that of *ming*. Laughter helps us to break through the general rule that his wife follows. When the wife believes she has no control over their situation, she is sad and angry. But when Liezi laughs, Liezi has transformed the situation that his wife believes to be *ming* into a situation within one's control. Laughter embodies the control of things based on deliberative choice and has the power to transform a seemingly unchangeable situation. A similar case is discussed in the following passage.

In the chapter 'Shan Mu' 山木 (Mountains and Trees), we once again see how laughter is related to one's self-control. The story begins by pointing out an uncontrollable situation, namely death. In this case, instead of focusing on the fact that everyone will eventually die and considering how to deal with the natural process of one's ageing and death, this story focuses on a paradoxical action, which will lead to someone's death. Such a paradoxical action is described in terms of whether one should behave as if one were useful or not useful (*cai* 材 or *bu cai* 不材).

> 莊子行於山中，見大木，枝葉盛茂，伐木者止其旁而不取也。問其故。曰：「無所可用。」莊子曰：「此木以不材得終其天年。」夫子出於山，舍於故人之家。故人喜，命豎子殺雁而烹之。豎子請曰：「其一能鳴，其一不能鳴，請奚殺？」主人曰：「殺不能鳴者。」明日，弟子問於莊子曰： 昨日山中之木，以不材得終其天年；今主人之雁，以不材死。先生將何處。[272]
>
> Zhuangzi was walking in the mountains when he saw a huge tree, its branches and leaves thick and lush. A woodcutter paused by its side but made no move to cut it down. When Zhuangzi asked the reason, he replied, 'There's nothing it could be

[272] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 667-670.

> used for!' Zhuangzi said, 'Because of its worthlessness, this tree is able to live out the years Heaven gave it.' Down from the mountain, the Master stopped for a night at the house of an old friend. The friend, delighted, ordered his son to kill a goose and cook it. 'One of the geese can cackle and the other can't,' said the son. 'May I ask, please, which I should kill?' 'Kill the one that can't cackle,' said the host. The next day Zhuangzi's disciples questioned him. 'Yesterday there was a tree on the mountain that gets to live out the years Heaven gave it, because of its worthlessness. Now there's our host's goose that gets killed because of its worthlessness. What position would you take in such a case, Master?'

According to the disciple, being either useful or useless will unavoidably lead to death. Therefore, the disciple asked Zhuangzi how he should 'posit himself' (*hechu* 何處) so as to be safe. Before addressing how Zhuangzi answered the disciple's question, we should first notice how the question was asked, namely what it implies. The way in which the disciple asked the question already reveals that his mindset contains a dichotomy. To be specific, the way the disciple thinks of positing himself is restricted to an either-or choice. He has limited himself to either being useful or useless. It is such a mindset that confused him, since he knows from given facts that neither of these choices averts the possibility of being killed. Confronted with the disciple's question regarding exactly where to posit himself to be safe, Zhuangzi laughed and gave the following explanation:

> 莊子笑曰：「周將處乎材與不材之間。材與不材之間，似之而非也，故未免乎累。若夫乘道德而浮游則不然。無譽無訾，一龍一蛇[273]，與時俱化，而無肯專為；一上一下，以和為量，浮游乎萬物之祖；物物而不物於物，則胡可得而累邪！此黃帝、神農之法則也。。。[274]
> Zhuangzi laughed and said, 'I'd probably take a position halfway between worth and worthlessness. But halfway between worth and worthlessness, although it

[273] Using animal metaphor to indicate the adaptive and transformative attitude is not rare in the *Zhuangzi*. The most famous one is probably the dreaming butterfly which is used to refer to the unfixed metal perspectives and categories towards things. We are also not feeling strange of the fish image appeared in this anthology. Inspiring discussions on the importance of animals, metaphorical or metaphormosis, normal or strange, for ethical cultivation, political, social and ritual uses, please see Sterckx Roel. *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China.* SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. Sterckx argues in chapter 4 that dragon as animal symbol is marked as the soil occupation. In chapter 6, he argues that animals like sakes is frequently associated with the idea of transformation due to its natural ability to shed the skins.

[274] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 667-670.

> might seem to be a good place, really isn't – you'll never avoid trouble there. While if you were to climb up on the Way and its Virtue and go drifting and wandering, neither praised nor damned, temporarily being a dragon, temporarily being a snake, adapting with the times, never willing to hold to one course only, sometimes staying up, sometimes keep down, taking harmony for your measure, drifting and wandering with the ancestor of the ten thousand things, dealing with things without being manipulated by outer things – then how could you get into any trouble because of outer things? This is the method of Shen Nong and the Yellow Emperor….

When the confused, frustrated disciple consulted Zhuangzi regarding a life-death issue, Zhuangzi first replied with laughter. How can we understand the laughter of Zhuangzi here? Through the context, we see that laughter here shows the confidence that comes from taking things under control. It transforms the disciple's uncertainty of action and a seemingly unavoidable death into a form of self-controlled action. Such self-control conveyed through laughter is also related to one's ability to break through a fixed mindset. This is the same as the four masters mentioned above, who were not only capable of laughing at the acceptance of death and adapting into transformation, but also laughing away the fixed ritual codes surrounding death.

To be specific, within this context, on the one hand, Zhuangzi laughs away the fixed mindset of the disciple. Zhuangzi knows that his disciple thinks within a fixed dichotomy; therefore, by knowing the disciple's problem, Zhuangzi knows how to guide him. This is why Zhuangzi in the beginning only gave the disciple a solution that is not ideal. He first suggested the idea of positing (*chu* 處) oneself somewhere between being useful and useless because this would be the answer that the disciple expected, namely to choose an answer from the given dichotomy, useful or useless.[275] And then Zhuangzi breaks through the fixed mindset and argues that as long as one intends to 'posit' oneself in accordance with some

[275] We should also notice that here the problem of this method is not about the idea of positing oneself per se, but positing oneself at some fixed method.

pre-existing choice, one cannot escape trouble.[276] In other words, Zhuangzi's laughs away the fixed mindset. His laughter shows an opposite attitude of being stuck in an either-or choice. Zhuangzi's laughter also shows his disagreement of seeing death as an unavoidable result which the disciple beliefs.

Moreover, Zhuangzi laughs because he is confident that he can solve the disciple's question. He transforms what the disciple believes to be uncontrollable into a form of self-control. He told the disciple that as long as one can 'transform oneself in accordance with the times' (*yu shiju hua* 與時俱化), one will have no trouble dealing with things. Such a way of dealing with things is dramatically different from either being useful or useless. Without a fixed rule to follow, one changes oneself in accordance with the situation and is as flexible as a snake who sloughs off his skin according to the seasons.[277] One accepts the change of outer things and adapts to what is given; in so doing, one will not be praised for being useful or end up being killed like the goose. Instead, one can deal with things in harmony and without being influenced by outer criteria, 'dealing with things without being manipulated by outer things.' (物物而不物於物)[278]

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[276] Chen Xuanying 陳玄英 believes that the problem is that one has not chosen the right place, which I believe is rather arbitrary. Instead, Lu Changgeng's 陸長庚 observation is more reasonable. He argues that the problem is that one still intends to behave and posit oneself in a certain way. It is such an intention that is problematic. See Cui Dahua 崔大华, *Zhuangzi Qi Jie* 莊子歧解(The Alternative Interpreatatin of the *Zhuangzi*), Zhongzhou: Guji chubanshe, 1988, p. 533.

[277] Cheng Xuanying points out the importance of transformation as one who does not stick to any fixed standpoint, nor does not stand in between any perspective, and therefore one can adapt with the change and confuse others. See *Zhuangzi Jishi*, p.669.

[278] One may still argue that 'adaptation without intention' is still a certain kind of` principle that one follows and holds onto (*zhuan* 专). Such a critique can be solved through the following explanation: '若夫萬物之情，人倫之傳，則不然。合則離，成則毀，廉則挫，尊則議，有為則虧，賢則謀，不肖則欺，胡可得而必乎哉？悲夫！弟子志之，其唯道德之鄉乎！' (But now, with the forms of the ten thousand things and the codes of ethics handed down from man to man, matters don't proceed in this fashion. Things join only to part, reach completion only to crumble. If sharp-edged, they are blunted; if high-stationed, they are overthrown; if ambitious, they are foiled. Wise, they are schemed against; stupid, they are swindled. What is there, then, that can be counted on? Only one thing, alas! – remember this, my students – only the realm of the Way and its Virtue!) Through the following passage, we can see that the Zhuangzi has divided his discussion into two realms, namely 'the forms of the ten thousand things and the codes of ethics handed down from man to man' (萬物之情，人倫之傳) and 'the realm of the Way and its Virtue' (道德之鄉). In the realm of humans and things, one should not hold onto one principle, because things will end up in opposite states, such as 'Things join only to part, reach completion only to crumble. If sharp-edged, they are

When Zhuangzi laughs, he is indicating that he thinks that what the disciple believes to be unavoidable death can be a choice within one's control. Suppose that the disciple did not get an answer from Zhuangzi, and was harmed either by being useful or useless, or by being somewhere in the middle. The disciple must claim that it is his *ming*, since he cannot determine why he ended up with only two options, both of which lead to death. After Zhuangzi's explanation, Zhuangzi allows the disciple to deal with different situations using different methods, and therefore to protect himself. In this way, the disciple will no longer believe that he will end up dead like the goose or like some useful tree. Instead, Zhuangzi's laughter means that he has informed the disciple of how to take things under his control. In other words, laughter embodies one's self-control, which not only requires one to free oneself from adhering to fixed rules, but also to change oneself in accordance with different times and situations.

Conclusion:

From the previous three examples in the *Zhuangzi*, we see an association between laughter and one's self-control over situations that are beyond human control. To be specific, in the chapter 'Da Zongshi', we see four friends, Master Si (子祀), Master Yu (子輿), Master Li (子犁), and Master Lai (子來) laugh with each other and agree to be adaptive in any given situation, making full use of what is given (*an shi er chu shun* 安時而處順) instead of following fixed rituals and social codes. Furthermore, in the chapter 'Rang Wang', when Liezi's wife complains that their situation of impoverishment is unchangeable and

blunted; if high-stationed, they are overthrown; if ambitious, they are foiled. Wise, they are schemed against; stupid, they are swindled (合則離，成則毀，廉則挫，尊則議，有為則虧，賢則謀，不肖則欺), and therefore any position one takes would end up giving trouble. While in the realm of the great *Dao* and *Virtue*, as long as one can adapt and does not hold onto anything, then one will be able to keep oneself away from trouble.

will probably lead to their death, she attributes it to *ming*. Here, Liezi also replies with laughter and explains that he did not follow the general rule and rejected Zi Yang's offer with good reason. Liezi laughed because he knows that it is not something that he should be sad about; instead, he knows that he has chosen not to follow the general rule and is therefore saving himself from future punishment by the ruler. Lastly, in the chapter 'Shan Mu', when Zhuangzi's disciple was confused about whether he should behave as useful or useless in order to avoid death, Zhuangzi answered with laughter, and suggested that he accept the given situations and change himself in accordance with the times (與時俱化).

An uncontrollable situation is either a given result that cannot be changed, or is a situation that others merely *believe* to be uncontrollable. The former refers to the fact that there are things that are beyond human control. When one's body is changed or damaged, that is a given fact that cannot be changed, as is death. No one can live forever and escape death. The latter is about how one restricts oneself in one's mind and treats certain things as uncontrollable due to self-limitations. When Liezi's wife understands their hunger as an uncontrollable and unexplainable situation, Liezi explains it away and transforms it into a rational choice. When Zhuangzi's disciple believes that regardless of whether he is useful or useless, his situation will probably lead to death, Zhuangzi provides an entirely different way of seeing the situation, changing a seemingly necessary death into an adaptive attitude.

From the previous analysis, we can conclude that this form of self-control is an expression of the following. First, self-control requires cultivation. It shows that one is capable (*neng* 能) of dealing with things differently; everyone can understand (*zhi* 知) such an ability. It requires one to eliminate any fixed rules. When one intends to follow a fixed way of dealing with a situation, one can never avoid trouble.

Second, self-control is about being adaptive and dealing with things in accordance with different times (*shi* 時) and situations. In this way, one can make full use of a given

situation and transform it as if it were within one's control and therefore, certain seemingly uncontrollable situation is no longer beyond human's direct and immediate` control.[279] When one can be flexible without sticking to one method or one value, one will keep the mind calm without being hurt emotionally. More importantly, one takes advantage of that which is given and cannot be changed, and therefore disperses the restrictive nature of the situation without being confined by it.

Third, self-control is about looking at things from a different perspective, and therefore transforming what others believe to be unchangeable into a form of choice. In other words, one could have firmly believed certain things to be uncontrollable and taken them to be in fact beyond control, but such a firm belief can also be changed and transformed by looking at it from a new perspective, therefore transforming what is believed to be uncontrollable into something that can be changed and chosen.

Fourth, with self-control, one will free oneself from emotional fluctuations, and not be manipulated by outer situations. When one can accept the changes that occur in life and adapt to what is given, one can free oneself from the fear of change and resentment with the given situation, and no longer dwell in sadness and tears over someone's death. If one can set oneself free from fixed rules, many situations would no longer appear as *ming* but as rational choices.

If we agree with the above analysis that laughter in the *Zhuangzi* represents one's self-control towards situations that are beyond one's control, the question becomes, why

[279] One may argue that one can only transform the attitude towards the given situation instead of changing the fact of a given situation. On appearance, it is true. The situation is uncontrollable, it is given and temporarily beyond one's direct control. However, how one perceives a given situation can be changed and therefore, to certain extent, we can say that one can perceive certain fixed situation as not because one's limited ability, and *as if it were* within one's control. For example, one can regard one's inability to swim as an Olympic champion as an uncontrollable situation. This means that one accepts the fact that after years of training, one is incapable of reaching that goal and regards it as one's limitation. Certainly, one can reject to admit such a limit and therefore continues to try breaking through one's physical limit for a certain goal, in this sense, the temporary fact of not being able to reach certain goal will not be perceived as limitation, but only a process of reaching certain goals.

laughter? There are three reasons for why laughter allows one to assert one's self-control over situations that are beyond human control.

First, laughter has a narrative function, indicating a change in atmosphere. To be specific, before pointing out the act of laughing, the composers of the text project the mood of confusion or frustration, such as in the case of Zhuangzi's confused disciple or Liezi's frustrated wife. After the act of laughing, the atmosphere within the stories changes dramatically. A resolution is provided, there is a sense of relief and lightness. With the laughter of the protagonists, the tension turns into an easy atmosphere that is beyond expectations.[280] Also, laughter as a literary device helps with the narration that follows, presenting a contrast with what was presented before the laughter.

Second, the laughter of Liezi and Zhuangzi allows them to maintain a certain distance when examining an existing situation. It therefore allows them to detach themselves from the current situation and to deal with it less emotionally and subjectively, which to some extent is similar to the third and fourth types of expression presented above. When Liezi laughs, it seems to be a sign indicating that he can look at his impoverished situation in such a way that he is no longer bothered by it, and no longer struggles with how to climb out of poverty. When Zhuangzi laughs when facing his nervous disciple, instead of standing frozen in the face of two fatal options, as the disciple believes the situation to be, his laughter shows that Zhuangzi is considering the given options in a more objective manner, and therefore sees the situation as having more possibilities for resolution. In other words, laughter opens up a new solution to a supposedly irresolvable problem.

Third, laughter shows an active performance against fixed social norms and mindsets. When one laughs at someone's death, one acts against the necessary performance

[280] See John Dewey's Relief Theory. Dewey argued that laughter marks a period of suspension or ending. 'It is a "sudden relaxation of strain, so far as occurring through the medium of the breathing and vocal apparatus…. The laugh is thus a phenomenon of the same general kind as the sigh of relief.' See John Dewey, "The Theory of Emotion," *Psychological Review*, No. 1 (1894): 553-569.

and coded gestures of a funeral service, such as social wailing and jumping. One laughs away fixed social norms, just as Zhuangzi laughs away his disciple's fixed mindset of dealing with things. When Liezi laughs, his laughter becomes a part of his action contrary to other possessors of the Dao normally behave, such as accepting a ruler's offer and living a comfortable life. Laughter stimulates one to reflect on one's previous fixed way of thinking and vividly demonstrates the ability to come to a different understanding of how to act in a situation.

Lastly, laughter shows that one is confident about handling matters with self-control. In other words, the pursuit of self-control is expressed through, but is not limited to, laughter in the *Zhuangzi*. This is clearly seen in the case of the four masters who try to make full use of what is given and, by acting in accordance with what is given, take things under their control. By the same token, when Liezi's wife treats their situation of impoverishment as something beyond human control, Liezi, with careful consideration, considers it to be a situation that he himself created. Therefore, Liezi's laughter can be seen as a way to express his pursuit of control, instead of being helpless in his suffering. Similarly, Zhuangzi laughs when teaching his disciple how to solve a problem that, in the disciple's eyes, appears to be insurmountable. Zhuangzi's laughter informs us that he has a way to solve this problem, and has the choice to not to act in a way that will result in death. Laughter expresses his confidence in taking what is given under control and changing what seems to be unchangeable into situations that are within one's control.

By looking at different ways in which laughter is used in the *Zhuangzi*, we see its importance in this anthology. Similar to other early Chinese texts, laughter in the *Zhuangzi* is frequently used to express contempt and disagreement. More importantly, laughter in this anthology embodies one's self-control when dealing with uncontrollable situations, which is different from merely dealing with things passively, submitting to fatalism, or escaping

from the uncontrollability of life. On the one hand, the *Zhuangzi* has its own ideas about whether certain things are indeed unchangeable. With this deliberation, it is possible to transform what others believe to be beyond control into a form of controlled choice. On the other hand, when facing given situations, the *Zhuangzi* advocates making full use of them. By this, one changes what is given into what is useful. This is why when others are desperate, sad, or resentful, Zhuangzi can laugh. He laughs the helplessness away and laughs from a sense of confidence in his self-control.

From the previous discussions, we can see that in the *Zhuangzi*, when dealing with uncontrollable situations, although different actions are emphasized, the focus with regard to one's self-control is on one's perspectives and attitudes towards understanding things. Such a Zhuangzian idea is different from the logic of 'freedom and fate' in Western discourse, where scholars search for freedom mainly by discussing how one could act otherwise, namely, where the focus is on actions.[281] From the previous discussions, we see that the *Zhuangzi* assumes that control lies in one's attitudes and perceptions of situations, rather than simply in actions. By relating self-control to the adoption of a new attitude to look at and react to given situations, we find that the natural contradiction between freedom and fate that appears in Western discussions is unnatural for the *Zhuangzi*.

[281] The references and justifications regarding this point were discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Conclusion: Applied Studies on Contentment

To conclude, I would like to revisit the story introduced in the very beginning of this thesis regarding the contemplation of *ming* in the *Zhuangzi.* After it had rained for ten days, Master Yu visited his impoverished friend, Master Sang, with food. When Yu approached, he heard, 'Father? Mother? Is it Heaven? Is it Man?' (父邪母邪！天乎人乎！). To Yu, it sounded like someone was singing, but also crying. On the face of it, Master Sang was singing about Heaven and his parents. In fact, he was singing about *ming*, a situation that should be regarded as not immediately and directly within one's control.

> （子桑）曰：「吾思乎使我至此極者而弗得也。父母豈欲吾貧哉？天無私覆，地無私載，天地豈私貧我哉？求其為之者而不得也。然而至此極者，命也夫！」[282]
> Master Sang said, 'I was pondering what it is that has brought me to this extremity, but I couldn't find the answer. My father and mother surely wouldn't wish this poverty on me. Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears up all without partiality – heaven and earth surely wouldn't single me out to make me poor. I try to discover who is doing it, but I can't get the answer. Still, here I am – at the very extreme. It must be *ming*.'

In this passage, there is no positive claim about being content with *ming*. When Master Sang regards his situations as *ming*, what we can see directly is that he clearly knows that his current situation has nothing to do with the wrongdoings of his parents, nor is it related to some supernatural power acting against him. Also, he does not suffer from emotional disturbance. He does not cry about his hunger. Nor does he shout about his poverty. He does not curse Heaven for the incessant rain. Nor does he blame Master Yu for not bringing him food earlier. Someone who does not understand *ming* could have reacted in all of those ways. So when Master Sang describes his extreme situation as his *ming*, even though he does not directly express his contentment with it, it is not without reason to argue

[282] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 285-286.

that he embraces his life in full, although it is not ideal. He does not become ill because of negative emotions. He does not cry because of sorrow, nor does he blame anyone in anger. He sings and plays the zither for probably being alive and having a friend like Master Yu.[283]

When Master Sang attributes his situation to *ming*, he knows that he will continue to be poor which he probably does not like, but he also knows that he will continue to have a good friend, and he will continue to sing and play zither while heaven chooses to rain. In other words, we may say that Master Sang sings because of his willing acceptance of *ming* and because he accepts with his uncontrollable situation with affirmation. He affirms the fact that he has a best friend who visits. He also affirms that he is not burdened with emotional fluctuations. Moreover, he makes these affirmations without hating or blaming anyone. In other words, he shows his contentment with *ming*.

In the *Zhuangzi*, the attitude of willing acceptance of human limitations and of being content with what is regarded as *ming* is expressed through the idea of *an* 安 (contentment). It differs from the three models pointed out in the introduction, namely the 'accept and escape', 'accept as embodiment', and 'accept to adapt' models. The idea of *ming* cannot be seen as a general description of situations in life, but as referring to particular events. In other words, *ming* neither leads to a fatalistic point of view, in which every situation in life is seen as being beyond human control, as the first model suggests, nor does it imply a

[283] One may argue that Master Sang is clearly lamenting his *ming*---his poor and extreme situation that is beyond his control. Master Sang gives in to his life while he does not like it. We do not have hard evidence to reject this kind of pessimistic reading within this context. In fact, as annotator Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 points out, such an understanding is in line with the questioning of Master Yu when he heard Sang singing outside the door. Before listening Sang's understanding, Yu suspects that Master Sang was blaming the heaven and the parents. See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, p.286. I am also admitting that to Master Sang, being in such a poor situation is not physically ideal with cold and hunger. However, this does not necessarily lead to one's lamenting of the situation. What we need to notice is that, the lyrics that Master Sang sings is not about how sad and helpless he is. Instead, the lyrics focus on not to blame and not to resent with an emphasis of *ming*. Therefore, based on the discussions in the previous chapters, I propose the above new idea regarding Master Sang's affirmation of his situation. We can also think that one will not be liking one's situation as being born as crippled. However, this certainly does not mean that one can only lament when one understands that it is not the misconduct of one's parents, nor the fault of doctors, but a matter of uncontrollable situation. A crippled person can certainly embrace one's life with positive acceptance of one's disability, without blaming others or oneself.

submissive attitude, in which it is argued that one should compromise one's own ideas to be in union with Heaven, and therefore accept whatever is given, as the second model suggests. Moreover, it does not require one to adapt to every situation that is beyond one's control, as suggested by model three. To make full use what is given is one kind of choice when faced with an uncontrollable situation, but not a general attitude.

On the contrary, in the *Zhuangzi ming* is a situation that one regards as not immediately and directly within one's control. In other words, to a certain extent, *ming* becomes a kind of choice. One can decide whether to regard the relationship between rulers and subordinates as one's *ming*. One can also break through what others believe to be beyond human control and provide new possibilities. As such, while a certain situation can be regarded as beyond human control at one moment, such as the impoverished situation of Master Sang, when something changes at the next moment, such as when Master Yu provided him with food and company, the previous situation that Sang regarded as *ming* no longer existed. This is why, in the *Zhuangzi*, *ming* neither refers to every situation in life nor connotes an denial of human freedom of choice.

When the idea of *an* is proposed in the *Zhuangzi*, it is seen as an ideal state of mind that requires self-cultivation. It is not only seen as a higher level of courage that does not create turmoil and conflict, but also as an attitude that makes one affirm things beyond human control as the ultimate experience of life's reality, and allows one to keep one's mind free of the anxiety stemming from uncertainty. When used to deal with family and social relationships, the attitude of *an* allows one to be a filial child and to take care of one's parents without either burdening them or hurting oneself. It relieves both parties from having to live up to certain standards. The attitude of *an* transforms one's uncontrollable love for one's parents into a form of filial piety.

Through this project, we also determine that although many arguments on *an* and *ming* are expressed through normal speech, other forms of expression such as musical language and laughter are also adopted in the *Zhuangzi.* In this anthology, we constantly see doubts expressed about the use of normal speech (*yan* 言), in that normal speech an easily lead to arguments, fights, and therefore lead the society into turmoil and lead people away from the truth and the Dao. as discussed in Chapter Four.

Therefore, it is not unexpected to find characters within the *Zhuangzi* who employ ways to present ideas other than through speech. In this thesis, I show that singing is often used as an audience-neutral and target-free mode of speech to express contentment with *ming.* In addition, the act of laughter is used by many of the master figures in the *Zhuangzi* to laugh away self-limitations and transform what others regard as being beyond human control into a form of conscious choice.

My reconstruction of the Zhuangzian idea of *an* to deal with human limitations can thus be summarized as follows:

First, different from treating *an* as a general attitude to life, as other models suggest, I argue that contentment is an attitude adopted for dealing with particular events. This means that, on the one hand, one should decide when and why certain things should be regarded as beyond human control; while on the other hand, it does not exclude the scenario that, upon reflection, one breaks through one's restricted mind and exercises one's self-control. In other words, when facing a certain given situation, one should examine whether it is a) in fact an uncontrollable situation, such as death; b) a situation that one only believes to be uncontrollable due to one's limited knowledge and restricted way of thinking, such as the disciple of Zhuangzi who based his actions and outlook on a false dichotomy, believing that afflicted death (in contrast with natural death or accidental death) is unavoidable, regardless of whether one chooses to be useful or useless; or c) a situation that, while in fact escapable,

should still be regarded as if it were beyond human control so as to maintain one's physical and mental health, as some of the examples of the relationship between rulers and subordinates illustrate.

Second, since contentment is not a general attitude, to the *Zhuangzi* what appears to be a contradiction between the freedom to act and a willing acceptance of what is given is in fact an illusion. Unlike the decision to question the existence of the freedom to act when everything is fated, when one *chooses* to *regard* things as *ming* and *chooses* to *be content* with it, one is exercising the same kind of self-control as when one rejects or conforms to certain situations. It requires one to abandon previous beliefs on how things should develop, and pushes one to adopt a different worldview with which to face the current situation. One's self-control is therefore represented either through making full use of what is already given, or by breaking through what seems to be irreversible and unavoidable. To the *Zhuangzi*, freedom lies in one's attitude and response towards things, instead of in questioning whether one could have acted otherwise. The *Zhuangzi* laughs away fixed mind-sets and laughs with new possibilities and the exercise of self-control.

Third, the idea of contentment allows one to free oneself from emotional fluctuations, as well as from anxiety about uncertainty. To be specific, when one gives up existing ideas on how things should develop, but affirms the given situation as if it were as natural a change as day and night, one will no longer be angry, sad, or scared when things do not work out or when the undesirable happens. In other words, one will not harm oneself with emotional fluctuations. Otherwise, according to the *Zhuangzi*, this could be fatal. Moreover, when one is capable of adopting the attitude of contentment, one will no longer be bothered by the fact that there are things that are beyond control, which we cannot be sure of how to deal with. When a hunter is anxious of wild animals that may hurt him, the hunter may end up actively looking for dangerous animals himself and, inadvertently, meet his death. Instead,

when one is not anxious about uncertainty, one will walk one's own path and face the situation only when it appears. By doing so, one will not harm one's physical and mental health. One will face wild animals with sufficient strength, a cool mind, and the courage to accept death as the ultimate reality of life.

Lastly, the willing acceptance of *ming* is not merely limited to one's spiritual and imaginative mind. In fact, the idea of contentment is inseparable from its practical usage. When one is capable of adopting the attitude of *an,* one can find new possibilities and potential within a given situation. For example, one can remain mired in sorrow and anger about one's amputated arm. Or, one can be content with it and like Master Yu, whose left arm was transformed into rooster, use it to keep watch during the night. Also, with the attitude of *an*, one transforms one's uncontrollable love for one's parents into a kind of ideal relationship that does not burden either of the parties with love, nor pushes them to live up to certain standards, moral or social. Instead, one can find the most comfortable relationship with one's parents and serve them in accordance with their needs without hurting oneself.

One question remains – namely, under what circumstances should one be content with a given situation and when should one instead exercise one's self-control? How should we decide? Why, in the chapter 'Renjian Shi', was Duke Xie told by Confucius that he should regard the command from the ruler as a *ming* and fulfil it? Why was the situation of impoverishment a *ming* to Liezi's wife but not to Liezi himself? How is one to decide whether to willingly accept a given situation?

To the *Zhuangzi,* the answer first lies in whether a certain decision will endanger one's physical and mental health. As discussed in the chapter 'Yang Sheng Zhu', 'to protect your body, keep yourself alive, look after your parents, and live out your years' (可以保身，可以全生，可以養親，可以盡年) is one of the ultimate goals in life that is advanced in the *Zhuangzi*. In other words, whether one is able to live in peace with the decision.

When rejecting the command from the ruler will immediately lead to one's death, as in the situation of Duke Xie, then what other choice does one have but to regard the situation as one's *ming* and to act in accordance with what the command requires? To the *Zhuangzi*, only by doing so can one protect one's life without being harmed by either one's emotional disturbance or the incapability of fulfilling one's job. As Confucius informed us, when under the circumstance faced by Duke Xie, the best way to keep one's life is not to think of it but to act as the command requires. However, when a certain command does not necessarily endanger one's life, one certainly has the freedom to exercise one's choice. As the 'Qiushui' story informs us:

> 莊子釣於濮水，楚王使大夫二人往先焉，曰：「願以境內累矣！」莊子持竿不顧，曰：「吾聞楚有神龜，死已三千歲矣，王巾笥而藏之廟堂之上。此龜者，寧其死為留骨而貴乎，寧其生而曳尾於塗中乎？」二大夫曰：「寧生而曳尾塗中。」莊子曰：「往矣！吾將曳尾於塗中。」[284]
>
> Once, when Zhuangzi was fishing in the Pu River, the king of Chu sent two officials to go and announce to him: 'I would like to trouble you with the administration of my realm.' Zhuangzi held on to the fishing pole and, without turning his head, said, 'I have heard that there is a sacred tortoise in Chu that has been dead for three thousand years. The king keeps it wrapped in cloth and boxed, and stores it in the ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead and have its bones left behind and valued? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?' 'It would rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud,' said the two officials. Zhuangzi said, 'Go away! I'll drag my tail in the mud!'

Zhuangzi exercises his self-control by rejecting the offer from the ruler of Chu. Apart from not wanting to be limited like the dead tortoise, crucially, he does not want to trade away his life in order to be valued. He wants to keep himself alive, happy being where he is supposed to be, just as the tortoise would have wanted to play around in the mud.

Apart from the idea of keeping one's body and life intact and living out one's years, another important factor necessary to deciding whether to exercise one's self-control or

[284] See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 603-605.

choosing to be content with the uncontrollable *ming* resides in one's awareness of the situation and one's capability to decide. As in the case of Liezi's wife, it is only her *ming* because, unlike Liezi himself, it is never up to her whether to accept the offer from outside. Nor does she have the awareness of what would have happened had Liezi accepted the job. Because of her limited knowledge, power, and social status at the time, whether to continue to suffer from poverty or to possibly be killed by the ruler, could only be regarded by Liezi's wife as *ming*. As for Liezi himself, he chooses to reject the offer and continue their life of poverty because he knows that if he were to accept the offer he would have a limited ability to protect his life from being harmed by the ruler. If he had the ability to serve the ruler in a manner similar to that of the man who swims in extremely dangerous waters, he might have considered accepting the offer and treating it as an opportunity to guide the ruler.

In the chapter *Renjian Shi* 人間世 (In the World of Men), the *Zhuangzi* provides us with a strategy to deal with such a problem. The focus of this strategy lies in *yu* 與 (to participate) and *shun* 順 (to follow) in order to be able to *da* 達 (understand), so that one can solve a situation that others regard as unsolvable and uncontrollable. Without this ability, one can only regard certain situations as *ming*.

> 顏闔將傅衛靈公大子，而問於蘧伯玉曰：「有人於此，其德天殺。與之為無方，則危吾國；與之為有方，則危吾身。其知適足以知人之過，而不知其所以過。若然者，吾奈之何？」蘧伯玉曰：「善哉問乎！戒之慎之，正汝身也哉！形莫若就，心莫若和。雖然，之二者有患。就不欲入，和不欲出。形就而入，且為顛為滅，為崩為蹶。心和而出，且為聲為名，為妖為孽。彼且為嬰兒，亦與之為嬰兒；彼且為無町畦，亦與之為無町畦；彼且為無崖，亦與之為無崖。達之，入於無疵。汝不知夫養虎者乎？不敢以生物與之，為其殺之之怒也；不敢以全物與之，為其決之之怒也。時其飢飽，達其怒心。虎之與人異類而媚養己者，順也；故其殺者，逆也。[285]
>
> Yan He, who had been appointed tutor to the crown prince, the son of Duke Ling of Wei, went to consult Qu Boyu, 'Here is this man who by nature is lacking in virtue. If I let him go on with his unruliness I will endanger the state. If I try to

[285] Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi Ji Shi*, pp. 164-167.

> impose some rule on him, I will endanger myself. He knows just enough to recognize the faults of others, but he doesn't know his own faults. If this is the case, what can I do with such a man?' Qu Boyu said, 'A very good question. Be careful, be self-restrained and cautious, and make sure that you yourself are correct! In your actions it is best to follow along with him, and in your mind it is best to harmonize with him. However, these two courses still involve dangers. Though you follow along, you don't want to be pulled into his doings, and though you harmonize, you don't want to be drawn out too far. If in your actions you follow along to the extent of being pulled in with him, then you will be overthrown, destroyed, wiped out, and brought to your knees. If in your mind you harmonize to the extent of being drawn out, then you will be talked about, named, blamed, and condemned. If he wants to be a child, be a child with him. If he wants to follow erratic ways, follow erratic ways with him. If he wants to be reckless, be reckless with him. Understand him thoroughly, and lead him to the point where he is without fault. Don't you know how the tiger trainer goes about it? He doesn't dare give the tiger any living thing to eat for fear it will learn the taste of fury by killing it. He doesn't dare give it any whole thing to eat for fear it will learn the taste of fury by tearing it apart. He gauges the state of the tiger's appetite and thoroughly understands its fierce disposition. Tigers are a different breed from men, and yet you can train them to be gentle with their keepers by following along with them. The men who get killed are the ones who go against them.'

Here, we are first presented with a dilemma. The idea of dilemma here refers to cases in which the agent (who performs the action) regards herself/himself as having "justifiable reasons" to do each of two (or more) actions. The agent can do each of the actions but believes he or she cannot do both (or all) of the actions. The agent thus seems condemned to failure--- no matter what she does, he/she will do something wrong (or fail to do something that she ought to do).

We cannot help but notice that such a dilemma in fact frequently happens in our daily life. One's general obligation can be in conflict with a role-related obligation.[286] Two

[286] For example, once a lawyer finds out that his/her defendant is guilty, one's role as a lawyer may conflict with the general obligation of telling the truth due to the attorney-client privilege. The conflict of values due to a person's multiple roles is more easily encountered in early China.

different roles may pose conflicting choices.[287] All of these conflicts can be seen as conflicting moral reasons. [288]

The dilemma presented here is as Yan He observed, whether or not he chooses to impose rules on the Duke, he will end up hurting either himself or the state. In other words, Yan He was facing a situation that appeared to be both undesirable and out of his control.

As we can imagine, without the help of Qu Boyu, Yan He was in fact facing an unsolvable and unchangeable situation that can only be regarded as *ming*. Yan He would have had no choice but to act as a tutor and free himself from emotional disturbances, as Duke Xie did. Otherwise, the ruler would certainly have him killed for rejecting the job. However, if one knows how to *yu zhi* 與之 (to participate with someone), *shun* 順 (to follow), and therefore to *da zhi* 達之 (to understand it), the situation can in fact be taken as a real chance to transform others. It becomes a new possibility instead of a *ming*.

Through this story, we know that to truly understand a situation and the people involved is not easy. Qu Boyu first contrasts the strategy with 'pretending', namely *jiu* 就 (follow along) and *he* 和 (to harmonize). When one pretends, one is clearly aware that to 'follow along' and 'harmonize' are inconsistent with one's real beliefs, and therefore one will end up torturing one's body and mind. The difference between 'participating with someone' (*yu zhi*) and 'pretending' is that, when one pretends to act in a certain way, one does not agree with what one is doing, and therefore has lie to oneself in order to go along with one's actions.[289] In contrast, to follow, to *yu*, requires sincerity in action and a real

[287] A talented artist who travels around the world to learn new skills and gain inspiration may not be seen as a responsible spouse, since such an artist is mostly away from for his/her family. In this case, one's responsibility to develop one's talent is in conflict with one's duty as a spouse.
[288] Also, whether the cases are genuine dilemmas is not the concern of this chapter.
[289] The kind of 'pretending' that is discussed here is different from that practised by a child who pretends to be a nurse at home or an actor who pretends to act a certain role. Rather, it is a certain kind of action that goes against one's common beliefs.

understanding. It prevents the problem of being discovered to be faking and thereby endangering oneself.

The strategy that one should adopt to teach the crown prince is just like that used to train a tiger. The approach of *shun* 順 (to follow) is instrumental instead of fundamental. The tiger trainer sincerely follows the nature of the tiger and, therefore, through being with the tiger and understanding it, the tiger is able to be friendly with the trainer. It is important to notice that following the object without putting pre-existing rules in mind is only an approach for thoroughly understanding (*da* 達) the object so as to *possibly* guide it. As this is what the trainer did with the tiger, with understanding, he knew what and when to feed the tiger, so that it would gradually follow his guidance. In other words, with a strategic way of acting, one no longer needs to regard the undesirable consequences resulting from serving the ruler as *ming*; instead, one can view the position as a possibility to guide the ruler without hurting oneself.

By saying that neither endangering the state nor harming one's own body is Yan He's *ming* if he follows the advice of Qu Boyu, we can contemplate another possibility that was not described within the text. We may argue that, to Yan He, the act of serving itself is his *ming*, namely a situation that is beyond his control, and that he should be content with it. The text itself never assumes that Yan He could have realistically rejected this job, but only that he was confused about what to do. In other words, we may continue the story by saying that Yan He took Qu Boyu's advice and regarded being the tutor of the crown prince as his *ming*. He therefore deals with the situation as if he were training a tiger. By following and understanding the crown prince, Yan He saves his own life and is probably able to guide the prince gradually towards a more desirable path.

Being aware of one's environment, the given situation, and one's ability enables a person to decide whether a certain situation can be treated with *an*. This was the case with

the swimmer who was capable of swimming freely in the dangerous waters of Lü Liang (吕梁). He was able to be at ease with where he was born and raised, and with affirming things that were beyond his control, because he had sufficient knowledge of himself and of how to act. He clearly knew the nature of the water and how to survive in it. Another person who was naturally bad at swimming but also raised in the same area, could only choose to find a way to stay clear of the water, otherwise death would likely be the only result, which is certainly not what the *Zhuangzi* would suggest. Overall, the question of whether to affirm one's *ming* or to reject it depends on one's ability to understand how to deal with it properly at a given moment.

Indeed, the argument of how to properly deal with *ming* appears to be a circular one. One may argue that, if one can properly comprehend the situation, as well as one's ability to deal with it, whether the given situation needs to be seen as *ming* is probably no longer important.[290] One is either lacking knowledge about how to act and, as a result, considers everything to be beyond human control, or one is full of confidence and believes that everything is within one's control. In either case, it is hard for one to better understand the situation and therefore to decide whether something is indeed beyond one's control. This is true to some extent. But what we should not forget is that human beings are not machines that process all possible options, free from emotions.

Human decision-making is a complex mix of (limited) knowledge, ideas about life's purpose and, importantly, the need to deal with feelings, which can range from anxiety to certainty and include attachment to people, the fear of death, and so on. Even when we are lucky enough to be a position to decide, and even when we have obtained enough knowledge to make a considered choice, when faced with undesirable and uncontrollable situations,

[290] This only applies to the prescriptive dimension of *ming*, certain situations are reasonably beyond human control regardless of how much self-knowledge and ability to deal with a situation one has.

without being able to *an*, we may still not be able to fully employ these abilities. Without being able to *an*, there is no way of exercising any freedom of thought, choice, or action that we might have.

Lastly, let us look at one of the most difficult and unsolvable moral dilemma---Sophie's Choice, and see how the idea of contentment can actually be helpful for one to live well even when it does not solve the dilemma. Sophie's Choice is as follows:

> 'Sophie and her two children are imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. A guard confronts Sophie and tells her that one of her children will be allowed to live and one will be killed. But it is Sophie who must decide which child will be killed. Sophie can prevent the death of either of her children, but only by condemning the other to death. The guard makes the situation even more excruciating by informing Sophie that if she chooses neither, then both will be killed. With this added factor, Sophie has a morally compelling reason to choose one of her children. But for each child, Sophie has an apparently equally strong reason to save him or her.'[291]

In cases like William Styron's Sophie's Choice,[292] no scholars by far can provide reasons to argue which one of her two children should be the one that she chooses to save. The best we can say is, as Michael Zimmerman suggests, she should act to save one or the other of her children, since that is the best that she can do.[293] But the Zhuangzian attitude of living in equanimity can help Sophie to live a better life with her remaining child.

If we think of this issue in a practical way instead of theorizing it, we know that the pain and difficulty that Sophie faces is which child she should decide to save, and which to kill, instead of whether she should save her children at all. No doubt, ideally Sophie wants

[291] Mcconnell, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-dilemmas/. 2014.Accessed 17/07/17.
[292] Greespan, Patrica S. 'Moral dilemmas and guilt'. *Philosophical Studies* 1983:43 (1): 117-125.
[293] Zimmerman, Michael J. *The concept of moral obligation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 207-225.

to save both. But practically, she cannot. To her, she is facing a situation beyond her control though what she had to do is to 'choose'.

Therefore, the problem she faces is how she can live her life facing the fact that she did not choose the one who died, and how she can still live a good life with the saved child while carrying guilt (both to herself and possibly to the saved child), remorse, and anger.

The Zhuangzian answer is that, only by willingly accepting the fact that she cannot save both but only one of them, can she not punish herself for not being able to save both and therefore, free herself from dwelling in guilt, pain and anger. Accordingly, only by affirming her own choice of the one that she saves, can she direct her attention to the saved child and her own life without being restrained by doubts because of her decision. This does not mean that Sophie should no longer feel pain or sorrow. The direction of attention enables one to focus on what one can still do, without being stuck within the previous mind-set.

Whoever she saved in the end, I argue that it is wise for Sophie and the saved child (when growing up and knowing the situation) regards their situation as being alive as their *ming* and in the meanwhile, regards the death of the other child also as an unchangeable situation given the fact that Sophie at that point could have saved the other child.

Suppose that after saving one of her children, without being able to live in peace with her choice and at ease with the undesirable situation, Sophie might have been thinking of what else she could have done. She could have spent her entire life blaming herself and living in pain (which also in turn harm the saved child), instead of focusing on how she could live better together with the saved child. Therefore, in the case of Sophie's Choice, a moral expert's advice not only analysing the competing values of how she should act, but also advising on the attitude of how she can live in peace with her choice, shows another level of moral caring for the recipient.

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