The Performed *Dao*: Understanding the *Zhuangzi* with the Literary Form Approach

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis adopts the literary form approach to the analysis of the *Zhuangzi*. I argue that the literary forms deployed in the *Zhuangzi* are not neutral and empty but philosophically meaningful. The leading question dealt in the thesis is how form and content are connected in the *Zhuangzi*. On the macro level, I provide a characterisation for the methodology to which I refer as the relaxed literary form approach. It is a modified version of the past literary form approach. On the micro level, I study the forms—including narrative, irony, and paradox—in detail, showing how these forms contribute to the meaning construction of the *Zhuangzi*. I argue that the form of narrative is to construct the "constellation of perspectives"; the form of irony is to bring about the experience of uncertainty and not-knowing; the form of paradox is to put the text in an ever-drifting dynamic. This investigation leads to a fundamental reconceptualisation of the *Zhuangzi* and the *dao*: instead of being represented the *dao* is *performed* in the text, and thus the *Zhuangzi* is a *dao*-performance.

Introduction

This thesis begins with the idea that form and content are inseparable in the production of meaning, and ends with the call for a radical reconceptualisation of the nature of the *Zhuangzi*. On the one hand, general methodological and hermeneutical questions are concerned; on the other hand, particular and substantial interpretative issues regarding the *Zhuangzi* are also dealt with. The basic question I shall answer is: why is the *Zhuangzi* written in such a remarkable way? What is the philosophical significance of these literary forms?

The "Methodology" chapter deals with the proposal of the literary form approach. I compare the orthodox content approach and the newly suggested literary form approach. The two approaches disagree with one another on the role of literary forms in philosophical arguments. I shall make a case for the literary form approach with subtle qualifications. The qualifications are motivated by two possible challenges i.e the content-laden and lack of argumentation challenge to the literary form approach. At the end of it, a relaxed literary form approach is formulated and I shall analyse the "Yuyan" 寓言 chapter as an application of it.

The "Narrative" chapter introduces my analysis of the literary forms of the *Zhuangzi*. The first literary form I shall analyse is the form of narrative. I begin with the "ancient quarrel" between Plato and Aristotle concerning the relation of narrative (or "poetry") and philosophy. I then draw insight from the contemporary study of narratology and critical philosopher Theodor W. Adorno to articulate the value of narrative as the "constellation of perspectives". The concept of the "constellation of perspectives" emphasises that narrative is valuable for it creates a space in which diverging perspectives interplay. Such a recognition is in conflict with the dominant interpretive strategy regarding how to read the narrative of the *Zhuangzi*. I refer to the strategy as "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesman". I argue against such a strategy since it pays no respect to the value of narrative. The long-standing interpretative debate over the "Xiaoyaoyou" 逍遙遊 chapter is an example to illustrate how my reading differs from them. I argue that *xiaoyou* is not exemplified by any one of those characters but should be understood as the activity of drifting among the constellation.

"Irony" is the next literary form employed in the *Zhuangzi* which I analyse. I identify a literary form of "ironic twist" in the "Tianzifang" 田子方 chapter (and also in the

"Xiaoyaoyou" 逍遙遊 chapter). By "ironic twist", I mean the purported "*Zhuangzi*'s spokesman" is often subverted under scrutiny. The linear reading of the narratives of the "Tianzifang" chapter loses its appeal when read in detail. In such a subversion, not only are the characters in the narratives mocked, but also we, the readers, are set up because our rigid preunderstanding of the *Zhuangzi* is shaken. With the form of irony, the *Zhuangzi* is promoting a way of living of "non-knowing" which resembles the philosophy of Socrates in many substantial ways. I draw insight from Jonathan Lear to do the comparison at the end of the "Irony" chapter.

The last literary form I shall analyse is "paradox". The "Paradox" chapter attempts to provide a thorough study of the paradoxical expressions in the *Zhuangzi*. I shall argue against the semantic, metaphysics, logic, and relativism approach on the grounds of my case studies of the "paradox of self" and "paradox of usefulness". Instead, I identify the structure of "paradox over paradox" from these case studies and argue that the philosophical point of paradox expressions in the *Zhuangzi* is to challenge our most fundamental beliefs. I refer to my own approach as the "performative and therapeutic" approach.

After a survey of these literary forms, I turn my attention to a more general level. The "Philosophical significance" chapter asks a general question: from a philosophical point of view what do these literary forms really do? It is not the question of what narrative, irony, or paradox could do, but what they can do *together*. I answer this question with respect to the "self-defeating" problem. I argue that the philosophical significance of these forms is that they provide a philosophical way out for the threat of self-defeating.

On these grounds, our conceptualisation of the nature of the *Zhuangzi* should be renewed: it is a *dao*-performance instead of a text representing the *dao*. The *dao* of the *Zhuangzi* is a performed *dao*.

Methodology

Among the myriad ways of doing philosophy, interpretation of texts has been fundamental, prevailing over years in the exploration of Chinese philosophy—it seems hardly conceivable that one could do Chinese philosophy without any interpretative works on Chinese philosophical classics. From the long-standing tradition of doing philosophy by annotating the classics to the widely-shared contemporary New Confucianism idea of "doing philosophy through studying the history of philosophy" 即哲學史以為哲學, the major way of doing Chinese philosophy has remained reading the classics, extracting and developing its philosophical ideas.[1] Even the study of Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world nowadays, which may be more concerned with the philosophical resources in the texts instead of what the texts "actually" say, is still inevitably premised on text-reading. It is of immense difficulty to come across a paper presented in a Chinese philosophy conference that does not involve any interpretation of the classics.

Leaving aside the big question of whether we should keep, abandon or modify the Chinese tradition of doing philosophy through interpreting its own classics, when we speak of the methodology in the study of Chinese philosophy we often mean the reading strategy we apply to the texts. That is, how we should articulate their philosophical ideas from the texts.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I am concerned with this more approachable but yet equally important methodological question. I shall lay out the basic methodology employed in the later chapters. This methodological chapter consists of three parts: first, I shall articulate the difference between the content approach and the more recent form approach. Second, I point out two doubtful ideas of the literary form approach. Third, I propose that we use a reading strategy which is positioned between them and demonstrate its suitability by applying it to the opening passage of the "Yuyan" 寓言 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*

i. The content approach and the literary form approach

There have been many reading methods explicitly proposed or implicitly used in the literature. Some scholars take the concept-based approach which focuses on a single term in the texts, and attempt to construct a coherent and comprehensive conceptualisation of the

[1] Tang, Junyi 唐君毅 (1968)《中國哲學原論. 原性篇》Hong Kong: New Asia Institute Press, Introduction.

selected term. Shun Kwong Loi 's *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought* is one exemplary case. It presents a comprehensive survey of the content and development of the important concepts in Mengzi's ethical thoughts.[2] The role of different concepts in *Mengzi*, xing 性 and yi 義 for example, is Shun's major focus in analysing the text and comprehending Mengzi's philosophical system. Alternatively, some take the question-based approach, with which the scholar interprets the texts in relation to a particular philosophical question. Lao Sze Kuang 勞思光 called this "the method of fundamental question" 基源問題研究法.[3] The method suggests that philosophical texts present systematic answers to one or a set of fundamental philosophical question(s); hence the question could serve as our compass while we wander in the puzzling world of texts. In addition to the concept-based and question-based approach, the comparative approach is common in contemporary studies of Chinese philosophy in both the Chinese- and English-speaking worlds. Scholars compare similarities and differences between ideas in Chinese texts and those in non-Chinese, predominantly western, philosophy. This approach is controversial since some believe that there is incommensurability between the western and Chinese philosophical concepts.[4] Some scholars, however, argue that such comparison not only fosters better understanding of both traditions, but more importantly gives readers insights on how to solve their own philosophical puzzle.[5] For example, Huang Yong argues that comparing Zhuxi's philosophy to western virtue ethics can help solve the "self-centeredness" problem to virtue ethics.[6]

Indeed, this is far from a comprehensive overview of the reading strategies that scholars have adopted. And, more importantly, scholars' choice of strategy is related to their own purpose of doing Chinese philosophy. Some may aim to articulate what the texts "in fact" mean whereas others may take the texts as resources for solving their own philosophical questions.[7] Although the above classification is over-simplified, I nevertheless believe that all of these relatively traditional interpretation methods can be grouped together as the content approach. What is common to them all is that they go directly to the content of the texts, regardless of what the basic unit of the content is composed of, be it concepts, arguments, or chapters.

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[2] Shun, Kwong Loi (1997) *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, CA: Stanford University Press
[3] Lao, Szekwang (1982),《新編中國哲學史》vol.1, Taipei: San-Min Press, Preface.
[4] For example, the Journal of Chinese Philosophy had published a series of papers on the special theme of the comparison between Heidegger and Chinese philosophy. See *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 41.3-4 (2014)
[5] Bruya, Brian ed. (2015), *The Philosophical Challenge from China*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015
[6] Yong, Huang (2010) "The Self-centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (4):651-692
[7] Shun, Kwongloi (2009) "Studying Confucian and Comparative Ethics: Methodological Reflections", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 36.3

Also, whether they read the texts with reference to a fundamental philosophical question of western philosophy does not contradict the fact that content is their primary focus. Their focus is to unearth the philosophical ideas "underneath" the texts, without paying sufficient attention to the ways in which the ideas are formulated.

More recently, some start to wonder whether there could be a new reading methodology. They believe how the philosophical text is written is theoretically related to what philosophical thoughts are conveyed in the text. That is to say, the literary forms used in a text are neither merely chosen in an arbitrary way, nor for some pragmatic purposes. Rather, they are indistinguishable with the content. Some may even believe that they are parts of arguments which have argumentative force. This idea opens up a new methodological possibility and has significant influences on how we do Chinese philosophy. When we study philosophical texts comprehensively, we have to study not only *what* the texts say, but also *how* what is said is said. The "what" and the "how" are believed to be bound together. For example, in the book *Literary Form of Argument in Early China*, which adopts this approach at great lengths, Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer argue that "these literary forms are not whatever is left over when the paraphrasable 'something to say', message, content, subject matter, is taken away". And they are not also just something to "make them [the arguments] more attractive to their readers, be it for embellishment, or to make them didactically more easily accessible or memorable."[8] Rather, the forms *constitute* the content. I refer to this approach as the literary form approach. To clarify, it is not that the past scholarship ignored literary forms, but that it would often regard them as poetic, aesthetic and pragmatic rather than philosophical, logical and cognitive. David Hall and Roger Ames are a good example of this, as they contrast "aesthetic order" in Chinese philosophical thinking with "rational order" in western philosophy.[9] In other words, literary forms are considered as a rhetorical device belonging to the realm of literature (or the realm of poetry in Plato's terminology), instead of part of arguments belonging to the realm of philosophy. The fundamental thesis of the literary form approach is that literary forms are indispensable parts of the content and serve an argumentative function.

This literary form approach can become manifest in various ways. For example, Edward Slingerland's attention to the cognitive aspects of metaphor, I believe, belongs to the camp of literary form approach. Based on Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory which

[8] Gentz, Joachim and Meyer, Dirk (2015), *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*, Leiden: Brill, p.7
[9] Hall, David L.and Ames, Roger T. (1987) *Thinking Through Confucius* New York Albany: SUNY

promotes that "all theories are based on metaphors because all our abstract concepts are metaphorically defined", Slingerland argues against the idea that "the western philosophical tradition has long been characterised by a view of metaphor as philosophically superfluous: a decorative rhetorical device expressing a thought capable of being fully reduced to some literal equivalent, and therefore merely entertaining at best, and potentially misleading at worst."[10] The view against which Slingerland argues by and large echoes the content approach stated previously. What they are focusing on are all the "abstract" and "propositional" ideas underneath the texts whereas the literary forms, specifically the form of metaphors in our example raised, are unimportant or "philosophically superfluous" and thus ignored. On the contrary, Slingerland, like the other advocates of the literary form approach, believes the form of metaphor constitutes the content and thus is philosophically important to the readers of the text. Slingerland asserts that metaphor is "'true' in the sense that metaphors are perceived as telling us something about the world."[11] Thus, metaphors should be taken seriously.

Moreover, the literary form approach can also become manifest in the holistic study of a single chapter of the classic. The literary form approach sometimes concerns the structural and compositional features of the text. This application of the literary form approach in the holistic manner, unlike the content approach which often isolates statements or concepts from the structure, is concerned with how the different literary units are organically connected to each other to form a meaningful whole. De Reu Wim, for instance, challenges two related facets of the long-standing interpretation of "Waiwu" 外物 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. For one thing, there is an ingrained belief that the chapter is "made up of scraps put together at random" and hence a "ragbag of odds and ends". For another, the chapter's well-known final section has long been understood as grappling with the relation between language and meaning. Focusing his attention on the structure of the whole chapter but not the content of a single section or particular statements, De Reu identifies a considerable number of "verbal connections" among its different textual parts which contribute to making the chapter a structured and coherent whole. He concludes that the theme of the chapter's well-known final section should be fundamentally altered, highlighting that the section, along with the whole

[10] Johnson, Mark (2008) "Philosophy Debt to Metaphor" in *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, p.51. And Slingerland, Edward (2011) "Metaphor and Meaning in Early China" *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10:1-30, p.2

[11] Slingerland, Edward (2011), p.6

chapter, is concerned with "the [practical] question of how best to linguistically engage with guiding opinion and teachings as a part of that social world."[12]

This is certainly not an exhaustive list of examples. From the selected instances we can nevertheless at least see how the literary form approach can be manifested in the study of Chinese philosophy, and more importantly the difference between the orthodox content approach and the relatively new literary form approach.

ii. The content-laden challenge

In the following, I shall discuss two possible challenges to the literary form approach. The first challenge is the content-laden challenge. It is concerned with the question of how the literary form approach can be distinguished from the content approach. The upshot of the challenge is that the literary form approach is never absolutely content-free.

Before entering a discussion of the content-laden challenge, it must be noted that my aims here are not to dispatch the literary form approach. Quite the contrary, I am with the literary form approach and the thesis should be viewed as an attempt to comprehensively deploy the approach into the study of the *Zhuangzi*. In the discussion of the two possible challenges, I endeavour to point out a questionable yet implicit idea underpinning the approach which can, in turn, lead us to obtain a better view of what it is and how it is best applied. Therefore, the content-laden challenge could be seen as a suggestion in disguise, shedding insight into how the literary form approach could be modified.

Accordingly, not only do I contend that there is a possibility of the literary-form approach being modified by taking the content-laden challenge into account and is therefore not subject to the challenge, I also endorse such a possibility as the ideal form of the literary form approach and ideal way of doing Chinese philosophy. Notably, this possibility is not something invented by me. To a certain extent, this ideal literary form approach (I also refer to it as the relaxed literary form approach because it takes a milder view on the presumption of being content-free) has been adopted in the literature, though its employment may not be explicit enough.[13]

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[12] Gentz, Joachim and Meyer, Dirk (2015), p.296

[13] For example, Dirk Meyer, in his article "Truth Claim with no Claim to Truth: Text and Performance of the 'Qiushui' Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*" does not claim that his approach is content-free. I thus believe that Meyer's approach is already exercising the relaxed literary-form approach. It is therefore not subject to the content-laden challenge, although he does not problematise the question of content versus form.

In order to do justice to those who have implicitly adopted the ideal/relaxed literary form approach, I must emphasise that the content-laden challenge here is not a challenge to the literary form approach as such. The content-laden challenge is rather a challenge to a more primitive and radical version of the literary form approach. I refer to such a version as the Robust literary form approach which is subject to the content-laden challenge. Wagner is one of the pioneers who adopted the literary form approach in Chinese philosophy, and his works might be seen as an application of the robust version of the literary form approach. It is therefore well suited to serve as my main example to illustrate the content-laden challenge.[14]

Having introduced the distinction between the two approaches, one may feel unsatisfied by it. This impression is exactly the motivation of my first question to the literary form approach. I contend that this impression is based upon the nature of the distinction. The distinction between the two approaches is not a distinction in an all-or-nothing fashion, but instead in a matter-of-degree, or spectrum-like fashion. In other words, the literary form approach can never be distinguished from the content approach in any absolute sense, and a particular research on Chinese philosophy can never be classified as taking purely the literary form approach in absolute sense either. The underlying reason for this is that we can never single out the literary form of a text and study the form independently. The study of the literary form is always by and large content-laden. To illustrate this, I discuss Wagner's study of the "Inter-locking Parallel Style" (IPS) of Laozi and Wangbi's commentary because, in using the literary form approach to study Chinese philosophy, it claims to be formalistic.[15]

According to Wagner, IPS is a particular literary form prevailing in Laozi and Wangbi's writing. This IPS pattern is subdivided into two forms: open/explicit IPS and close/implicit IPS. I will only focus on open/explicit IPS since Wagner himself admits close/implicit IPS cannot be semantic-neutral.[16] IPS is a pattern that splits the argument into two subject matters (a) and (b), and these two matters are connected to each other in a parallel and interlocking fashion. This could be exhibited by a simple example as shown below:

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[14] It should also be noted that my major concern here is not to evaluate Wagner's actual position but to illustrate what objection the literary form approach might face if pushed to the extreme.

[15] Wagner, Rudolf (2000) *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator Wang Bi on the Laozi*. Albany. State University of New York Press

[16] Wagner, Rudolf (2000) p.75. He writes: "A frequent variant within IPS, the change of the sequence a b a b into one such as a b b a does not present problems in open IPS. Sometimes it does so in the closed form because the linkages between elements of the same string are not immediately evident to a modern scholar coming from a different cultural background."

1a 為者敗之

2b 執者失之

3c 是以聖人

4a 無為故無敗

5b 無執故無失

(Laozi 64.5-6)

Wagner decodes the text with open IPS and restructures the text as:[17]

1a 2b

3c

4a 5b

In this passage, we can see that there are two parallel pairs 1a-2b and 4a-5b which are identified purely by the sentence structure—namely X者X之 and 無X故無X—and two strings a and b which are identified by two sets of key terms: *wei* 為-*bai* 敗 and *zhi* 執-*shi* 失. Phrase 1a is linked with phrase 4a with regard to the key terms: *wei-bai*; and phrase 2b is linked with phrase 5b with regard to the key terms: *zhi-shi*. In other words, although phrases 1a and 2b are in parallel fashion, they belong to different strings dealing with different key concepts and issues (so does phrase 4a and 5b). Additionally, phrase 3 as a c element is a linking or sometimes concluding unit that is related to both strings a and b. In short, an IPS pattern often goes like 1a-2b, 3a-4b, 5a-6b and so on, with the linking or concluding c element placed in between or at the end of the sequence. Every set of two Arabic numbers (e.g. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6...) indicates the parallel sentences, and every English character (e.g. a, b) indicates a distinct subject matter.

[17] Wagner, Rudolf (2000) P.65-66

In the case of open IPS, Wagner believes that his analysis is purely formalistic in the sense that his decoding of the IPS can be justified without any commitment to the content of the passage, but solely by the literary evidence. He writes:

> It should be noted that I deal here with structure, not with the particulars of translation. Even if someone should prefer a different choice of translation terms, the argument would stand so long as the structural analysis is not falsified.[18]

The point emphasised is that his analysis is translation-free and comment-free. That is to say, regardless of the meaning of the passage, phrase 1a should still be grouped with phrase 2a since they use the same symbols *wei* and *bai*. And phrase 1b should still be grouped with 2b since they use the same symbols *zhi* and *shi*. The IPS analysis has nothing to do with the content of the concepts *wei, bai, zhi* and *shi* but only with formal features. Even someone who does not know Chinese at all can have the same IPS analysis with Wagner's as long as the sameness between the symbols is noted.

However, I contend that the IPS analysis is also content-laden. To say that it is content-laden is to say that the IPS analysis has its commitment on the semantic meaning of the text. The upshot is that even if two phrases apparently use the same symbol, it does not automatically lead to the conclusion that they should be grouped to the same string dealing with the same subject matter. In the case of Laozi 64.5-6, even though it is obvious that both phrase 1a and 2b include the same terms *wei* and *bai*, it does not imply the meaning of the terms *wei* and *bai* in phrase 1a is the same as those in phrase 2b. It is not uncommon in early China that two same terms have different meanings within a text. For example, the paradoxical expression in *Laozi* 38, “the superior virtue is not virtuous”上德不德. According to the commonly-held semantic approach towards paradoxical expressions, although the same term "*de*" appeared two times in the phrase “the superior virtue is not virtuous”, the meaning of the first *de* is not identical with the meaning of the second *de* due to the avoidance of self-contradiction. It would be a genuine problem of self-contradiction if the two *de* mean the same: how could we make any sense of the sentence “A is not A”? I shall leave the question of how one should deal with paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* in chapter 4.

[18] Wagner, Rudolf (2000) P.62

Some might argue that the two *de* here are identical to each other. But that would not undermine my point. My point is not that they do have different meanings, but that they *can* have different meanings. Even if they are identical to each other, it is something that needs to be argued. We should not take their content to be the same simply because they are given representation by the same graph. In other words, we should allow the possibility that different appearances of the same term in the same text can have different meaning and content. It is therefore possible that the terms *wei* and *bai* in phrase 1a, and *wei* and *bai* in phrase 4a are associated with different meanings. If it is the case, we can no longer group phrase 1a with 4a into the same string. Worse still, it is even possible to group 1a with 5b, 2b with 4a. In other words, Wagner's analysis of the formal structure of Laozi 64.5-6, which groups phrase 1 and 4 to string a, and phrase 2 and 5 to string b, take assumption on the semantic content of the key terms *wei, bai, zhi* and *shi.* Without the assumption on the content, Wagner's analysis may not stand. It should be noted that I do not mean it cannot or does not stand. The sameness between terms is certainly strong evidence to group them together, believing that they deal with the same subject matter. But there is no law-like inference. My point is to show that Wagner's analysis is not entirely content-free, though the content-assumption might be minimal here. After all, we can see how the assumption on the content of the text affects our analysis on the literary form of the text.

Interestingly, this echoes the criticism towards structuralism in western hermeneutics posed by Ricoeur. In the western hermeneutics tradition, there can be two distinctive kinds of attitude toward text: the understanding attitude and the explanatory attitude.[19] The former is a mode of understanding that emphasises the interaction between the subject and the text. It is believed that the meaning of the text is not something that exists objectively in the text itself, but rather, a result of the "fusion of horizon" between the subject and the text.[20] On the contrary, the latter is a response to the former since it is believed that the role of the subject is too dominant in the former account of how we read texts. The explanatory attitude is the idea that there is an objective and rigid structure presented within the text itself, and we can analyse the structure without involving the subjectivity of ourselves. One important

[19] Ricoeur, Paul (1981) *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. trans. John B. Thompson, Cambridge University Press

[20] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2004) *Truth and Method*, trans Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London and New York: Continuum, 2nd rev.edn. I shall further explain how Gadamer's hermeneutics is relevant to our study of the *Zhuangzi* in chapter 5.

motivation for the explanatory attitude is the influential distinction made by Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey believes that the understanding attitude is solely manifested in studies of history or humanity whereas the explanatory attitude is solely manifested in the study of natural science. The structuralists' project is to show that the explanatory attitude can also be applied in the study of text, and thereby render the humanities study the same sort of objectivity with that of scientific study. The scientific status of the humanities study, or more specific hermeneutics, can be thus preserved. This may also be the motivation of the rise of the literary form approach since the orthodox philosophical content approach is often thought to be too "subjective" that imposes the subject's own philosophical terminologies, conceptual schemes, and philosophical concerns too.[21]

With regard to the distinction between the understanding and explanatory attitude, Ricoeur points out the same problem, namely the impossibility of the understanding-free analysis on structure. He writes:

> We tried to adhere to a notion of sense which would be strictly equivalent to the arrangement of the elements of a text, to the integration of the segments of action and the actants within the narrative treated as a whole closed in upon itself. In fact, no one stops at so formal a conception of sense (...) It is this function of myth as a narrative of origins that structural analysis seeks to place in parentheses. But such analysis does not succeed in eluding this function: it merely postpones it. Myth is not a logical operator between any propositions whatsoever, but involves propositions point towards limit situations, towards the origin and the end, towards death and birth, suffering and sexuality.[22]

Here Ricoeur is taking myth as a particular type of text to discuss the explanatory attitude towards text. This is a similar doubt I posed to the literary-approach that no one can proceed the literary form approach or the structural analysis so formally. The analysis of the literary form of the text, Wagner's IPS analysis, for instance, is concerned with "the arrangement of the elements of a text" as the structuralists do.[23] But as Ricoeur rightly points out neither of

[21] The concern of "objectivity" and the revulsion at "subjectivity" is only part of the motivation. Another important motivation of the formalist-turn is the idea that the form itself is part of the content, and therefore without the study of form the content is misrepresented.
[22] Ricoeur, Paul (1981) P.160-161
[23] Indeed the philosophical project of structuralism is far more ambitious than Wagner's work in the sense that structuralism attempts to seek for a set of universal grammar valid to every human being. Wagner by no means shares such an ambition. But what they have in common is that they both try to figure out the formal structure of the text, be it universal or particular. They are in this sense formal and structural.

them can “stop at so formal a conception of sense”. More importantly, Ricoeur also reveals the underlying reason why we cannot: text is not merely a “logical operator between any propositions whatsoever”. It is something with meaningful content. Just as myth “involves propositions point towards limit situations, towards the origin and the end, towards death and birth, suffering and sexuality", the *Laozi* also involves propositions point towards politics, metaphysics, ethics, and a variety of different themes. We thus cannot take text as simply a sequence of symbols, single out the "formal structure", and shed light on it. In short, the distinction between the literary form approach and content approach is not absolute since the application of literary-approach is also content-laden.

Now we can see the limits of the robust literary form approach for its being content-laden. Does it then follow that the literary form approach is nothing genuinely new and helpful? Should we then abandon the distinction and continue our orthodox content approach to do Chinese philosophy? I do not think so. Nor does Ricoeur think that we should give up structuralist analysis. The content-laden challenge does not imply that the focus on the literary form of the text is unimportant to the interpretation of the Chinese philosophical texts. Alternatively, I suggest a hybrid attitude which is in between the content approach and the literary form approach. I refer to this modified version of the literary-form approach as the relaxed literary-form approach. This hybrid attitude is also the attitude of interpretation advocated by Ricoeur. I thus begin the articulation of the relaxed literary form approach with Ricoeur’s discussion on how we can combine the two attitudes: the understanding and the explanatory.[24]

Recall the two attitudes towards texts in western hermeneutics: the understanding attitude, and the explanatory/structuralists attitude. As explained before, Ricoeur has a similar question to the structuralist enterprise: texts are not “systems of units devoid of proper meaning, each of which is defined in terms of its difference from all of the others” and thus we cannot have an absolutely formal explanation on the structure of the text.[25] Nevertheless, Ricoeur is not suggesting that we should completely abandon the explanatory attitude, nor any attempt to analyse the structure of the text. Rather, in his conception of text, text is itself

[24] Again, I believe that this modified literary form approach is not entirely new. For example, Dirk Meyer’s study of the forms of the evacuated texts in Early China is clearly content-laden to some degree. But although he does not render the status of absolute content-free to the Literary-form Approach as Wagner does, he still gives heavy weight to the formal and structural character of the texts. This shows that not all advocates of the literary form approach are not directly subject to the content-laden challenge. See Meyer, Dirk (2012) *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China*. Leiden: Brill.
[25] Ricoeur, Paul (1981) p.153

a structured work, and hence not only enables the structural attitude but also necessitates it in our interpretation of the text. He writes:

> For the work of discourse presents the characteristics of organisation and structure which enable structural methods to be applied to discourse itself, methods which were first successfully applied to linguistic entities shorter than the sentence in phonology and semantics. The objectification of discourse in the work and the structural character of composition, to which we shall add distanciation by writing, compel us to place in question the Diltheyan opposition between 'understanding' and 'explanation'. A new hermeneutics is opened by the success of structural analysis; henceforth explanation is the obligatory path of understanding.[26]

In other words, although the meaningful character of text makes impossible the explanation of the pure form, the "structural character" of text still makes structural explanation an "obligatory path of understanding". The structural explanation is now understood as "as a stage - and a necessary one - between naive and critical interpretation, between a surface and a depth interpretation".[27] It is not the beginning stage of the whole process of our understanding since, as explained, it is impossible. Rather, it is based on "naive interpretation". That is to say, although our structural explanation is unavoidably content-laden, it is still possible for us to minimise the content on which we rely so as to do the structural analysis. The picture therefore is that we should suspend our deep, rich, or "critical" interpretation of the content of the text as much as we can, and proceed our structural explanation based on just minimal, or "naive" interpretation, and eventually have "our critical interpretation" on the content.

The picture is not a renouncement of the understanding attitude/the content approach. Rather, it refreshes our understanding of what it is meant to understand the content of the text. The meaning of the text is no longer something unrelated to the structure, be it the intention of the author or the philosophical resources for which we are looking for ourselves. The meaning of the text is embedded in the structured text-world. To interpret is accordingly to "follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself in route towards the orient of the text."[28] Placing oneself in the text, as the understanding attitude emphasises, is still essential. But now the location in which we place ourselves is the structure composed of the different

[26] Ibid., p.138
[27] Ibid., p.161
[28] Ibid., p.162

textual units. Therefore, the orthodox content approach in Chinese philosophy can also be preserved insofar as we give enough weight to the literary form. Even, this modified version of literary form approach can accommodate the approach that is concerned merely with the text's philosophical content of modern relevance. For example, the comparative approach mentioned in section 1 that seeks for philosophical resources in Chinese text by reference to contemporary problems. This sort of study would not necessarily be dismissed in the methodological picture I am proposing. The only reminder is that it should not be carried out in a too selective manner that over-destructs the text. Rather it should "follow the path of thought" of the text: *it becomes an enterprise that figures out what is of modern relevance along the path structured by the literary form of the text but not looking for thought resources in the aerial text-world*.

In short, this is a proposal that reconciles the interpretation and explanatory attitude in Ricouer's terminology, or the content approach and the literary form approach in my terminology.

iii. The lack of argumentative force challenge

The second challenge is concerned with the question of how far we can claim the literary form is itself part of the arguments. Regarding this issue, different advocates of the literary-approach may have stronger or weaker views, but it seems that most of them believe the form of expression is itself part of the arguments. For example, Meyer and Gentz emphasise the literary forms "serve specific argumentative function" and "indispensable parts of the arguments themselves."[29] Slingerland also argues that metaphors are not normatively neutral, but rather a primary tool in constructing arguments. But I am sceptical about the claim that *all* literary forms can be of argumentative force, especially those literary-forms at *atomic-level*. I will begin the articulation of the challenge with Slingerland's understanding of metaphor. He writes:

> In other words, metaphors and metaphoric blends are not normatively neutral mechanisms understanding the world—or expressing some sort of timeless harmony between nature and man—but rather polemical devices aimed at driving home a particular normative view …… This is why blending is arguably the primary tool in political and religious-moral debate, where human scale inputs are recruited

[29] Gentz, Joachim and Meyer, Dirk (2015) p.6

> polemically in order to inspire somatic-emotional normative reactions in the listeners.[30]

The reason why Slingerland believes metaphors to be normative and argumentative is based on the idea from the conceptual blending theory that metaphors are emotional-embedded, and our decision-making is subject to emotions. As such, metaphorical representations, via emotion, affect our acceptance or resistance of that certain concept, notion or discourse.

However, it seems that there is another mode in which we are convinced by the text, or in which the fusion of horizon happen. What Slingerland has argued is that by taking the literary form of metaphor, we are more likely to be emotionally moved by the text. But this does not exhaust all modes of our experience of being convinced by a text. Often, we are moved by the text because we "see" the reasonableness or truthfulness of a discourse. That is, the reader is able to "see" the force of the reasons provided by the text for its discourse. Accordingly, it is sensible to say that a text is emotionally-moving but not reason-giving, or vice versa.[31] In Gentz and Meyer's book, they argue that the literary forms should not be explained solely by its pragmatic function, such as making the text "more attractive to their readers (...) make them didactically more easily accessible or memorable." It shows that when the proponents of the literary form approach say that literary forms are of "argumentative force" they are also referring to the "argumentative force" in the reason-giving sense. I therefore believe that the "argumentative force" in question should be in reason-giving rather than emotionally-moving nature.

Nonetheless, I doubt whether the *atomic-level* literary forms, including metaphors, serve any argumentative force in the reason-giving sense since they seemingly cannot justify ideas. For instance, in Gentz and Meyer's book, Wagner contributes an article to argue that the function of 夫 *fu* in the early Chinese texts is a status marker that indicates the statement that follows as a principle for which general validity is claimed.[32] But the question is whether this particular literary form, namely beginning the sentence with *fu*, is argumentative in the reason-giving sense. That is to ask whether the statement justifies itself as a principle with general validity in virtue of the usage of *fu*. It seems that to start a statement with *fu* is not itself a *reason* for its reader to believe that the following statement is universally true.

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[30] Slingerland, Edward (2011) p.17
[31] I have no commitment here to the question of whether this kind of reason is universal and objective.
[32] Wagner, Rudolf (2015), "A Building Block of Chinese Argumentation: Initial *Fu* 夫" in Gentz, Joachim and Meyer, Dirk (2015)

Therefore, it is doubtful to claim that *fu*, as a literal pattern and hence a kind of literary form, represents "arguments themselves with argumentative function."[33]

I contend that this is also the case in metaphors. It seems that abstract concepts sometimes have their own internal and pre-metaphor structures and they are not totally "empty" allowing for wholly free metaphorical conceptualisation of them. As such, an argumentation gap in the usage of metaphor arises: how someone conceptualises an abstract concept by his selection of metaphors is one thing; what the abstract concept should be is another. Even if conceptual blending theory is correct in claiming that abstract concepts do not have any content before the metaphorical conceptualization, the question then shifts to how we can judge a metaphorical conceptualisation to be true before opposing conceptualisations since the target concept itself is now too empty to be the standard.

This argumentation gap can be found in almost all debates that take metaphor as their major argumentation tool. Slingerland takes the debate between Mengzi and Gaozi over human nature as an example to show how metaphor is a primary tool for argumentation.[34] We can also use it to illustrate how it does not. In this case, Slingerland believes that Mengzi's argument for claiming that human nature is good is to metaphorically conceptualise human nature as water and living instead of as raw materials. This argument works because our embodied experience tells us that water and living things are good and have their natural telos. The listeners will be persuaded by Mencius' telling them that human nature is good and has its natural telos through metaphorically conceptualising human nature as water and living things. Nonetheless, what is doubtful here is the grounds that allow Mencius to conceptualise human nature as water and living things. The argumentation gap is thus: how Mencius conceptualises the notion of human nature by his selection of metaphor is one thing; what human nature actually is is another. Accordingly, a metaphorical conceptualisation seems to be only a tool with a strong persuasive function; it, however, cannot serve as a reason-giving argument.[35]

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[33] Gentz and Meyer (2015) p.7

[34] Slingerland, Edward (2011), p.17-24

[35] Slingerland also contends that "blending is arguably the primary tool in political and religious-moral debate". But I think the question equally holds in the debate on political issues. The relation between countries — for example, Hong Kong and People's Republic of China (PRC) — is an abstract domain inciting frequent political debate. Therefore just like the contemporary metaphor theory concludes, always make use of metaphor projection so as to conceptualise this abstract domain, that is, the relation between Hong Kong and the PRC is always metaphorically framed by a certain concrete source domain. Not surprisingly, "concrete personal relations" is always the source domain of which we make use in this particular debate. The PRC always metaphorically frames the relation between Hong Kong and itself as the relation between father and son. This example does show that metaphor is a strong tool for persuasion — in this case intended at persuading Hong

What is the alternative? In response to the challenge, we can either have a less ambitious view on the importance of literary form or pay our attention to the *macro-level* literary form.

For the first alternative, what I aim to show in the earlier section is that the (atomic-level) literary form fails to be an argument in the normative sense.[36] It hardly strengthens the reason-giving force of the discourse. It can be seen in the case of Slingerland's metaphor study and Wagner's status marker study. But it does not imply that literary form thus fails to be part of the constituents of the content of the discourse. What we can modify in the literary form approach is simply that we should take a milder conception of the relation between literary form and discourse. We may alter the claim that "literary forms are indispensable parts of the arguments themselves" to the claim that "atomic-level literary forms, such as metaphor and status marker, are indispensable parts of the ideas or content conveyed, though they may not be part of the justification of the ideas". The latter and more mild claim, I believe, is very well supported even by the case of Slingerland's metaphor study and Wagner's status marker study. For example, if we want to understand the text thoroughly, the form of "beginning the statement with *fu*" should not be overlooked. Otherwise, we would miss out something: namely, the statement's status as a principle for which general validity is claimed. Therefore, this milder position still supports the important conclusion that the literary forms "need to be recognised fully to understand the philosophical discussion in more

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Kong people that they should be thankful for the PRC and obey its command, by appealing to their beliefs that a son should be thankful to his father and obey his command. Conversely, Hong Kong people can also reasonably challenge why the relation between Hong Kong and the PRC should be metaphorically conceptualised as the relation between father and son. They could, fundamentally, object that this relationship should not be conceptualised like this, but in a completely different way (perhaps as the relation between two business partners so as to be able to persuade others that Hong Kong does not have to show unconditional gratitude towards the PRC nor obey all of its commands unquestioningly). The problematic consequence of this is that the two parties cannot even form any substantial discussion since the target concept in question is metaphorically framed by two completely different sets of metaphors. The "father-and-son" metaphor means nothing to those from Hong Kong who are antipathetic to its political implications while the "business-partners" is unattractive to those who stand for PRC sovereignty claims. The two camps are simply talking past one another by using two different ad hoc sets of metaphor without arguing what the relation between Hong Kong and PRC should really be.

[36] To do full justice to Gentz and Meyer's approach, the normative sense of argumentation may not be what they mean in their talk of argument. They write: "'[a]rgument' is therefore not understood as a tool to ascertain truth, as is commonly seen in Western philosophical discourse." (2015, p.12). But then the question shifts to what "argumentative force" they mean. The most obvious alternative would be the actual argumentative force just explained in contrast to the normative argumentative force. And there is expression in the book, such as "arguments are devices of persuasion" (p.12), suggesting that the actual sense is what they mean. It, however, contradicts with their own idea that the literary forms should not be explained solely by its pragmatic function, such as "make them [the texts] more attractive to their readers (...) make them didactically more easily accessible or memorable." As a result, it appears that both actual and normative argumentative force are not what the book is supposed to mean by "argumentative force". It remains as a problem to them to better articulate a unique sense of argumentation of which literary forms are essentially part.

precise terms."[37] The main idea of the literary form approach that literary form cannot be overlooked in our search for meaning of the text is still well preserved.

For another, we may pay our attention to the *macro-level* literary form. The macro-level literary form is concerned with the structural character of the text: how the text as a whole is composed. It seems that the macro-level literary form can do much more than the atomic-level literary form in terms of its argumentative force. For example, in "Truth Claim with no Claim to Truth: Text and Performance of the 'Qiushui' Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*" Meyer established the coherence of the whole chapter, showing that the apparently separated textual units are interconnected and thereby generate meaning. By considering the chapter as a whole, Meyer identifies the river-like and ever-floating character in its form of expression that "each scene offered a new perspective on what was previously said, either enriching it or demonstrating that the previous understanding was simply a reflection of a tainted vision of reality."[38] The flow of the entire chapter, which continuously opens up new perspectives from which we can look at the reality, is itself a manifestation or duplication of a river, and therefore of the *dao*. Its forms of composition are thus part of its message on the *dao*, conveying ideas about the *dao* with no direct claims on it. This formal character of the 'Qiushui' chapter is itself an important part of the meaning and also the arguments of the chapter. It is theoretically impossible to directly argue for the *dao* endorsed in the chapter since the *dao* advocated is precisely an ever-drifting *dao*. If one directly argues for this ever-drifting dao, one would just result in fixation and distortion of the *dao*. Therefore, the ever-drifting *dao* can only be *argued* through the form, namely the ever-drifting and river-like structure of the chapter. From this example, we can see how the macro-literary forms are different from the atomic-literary forms: the macro-literary forms are of argumentative force.

If we put this modification of the literary form approach into wider context, it has to do with the performative nature of the text. To correctly articulate the argumentative force of the forms and structure, we have to see the text as a performance. In the case of the *Zhuangzi*, I shall argue that the text as a unity of forms and content is a *dao*-performance rather than a representation of the *dao*.[39] The precise content of such a reconceptualisation of the *Zhuangzi* would be unfolded in the later chapters, and receives an explicit formulation in chapter 5.

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[37] Gentz, Joachim and Meyer, Dirk (2015) p.12
[38] Meyer, Dirk (2015) pp.336-337
[39] Meyer has argued for a similar conceptualisation of the *Zhuangzi* in his analysis of the "Qiushui"chapter . See Meyer, Dirk (2015) pp.325

iv. The relaxed literary form approach and its application

With the two challenges and the corresponding modifications, I argue for an ideal version of literary form approach to which I refer as the relaxed literary form approach. The relaxed literary form approach is in the middle of the spectrum which has the robust literary form approach at one end, and the content approach at another. First, the relaxed literary form approach is distinguished from the robust literary form approach in that it concedes the impossibility of being content-free and focuses on the *macro-level* literary form. Second, it is important to note that the content-laden challenge does not make the distinction of the content approach and literary-form meaningless. The relaxed literary form approach is still distinguished from the content approach since the relaxed literary form approach still regards the text as an integral and self-contained entity generating meaning and arguments whereas the content approach regards the text as a vehicle *for* containing ideas.

To sum up, the relaxed literary approach is that we should suspend "critical" interpretation of the content of the text as much as we can, and proceed our macro-level structural analysis based on just minimal, or "naive" interpretation, and eventually have "our critical interpretation" on the content. I contend that this is the ideal way in which we approach the Chinese philosophical texts. As explained, this approach is beneficial to understand thoroughly the meaning of the texts.

Interestingly, this reading strategy is not alien to the Chinese intellectual tradition, so to speak. That is to say, when in the past Chinese scholars read their own classics, they also paid attention to the formal and structural character of the texts. For example, they sometimes represent the texts in a pictorial way.[40] It shows that they also realised that the text should not be just read linearly, or analysed in a statement-based manner as the content approach often does. Therefore, the macro-level literary form analysis resonates well with the Chinese own tradition.

To end with this methodological chapter, I shall take the famous section of the "Yuyan" 寓言 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* as an case in which there are many interpretative value as a result of the application of the literary form approach.

[40] Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, Georges Métailié (2007) *Graphic and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China.* Leiden: Brill

v. The case study: the “Yuyan” 寓言 chapter

寓言十九, 重言十七, 卮言日出, 和以天倪。

寓言十九, 藉外論之。親父不為其子媒。親父譽之, 不若非其父者也;非吾罪也, 人之罪也。與己同則應, 不與己同則反, 同於己為是之, 異於己為非之。

重言十七, 所以已言也, 是為耆艾。年先矣, 而無經緯本末以期年耆者, 是非先也。人而無以先人, 無人道也;人而無人道, 是之謂陳人。

卮言日出, 和以天倪, 因以曼衍, 所以窮年。不言則齊, 齊與言不齊, 言與齊不齊也, 故曰無言。言無言, 終身言, 未嘗言;終身不言, 未嘗不言。有自也而可, 有自也而不可;有自也而然, 有自也而不然。

惡乎然？然於然。惡乎不然？不然於不然。惡乎可？可於可。惡乎不可？不可於不可。物固有所然, 物固有所可, 無物不然, 無物不可。非卮言日出, 和以天倪, 孰得其久！

萬物皆種也, 以不同形相禪, 始卒若環, 莫得其倫, 是謂天均。天均者, 天倪也。

Nine out of ten of my words are lodging-place-word. Seven out of ten of my words are weighted-words. Goblet-words come forth day after day, being in harmony within the Heavenly-distinction.

The nine-tenth-lodging-place-words discuss something by borrowing an outside viewpoint. A father doesn't serve as a matchmaker for his own son because the praises of the father are not as reliable as those of the others. This is the fault of the ordinary people, not mine. People echo whatever agrees with their own and object to whatever doesn't. They deem what agrees with them to be the case, and deem what doesn't to not to be the case.

The seven-tenth-weighted-words are meant to stop other people’s words. It acts as the elderly. The one who is merely ahead of the others in age without grasping the warp and woof, the root to the top of things that match with his age is not genuinely ahead of the others. The one who has nothing ahead of the others has not grasped the way of people. The one who has not grasped the way of people but is just ahead in ages is what is called a stale man.

> With the come-forth-day-after-day-goblet-words, [we are] in harmony within the Heavenly-distinction, [we] follow along with the endless and irregular change, and thus [we] can live out [our] heavenly years. When nothing is said, they are a unity. [We] try to render unity to the words being spoken, they cease to be a unity. [We] try to talk about unity, it ceases to be a unity. That is why it is said that [we] should only have non-speech. When you speak non-speech, you speak throughout your life without saying anything. [When you speak non-speech], you say something even if you never say anything throughout your life. There is some pre-existing path from which you approve something. There is some pre-existing path from which you disapprove of something. There is some pre-existing path from which you judge it to be the case. There is some pre-existing path from which you judge it not to be the case.
>
> How do people make affirmative judgement? People base their affirmative judgement on other affirmative judgements. How do people make negative judgments? People base their negative judgement on other negative judgements. How do people approve something? People approve something on the basis of their approval of other things. How do people disapprove of something? People disapprove of something on the basis of their disapproval of other things. There must be some perspective from which a thing is affirmed. There must be some perspective from which a thing is approved. Nothing cannot be affirmed. Nothing cannot be approved. Without the coming-forth-day-after-day-goblet-words, harmonising [myself] within the Heavenly-distinction, how can I survive for long?
>
> Myriad things all have the same seed, which is circulated to each other in different forms. The beginning and the end are connected to each other as a circle to which no grouping is applicable. This is called the Heavenly Potter's wheel. Heavenly Potter's wheel, the Heavenly-distinction.[41]

The passage quoted is famous for its being an explicit and direct description of the form of expression of the *Zhuangzi* itself. In general, it classifies three main kinds of form of expression, namely the lodging-place-words 寓言, the weighted-words 重言, and the

[41] While taking others' translation works as my reference, all the translations of the original text of the *Zhuangzi* in this dissertation are done by myself. My major references are Burton Watson (2013) *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, A.C Graham(2001) *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, and Brook Ziporyn (2009) *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*

goblet-words 卮言. The past illustrations of the passage directly dealt with the content of these three concepts. They tried to explain the essential features of the three, how they work, and the reasons why they are employed in Zhuangzi with regard to its philosophy. However, what is overlooked is the way in which the author of the chapter conceptualises these three kinds of forms of expression.

By contrast, I argue that with the attention to how the three are described, we can better understand what the three mean. I contend that the focus on forms is particularly useful for the reading of this section because, as mentioned, the passage is about the forms of expression of its own. When the passage expresses ideas on the forms of expression of its own, the passage itself, too, has to be expressed in certain forms. It, then, is not a surprise that the ways in which the passage is expressed are in accordance with the ways endorsed in the passage. Therefore, the main idea is that the passage explains lodging-place-words in the way of lodging-place-words; explains weighted-words in the way of weighted-words; explains not only the goblet-words but also the other two (it fits the common assumption that the goblet-words is the most important among the three) in the way of goblet-words.

Consider the lodging-place-words first. The main point of lodging-place-words is "discuss[ing] something borrowing an outside viewpoint" 藉外論之. When we pay attention to the way in which the use of lodging-place-words is justified, we can find that its justification is also derived from "an outside viewpoint". It justifies the use of lodging-place-words mainly by the idea that "a father doesn't serve as matchmaker for his own son because the praises of the father are not as good as those of the others" 親父不為其子媒。親父譽之，不若非其父者也. This very idea, which is crucial to the justification of the use of lodging-place-words, is not the own viewpoint (if any) of the author of the passage, but "an outside viewpoint" as the passage immediately says that "this is the fault of the ordinary people, not mine" 非吾罪也，人之罪也. We thus see how the passage justifies lodging-place-words in the way of lodging-place-words.

Turn to the weighted-words then. The main point of lodging-place-words is the appeal to the authority. The appeal to authority also occurs in its explanation of the weighted-words. In the explanation of the weighted-words, the passage introduces the concept of "the stale man" 陳人. The phrase used by the passage when introducing the concept is "what is called" 是之謂. Although the passage does not appeal to any particular authority, this phrase shows that the passage appeals to the common knowledge of the community, namely the knowledge of what

is to be called as “the stale man”. The passage is not giving its own definition of “the stale man”, but is rather appealing to the usual language usage of the concept of “the stale man”.

This can be supported by the usage of the phrase “what is called” in other texts in early China. For example, the *Xunzi*. In the *Xunzi* the phrase “what is called” is often used together with the statements’ status maker: *fu* 夫. The association between the phrase “what is called” and the status marker *fu* show that the phrase *shi zhi wei* should not be read as “[this is] what I call” but as “[this is] what is commonly called” as *fu* functions as a status marker that indicates the statement that follows as a principle for which general validity is claimed according to Wagner.[42] Thus, when the passage explains the concept of weighted-words the explanation itself is also a kind of weighted-words.

Finally, we can also see how the goblet-words, and also the whole passage are expressed in the way of the goblet-words. To begin with the explanation of the goblet words, one of the unique features of the goblet-words is its enabling us to “follow along with the endless and irregular change” 因以曼衍. It follows that the goblet-words itself is also endless drifting (this feature of the goblet-words is also illustrated by the very metaphor of goblet). The explanation of the goblet-words also demonstrates how we speak in an endlessly drifting manner. It is best illustrated by the passage's playing with the concept of *yan* 言. It says that “when you speak non-speech, you speak throughout your life without saying anything. [When you speak non-speech], you say something even you never say anything throughout your life” 言無言, 終身言, 未嘗言;終身不言, 未嘗不言. This paradoxical expression is exactly a use of language in an ever-drifting manner. The first *yan* in the statement 終身言 is different from the second *yan*. Therefore, the passage is playing with the ambiguity of the concept of *yan* and drifting among the different meanings of it. In other words, when explaining the concept of goblet words, it introduces the concept of *yan* without rendering a fixed and rigid meaning to it, which is exactly a kind of goblet-words.

This is also the case in the explanation of the other two. Although the passage seemingly tries to justify the use of lodging-place-words and the weighted-words in the *Zhuangzi*, the passage actually deconstructs itself at the same moment. For the lodging-place-words, why we need lodging-place words is mainly because people’s cognitive habit that “echo whatever agrees with their own and object to whatever doesn't” and “deem what agree with them to be the case, and deem what doesn't to not to be the case.” 與己同則應, 不與己同則反, 同於己

[42] Wagner, Rudolf (2015)

為是之, 異於己為非之. But it is just a cognitive bias of the ordinary people 人之罪. It should not have been the case, and accordingly the lodging-place-words should not have worked. We thus see how the passage justifies the use of lodging-place-words, but also diminishes its ground at the same time. This is hence another demonstration of the goblet-words as its attitude toward the lodging-place-words is implicitly ever-drifting.

Likewise, the weighted-words are useful because people's trust in authority. Weight-words can stop the dispute just as the elderly can shut people up. Nonetheless, it is just another bias of the ordinary people as the passage says "the one who is merely ahead of the others in age without grasping of the warp and woof, the root to the top of things that match with his age is not genuinely ahead of the others" 年先矣, 而無經緯本末以期年耆者, 是非先也. It means that there is nothing appealing about the authority unless it grasps the way of men. In other words, people should not have been shut up by the authority simply because of its being an authority, and accordingly the weighted-words should not have worked. Again, we thus see how the passage justifies the use of weighted-words, but also diminishes its ground at the same time. This is again a demonstration of the goblet-words as its attitude toward the weighted-words is implicitly ever-drifting.

These findings which are essentially inspired by the attention to the literary form can enrich our understanding of the text and give us better preparation for the "critical" and substantial interpretation of it in manifold ways. First, it may alter our usual interpretation of the text. For example, since the goblet-words, unlike the other two, are not given a direct and clear definition and description, scholars often associate it with many other concepts in Zhuangzi. Heart-mind is one of the most common concepts. Goblet-words are then understood as words without the heart-mind or spoken by the empty mind. But with the analysis inspired by the structuralist attitude here, we may doubt whether the "mind-less" character of goblet words is the character emphasised in the section. The "ever-drifting" character seems to be the one. Indeed, some may connect the two characters, but the structure analysis here may at least remind us that the "ever-drifting" character is the primary one in the section.[43]

Meanwhile, it may also strengthen our interpretation of the text. The "ever-drifting" character of goblet-words is certainly not overlooked by previous scholarship, but what does it mean to write/speak in an "ever-drifting" way? It is unclear, and it seems that we can only introduce

[43] Lee H. Yearley (2005) "Daoist Presentation and Persuasion: Wandering among Zhuangzi's Kinds of Language" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33:3

another resource in the *Zhuangzi* again. In this respect, the structure analysis can step in and contribute. It shows that the section itself is already presenting us a substantial and excellent manifestation of the goblet-words. We can now interpret the meaning of goblet-words within the section, and no longer guess its meaning by appealing to other parts of the *Zhuangzi*. Again, I am not saying that linking different concepts in Zhuangzi is not legitimate. It is not only legitimate but also essential and beneficial. What all I am saying is that this "critical" and substantial interpretation should be grounded on the structure analysis.

Moreover, it is commonly believed that the goblet-words is the most important among the three.[44] But this is quite ungrounded. What is the reason for taking the goblet-words as the most important? The analysis of the form can contribute again. The reason is that even the lodging-place-words and the weighted-words are also explained in the way of goblet-words, but not the other way round. These enrichments show that the form analysis can not only alter our interpretation but also enhance our usual interpretation.

Last but not least, the form analysis can also indicate something philosophically interesting in the text. The endorsement of the ever-drifting goblet-words is something philosophically dangerous to hold. Like any other kind of relativism or skepticism, the position of advocating the ever-drifting goblet-words seemingly faces the crisis of self-defeating. If the author of the chapter endorses speaking/writing in an ever-drifting way, how is it possible for him or her to give us a static description, or even a definition of goblet-words? If he or she does, he or she refutes himself or herself. If he or she does not, what is the point of the passage? What can we get from the passage? The form analysis seems to indicate the third way that the author of the chapter gives us a sensible "classification" of the goblet-words but yet not fall into the trap of self-defeating since the "classification" itself is also expressed in the way of ever-drifting style. The passage is thus meaningful and still immune to the problem of self-defeating precisely by virtue of its literary form. Understanding how the forms save the *Zhuangzi* from the threat of self-defeating is essential to our appreciation of the philosophical significance of the forms. It would be the major focus of chapter 5.

I believe that I have clarified the literary form approach that I shall employ throughout the thesis. I can now turn the focus to the substantial analysis of the forms of the *Zhuangzi*. My first target is the form of narrative.

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[44] Wang, Youru (2004) "The strategies of goblet words- Indirect communication in the Zhuangzi", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* 31.2

Narrative

Narrative is a ubiquitous literary device in the *Zhuangzi*: narratives about animals; narratives about Confucius; narratives about Zhuangzi, etc. They presented pressing questions to us: why narratives? What is the point for the *Zhuangzi* to do philosophy through narratives? I attempt to answer these questions in this chapter.

i. Narrative Thinking

Narrative structures our life. When we try to understand someone's action by asking 'why did you do that?', it would be in some way absurd for one to answer 'my brain sent such and such chemical impulse through the motor neurons to my muscles. When the chemical impulse hits the muscles, my body moves accordingly. That is why I "did" that.' What makes this scientific physiological explanation absurd is not that it is untrue or trivial. It may be both true and nontrivial in the sense that it is an accurate description of what has happened and also arguably the ground on which other explanations arise. Rather, it is absurd in the sense that it does not really respond to our deepest need for understanding. The physiological explanation, though true and arguably fundamental, does not enable us to make sense of one's action. When asking the question of 'why' regarding human actions, we are often looking for a narrative explanation which enables us to make sense of the action in question.

"We have been together for five years. But he betrayed me. I slapped his face." Although this narrative explanation might be trivial to some philosopher as one might argue that this explanation can be completely reduced to the physiological explanation just mentioned, i.e. the anger stemming from his betrayal is in effect reducible to a certain brain state, this narrative explanation would still be a much better explanation with respect to our need for "making sense".

Not only is it the way in which we apprehend others and their actions, but also how we understand ourselves. The self is built upon memories as the concept of the self itself refers to the enduring entity that survives over time, or the subject having a set of experience. Without memories, how could I ever think of and tell about the thing that survives over time or the owner of experiences? It seems that there would only be unconnected thoughts, sensations, experiences but not a sense of the "self". In order to have the very idea of ourselves, we need

unified memories: the idea of the "self" is the subject to which such unified memories are ascribed.

The unity of memory depends upon the capacity of narration because "narrative is the principal way in which our species organises its understanding of time."[45] Alternatively, as Paul Ricoeur writes: "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organised after the manner of a narrative."[46] The narrative form is like a grammar of time that puts time into an organised structure. Just like ungrammatical sentences are nonsensical to us, time without the narrative structure is incomprehensible chaos to us. Only after being put into the structure of narrative does the chaos become something that can be genuinely understood and appropriated. This is the sense in which "time" becomes "human time" according to Ricoeur. Similarly, past experiences become our memory only until we can tell a story from it. Recall how we told others about our past. What we were often doing is not presenting a series of propositions with no narrative structure. We were rather telling a story, no matter how badly-structured it may be.

So, who am I? One purported answer is that I am the protagonist of my life story.[47] A self is always a narrative self. As Peter Goldie puts it, "a narrative sense of self is at the heart of how we think of ourselves as having a past and a future, and how we make plans for the future in the light of the past. In this respect, it is no exaggeration to say that having this ability to think about our past and future is part of what it is to be human, for our lives would surely be bereft without it."[48] Without memories, we have no self; without narrative we have no memories or "human time". I relate the past events into a coherent whole as my past and take my past as the horizon within which I can plan and act. What I am acting out in the future is in effect an "enacted narrative".[49] In short, "it is only through narrative that we know ourselves as active entities that operate through time."[50][51]

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[45] Abbot, H. Porter (2008) *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* 2nd edition Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.3

[46] Ricoeur, Paul (1984) *Time and Narrative*, three vols. trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, vol. 1:3

[47] Dennett, Dainel (1992) "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity", in *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives*, ed. F. Kessel, P. Cole and D. Johnson Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum

[48] Goldie, Peter (2008) *The Mess Inside*: *Narrative, Emotion, and the Mind* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.12

[49] Ibid., p.161

[50] Abbot (2008) p.123. Many other philosophers have argued for the similar point. For example, Alasdair MacIntyre says, 'the basic and essential genre for the characterisation of human action'. See Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) *After Virtue* University of Notre Dame Press

[51] Having said that narrative is so crucial to us, it remains unclear whether one's life itself is a narrative. To say that narrative thinking is the essential way in which we comprehend the world, the others and ourselves is not to suggest that our lives are themselves narratives, or of narrative structure. It is a very controversial issue of

ii. Narrative and Philosophy

Despite the great importance of narrative in our thinking, it seems to receive little attention in contemporary academic philosophy. If you open an academic journal of philosophy nowadays, it is very unlikely that you will find any narrative writings there. Although the Zhuangzi and the Republic are generally regarded as ancient philosophical writings, there is nothing in our academic journals sharing a similar narrative form of expression to them. The difference is striking and puzzling. Normally, what you find in the journals is something written in a form very similar to what you are now reading, i.e. my thesis chapter. In the context of contemporary academia, philosophy is, by and large, conceived as a subject concerning only arguments that are composed of true propositions and valid inference. Why is it so? The underlying assumption of this practice is that this is the form or the style of doing philosophy. By implication, this is the only style in which philosophy ought to be written. However, it is difficult to find someone who offers an explicit justification for this assumption. As Martha Nussbaum rightly points out, it is merely an unexamined practice prevailing in academia (in particular, what she is concerned about is Anglo-American philosophy. She is well aware of the fact that continental philosophy holds a much more friendly attitude to literature).[52] She writes: "the conventional style of Anglo-American philosophical prose usually prevailed: a style correct, scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid, a style that seemed to be regarded as a kind of all-purpose solvent in which philosophical issues of any kind at all could be efficiently disentangled (…) as though it was the style for ethics."[53] What she is complaining about is not that the "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid" style cannot be a style for ethics. She does not deny the possibility that ethics "can best be conveyed in the style we usually associate with mathematics or natural science."[54] However, what she emphasises is that the question of style or form is substantial rather than

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whether life is itself a narrative. Some argue so whereas some strongly disagree. For instance, Alasdair MacIntyre argues for a positive answer saying that 'stories are lived before they are told' (1981). Bernard Williams, on the contrary, argues that 'fictional characters have a special unity that no real life can have, that the end of them is present at their beginning....their wholeness is already there, and ours is not' (2007). Worst still, the idea that life is itself a narrative, Goldie argues, is very dangerous and leads to wrong expectation, frustration, self-deception and so forth. See Goldie (2008) pp.161-171. Regarding this philosophical issue, I would remain neutral.

[52] She writes: "In the latter half of the twentieth century, fiction and philosophy drew close in France, with Sartre and Camus writing both kinds of books and blurring the distinction. In the English-speaking world, by contrast, things were very different. Very few noted philosophers attempted fiction, and Iris Murdoch was the only eminent novelist to publish serious works of moral philosophy." Nussbaum, Martha (2012) *Philosophical Interventions: Reviews 1986-2011* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch. 20 "When She was Good"

[53] Nussbaum, Martha (1992) *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.14-15

[54] Ibid., p.15

trivial – unlike what is commonly assumed. Her real concern is that one's choice of the form should correspond to one's view on the nature of the domain of ethics. That is to say, it is not a problem for Spinoza or for the proponents of Utilitarianism to write their philosophical thought in "the style we usually associate with mathematics or natural science" since the form would be in coherence with their rationalistic conceptions of the ethical. According to their rationalistic views on the ethical, the ethical is all about the identification of the moral principle(s) and making moral judgments and decisions accordingly: a determined principle, determined inference, and determined result (indeterminacy might occur occasionally but doesn't lie in the very nature of the ethical). As such, the way in which the ethical enterprise processes is very similar to that of the mathematical matters: setting up universal axiom(s) and inference rules, and deducing particular results from them. Therefore, not only is it unproblematic for them to write their philosophy in a form similar to mathematics, they should even be compelled to do so. How could they write in the form of narrative if they believe that the ethical domain is by nature deductive and even calculative?

If one does not share the "top-down", and rationalistic view on the ethical with Spinoza or Utilitarian yet follows the "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid" style, one would then be self-defeating, for the literary form itself is contradicting one's philosophical position about how ethics should be done. Nussbaum gives an example to illustrate this: "an article, for example, argues that the emotions are essential and central in our efforts to gain understanding on any important ethical matter; and yet it is written in a style that expresses only intellectual activity and strongly suggests that only this activity matters for the reader in his or her attempts to understand." In her view, ethics might "best be conveyed in the style we usually associate with mathematics or natural science." But it might also best be conveyed in the narrative form. The choice of the form of expression is a substantial matter that depends on one's philosophical view on ethics.

When it comes to the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*, it is often said in the literature that the *Zhuangzi*'s view of the nature of ethics is "contextual", "perspectival", and perhaps "relativistic".[55] Whatever these labels mean, we all sense that the *Zhuangzi*'s view on ethical matters by no means belongs to the same "top-down" rationalistic branch used by the

[55] Hansen, Chad (1983) "A Tao of Tao in Chuang-tzu" in *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*, ed. Victor Mair Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press; and Fraser, Chris (2009) "Skepticism and Value in the *Zhuangzi*" in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 49.4: 439–57. They are the strongest proponents of the interpretation that the *Zhuangzi*'s ethical position is a sort of robust relativism. In the Chinese-speaking academia, 劉昌元 also famously identified the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* as perspectivism. See his "莊子的觀點主義" in《道家文化研究》6 (1995): 102-115. The issue of relativism would come back in later chapters.

Western philosophers just mentioned. It is certainly not the case that the *Zhuangzi* holds a rationalistic, deductive, and calculative view on the ethical (or any other philosophical matter).[56] Instead, we can see that many ideas in the *Zhuangzi* are expressed in the form of narrative rather than statement-based arguments. Take the famous story of Cook Ding 庖丁 as an example. The *Zhuangzi* does not express its ideas about *yang sheng* 養生 by stating proposition-based arguments, that is, the *Zhuangzi* does not write anything like "what matters in the nurture of life is X, as X brings Y". Rather, it expresses its idea about *yang sheng* by telling a story about Cook Ding, describing his gestures, motions, actions, speeches, etc. I believe that this combination of the content and form is not a mere coincidence: it does not just so happen that the *Zhuangzi* formulates its ideas of the ethical being perspectival in the form of narrative. The narrative form and the view of the ethical being perspectival is mutually constitutive: the view is best conveyed in the narrative form while the narrative form suggests that the *Zhuangzi* never hold a rationalistic, 'top-down', deductive, and calculative view on the ethical.

In contrast, consider the *Mozi*. The ethics of the *Mozi* have been regarded as very much akin to Utilitarianism or something similar.[57] Meanwhile, the literary form of the *Mozi*, especially the Canons, is strikingly different from the *Zhuangzi*. It is more systematic, deductive, and propositions-based in nature. Again, this is not a mere coincidence. Just like Utilitarian conception of ethics is "best be conveyed in the style we usually associate with mathematics or natural science", the philosophy of the Mozi is also best conveyed in the style it is actually put. It is therefore not at all a surprise that the Mozi and the Zhuangzi are so different in both their literary forms and philosophical contents. The striking difference between them in both form and content further justifies the idea that the form is indispensable with the content.

As Nussbaum points out, it is certain that the narrative form is rarely seen in the modern (Anglo-American) philosophy works. However, does this literary form of the *Zhuangzi* prevent Zhuangzi from being philosophical? I think not. Quite to the contrary: the narrative

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[56] I am not suggesting here that the *Zhuangzi* should be characterised as 'anti-rationalism' as A.C Graham famously suggests. Chris Fraser poses convincing challenges to such a characterisation: Neither should Mohism be labelled as 'rationalism' nor is there any 'rationalism' in early Chinese philosophy. It is, therefore, no such a thing called 'rationalism' to which Zhuangzi could oppose. As such, it does not make sense to classify Zhuangzi as 'anti-rationalism'. I do agree with Fraser at this point. And more importantly, any such labels like 'anti-rationalism', I believe, is problematic regarding the literary nature of the *Zhuangzi* (that is the whole point of my thesis). Still, it is not controversial to say that the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is not rationalistic in the sense that it appears not to be akin to that of Spinoza and Utilitarianism, which is highly rationalistic in nature.

[57] Hansen, Chad (2000) *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, "The Analytic Period"

form of expression is deeply connected to the philosophical ideas of the *Zhuangzi*. In this chapter, I attempt to take seriously the narrative form of expressions of the *Zhuangzi* and explore how the narrative form of expression is connected to the philosophical arguments in the *Zhuangzi*. My primary target of analysis is the "Xiaoyaoyou" 逍遙遊 chapter, especially the story between *Kun Peng* 鯤鵬 and the little birds.

iii. The constellation of perspectives

The first and most basic question before analysing the narrative of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter is: what is a narrative? The nature and value of narrative is no doubt the core question of narratology. No simple answer can therefore be expected. Yet a brief characterisation of the salient features and value of narrative is essential for us to take seriously the narrative form of the Zhuangzi and appreciate its genuine philosophical value. In what follows, I will rely mainly on Peter Goldie's philosophical account of the nature and value of narrative.[58]

Here is Goldie's general characterisation of narrative:

> A narrative or story is something that can be told or narrated, or just thought through in narrative thinking. It is more than just a bare annal or chronicle or list of a sequence of events, but a representation of those events which is shaped, organised, and coloured, presenting those events, and the people involved in them, from a certain perspective or perspectives, and thereby giving narrative structure—coherence, meaningfulness, and evaluative and emotional import—to what is related.[59]

[58] It is important to note that there are many scholarly discussions about the conceptual difference between 'narrative' and 'story' among contemporary narratology literature. For example, Mieke Bal famously argues for a narratological framework consisting of a threefold distinction: 'narrative', 'story', 'fabula'. According to this picture, a 'fabula' is 'a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.' A 'story' is 'a fabula that is presented in a certain manner.' That is, a 'story' is a 'fabula' viewed from a certain perspective, colouring a 'fabula' with focalization and subjectivity. A 'narrative' is 'a text in which an agent relates ('tells') a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof.' In short, a 'fabula' is the basic sequence of events, a 'story' is the result of viewing the sequence of events from a certain viewpoint(s), and a 'narrative' is the result of the materialisation and textualization of the story (this is also why we often see the term 'narrative text' or 'narrative discourse' rather than 'narrative' standing alone in the discussion of narratology). This threefold account of Bal enables us to explain many phenomena in our narrative experience, for instance we often see the same story, say the Cinderella story, travelling from a narrative discourse to another. Yet it also leads to the interesting question of whether there is a pre-existing 'fabula' or 'story' before the narrative discourse is being expressed. My argument in this chapter is, however, unaffected by the details here. I will thus use the term 'story' and 'narrative' interchangeably throughout the chapter in order to avoid complicating the chapter unnecessarily. For more discussion, see Bal, Mieke (2009) *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* 3rd edition Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 5-8

[59] Goldie (2008), p.2

While Goldie spent much effort to unpack this very dense definition of narrative, I am not going to discuss his detailed characterisations.[60] I only highlight one point most relevant to my analysis of the narrative in the Zhuangzi.

He emphasises that a narrative is not a pure record of a sequence of events. A narrative is something "more than just a bare annal or chronicle or list of a sequence of events". What is more in a narrative is that those events are presented, shaped, coloured in a certain way or from a particular perspective. The idea that a narrative is not a bare record of events is not at all uncommon in narratology. Most narratologists agree on the constitutive role of the narrator in the creation of narrative. For instance, in Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, the term "emplotment" is coined to refer to the narrator's work of putting events in an narrative order to become plots. Goldies follows this terminology.[61] Meanwhile, apart from the narrator's ordering, the narrator's colouring of the events is also recognised. Mieke Bal calls it "focalization", and the result of "focalization" is "colour the story with subjectivity" as it represents the materials from certain "points of view" turning a bare "actor" into "character", "location" into "place", and so on.[62] To sum up, H. Porter Abbot defines narrative as "the representation of an event or a series of events".[63] It is the *re*presentation rather than a bare presentation of events. It is a subjective creation instead of an objective record.[64]

Does "focalization" exhaust the meaning of a narrative? Put it in another, metaphorical, way, should we think of the "focalizer" as the authority governing the entire narrative-world? No, Goldie suggests. According to him the meaning of a narrative cannot be exhausted by the "emplotment". Unfortunately, the prevailing interpretive approach of the narratives in the Zhuangzi seems to be otherwise. It is often claimed that to grasp the meaning of a narrative is to understand what the narrator thinks. I refer to this as the search for the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson approach. The discussion of this widely-accepted approach would be the focus of the next section. The preliminary point is that despite the constitutive role of the narrator in our notion of narrative, it does not imply that the meaning of a narrative is nothing more than

[60] Goldie's conception of narrative is not uncontroversial. The most controversial idea in his account is that a narrative 'can be told or narrated, or just thought through in narrative thinking'. But it does not interest me here since the narrative in the *Zhuangzi* is clearly not something 'just thought through in narrative thinking' but something being narrated as a text. Although Goldie might be wrong that a narrative cannot be something just thought through in narrative thinking, my analysis still stands.
[61] Goldie (2008), p.9
[62] Bal (2009)
[63] Abbot (1981)
[64] I am thankful to Prof. Ted Hui for pointing out the difference between "emplotment" and "focalisation".

the thoughts of the narrator. (We will see that the reduction of meaning to the thoughts of the narrator is exactly the opposite to the value of narrative)

With this definition of narrative at hand, some might say that it is obvious that my analysis of the narratives in the *Zhuangzi* is misguided. One might argue that the Zhuangzi is clearly not a text of the narrative structure since we can see many chapters like the "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter as being very essayistic. This is a confused objection. I have no intention to say that the whole of the *Zhuangzi* is a narrative text. I am only suggesting that the literary form of narrative is of great importance to its philosophy. Understanding the salient features of the literary form of narrative would enable us to appreciate the philosophy and meaning of the *Zhuangzi* more thoroughly.

The real challenge is rather that even in the case of the more narrative-like the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter on which my analysis shall focus, it is still problematic to count it as a narrative text. We can easily identify the non-narrative element embedded in the chapter. For instance, the third passage of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter concerning "small understanding" 小知 and "great understanding" 大知 is argumentative and essayistic. At least on the face of it, the passage is not "a representation of events" but just an exposition of ideas. The "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter is in effect not a narrative text but rather a mixture of narrative discourse with non-narrative elements. As such, one might say, it would be wrong to analyse the chapter with the narratology framework.

My first quick response to this objection is this: I need not and do not ignore the non-narrative elements in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. Insofar as there are undoubtedly certain narrative elements in this chapter, my analysis, which takes the literary form of narrative seriously, contributes to the understanding of the meaning of the chapter. Thus, the challenge does not undermine my analysis. What the challenge really does is complicate the issue. Implicitly it poses the following question: how should we deal with the meta-narrative or non-narrative elements within a narrative text? The relation between the meta-narrative elements with the narratives is a well-discussed issue in narratology. Some novelists, like Pascal Quingard who even explicitly claims that his own reference to the Zhuangzi has intentionally shifted from narrative discourse to non-narrative discourse within a single text, play with these two seemingly different literary forms (I will discuss his relevance to the Zhuangzi in the later section). The existence of the meta-narrative elements and their interplay with the narrative elements do not undermine the narrative nature of (part of) the

Zhuangzi. They only make the meaning of the narratives more dynamic and playful. I shall discuss how the non-narrative element fits into the narrative context in my analysis of the non-narrative elements in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter.

After this brief introduction of the definition of narrative by way of a little detour, the next question is: what is the value of the literary form of narrative?[65] Understanding the value of narrative is of great importance to my analysis. It allows us to understand how the orthodox interpretative strategy of the *Zhuangzi* fails to take the narrative form of expression seriously. We have to understand the value of narrative in general so as to understand what the orthodox approach has distorted. I am going to argue that the value of narrative is going hand in hand with the philosophical idea of *xiaoyao* 逍遙.

I shall use the concept of "the constellation of perspective" to refer to the value of narrative. The idea is from Goldie, though the terminology is not. The terminology is inspired by the critical philosopher Theodor W. Adorno.[66] We will soon see how his philosophical thought is relevant to us. In respect to the value of narrative, Goldie says:

> The interplay between diverging perspectives in a narrative—between literal and evaluative, as well as within the evaluative domain—is one of the main sources of its power as a medium of thought in explaining and expressing what it is to lead a life as a person.[67]

That is to say, the power of the literary form of narrative lies in its "interplay between diverging perspectives". However, whose perspectives are at play in a narrative? The first simple answer is the diverging perspectives among the characters internal to the narrative. As explained, character is one of the components of a narrative. The divergence of characters often leads to the divergence of perspectives since in a narrative every character is an agent like us who holds a different point of view on different issues: life, value, truth and so on. A narrative is therefore always composed of the diverging perspectives of different internal characters. Moreover, it has already been shown that "emploment" or "focalization" are essential features of a narrative. This means that in a narrative not only are the characters'

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[65] That is not to say that the two questions are unrelated. They are in some ways mutually dependent. Consider the Aristotelian idea of what a certain thing is. The *telos* or the function of a certain thing is often responsible for the question of what it is and what its value is.

[66] Adorno adopted the idea of 'constellation of concepts' from Walter Benjamin and set it as the general methodology of his philosophical investigation. See Adorno (1997) *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

[67] Goldie (2008), p.13

perspectives at play but also the perspective of the narrator who is responsible for the "emploment" or "focalization". Moreover, the perspective of the external narrator can sometimes conflict with the perspectives of the internal characters (I shall argue this is in fact the case of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter: the perspective of the insects and the perspective of the narrator are somehow in conflict). These are only two examples of 'the interplay between diverging perspectives in a narrative'. As Goldie says, "there can be diverging perspectives between two or more characters internal to the narrative, between character and external narrator, between external narrator and internal narrator, between character and reader or audience, between external narrator and implied author, between implied author and author, between implied author and reader, between reader and reader, between actual reader and ideal reader, and many more besides".[68]

Some might think that the nature of diverging perspectives of narrative is in effect its flaw, or the reason why it is not an appropriate literary form for doing philosophy: it is just too 'messy'. One might argue that the multi-perspectival nature of narrative leads to its ambiguity in meaning. In a narrative there is by no means a singular truth viewed from a single point of view. The writing style prevailing in academic philosophy nowadays ought to be, in contrast, "clear" and "distinct" so that it allows the philosophers to state clearly their views and arguments on the issue in question. The argumentative form with which we are familiar in contemporary academia is single-perspectival rather than multi-perspectival. For example, the thesis I am writing is a presentation of the truth concerning the *Zhuangzi* viewed from my perspective. I pin down my position clearly and provide arguments in support of it. Unlike the literary form of narratives, not only the essayistic form enables me but also compels me to write in a "clear" language expressing a "distinct" position. This is the rationale behind the thought that the essayistic form of writing is *the* style of philosophy

The multi-perspectival nature of narrative, I agree, does lead to the blurring of rigid positions. However, I contend that the "messiness", unclearness and shakiness brought by the multi-perspectival nature of narrative become a flaw of narrative only when one holds a rigid, non-perspectival understanding of life, value, and truth. If one believes that life, value and truth are always dynamic and perspectival, the single-perspectival form(s) of expression would then be incompatible with one's thought, leading to the self-defeating problem pointed

[68] To be specific, Goldie is referring to novels here. But it is certain that novels are one of the tokens of the literary form of narrative. Goldie (2008), p.30

out by Nussbaum.[69] If reality is itself unclear, shaky, and perspectival, writing it down into a discourse which is of single-perspective is tantamount to distorting and doing violence to it. How could one reduce the multi-perspectival reality into a single-perspectival essay? Unlike the prevailing argumentative or essayistic form, the form of narrative provides a space for 'the interplay between diverging perspectives'. This space is often lost in the essayistic form of writings but preserved in narratives. The ambiguity in narratives is therefore not at all a flaw but the most invaluable aspect of narratives. I thus agree with Goldie that "to the complaint that narrative thinking is messy and imprecise, blurring all kinds of nice distinctions (…) the right reply is that this is just what it should be, given that life itself is messy. We must resist the temptation to oversimplify life, the mind, the life of the mind."[70] As long as we refrain from simplifying the complicated world, narrative would be our resort (perhaps the last and final one) to write the book of the world.[71]

Indeed, some may ask on what grounds we believe that since the *Zhuangzi* holds that life, value and truth are always dynamic and perspectival, the multi-perspectival narrative is the suitable form expressing such thoughts without self-defeating. My answer is that the form of narrative and the other literary forms of arguments discussed in this thesis are the reasons. The multi-perspectival forms of expression in the Zhuangzi show that its philosophical ideas on life, value and truth cannot be single-perspectival. Otherwise, we have to bear the cost of understanding the *Zhuangzi* incoherently. Its philosophical ideas, in turn, make the form of narrative meaningful and suitable. This might seem circular: the form justifies the content while the content justifies the form. But this is exactly what this dissertation and the literary form approach is all about: the form is constitutive to the content; they go hand in hand. So I am not going to offer any argument independent of the form to show that the *Zhuangzi* views life, value and truth as dynamic and perspectival (even such an argument might be possible). The form tells it. As long as we take the value of narrative, that is, the multi-perspectiveness, into our consideration, we get to its philosophical idea. I believe that this can be shown in my analysis of the "Xiaoyaoyou".

To label this invaluable aspect of narrative, I borrow an illuminating concept from Theodor W. Adorno: "the constellation of perspective". The original concept in Adorno's philosophy

[69] Nussbaum (1992), p. 14
[70] Goldie (2008), p.173
[71] I am not saying that it *must* be an oversimplification when we write the book of the world in the essayistic form of single-perspective. As discussed above, it is completely fine to do so when one is holding a robustly rationalistic view on the issue in question. The point is just that the multi-perspectival nature of narrative is not *necessarily* a flaw but very often merit

is “the constellation of concepts”. In brief, the idea of “the constellation of concepts” is also a kind of form of expression that plays a crucial role in Adorno's philosophy. Just like “the constellation of perspective” in the narrative of the *Zhuangzi*, Adorno wrote his philosophy in the form of “the constellation of concepts” so as to avoid contradicting himself.

One of the major themes in Adorno's philosophy is the problem of the prevailing “identity thinking” in modern philosophy and (capitalist) society. “Identity thinking” is a form of thinking that subsumes a particular object into a general concept, giving it a fixed identity. It understands the object via universal principle, law and concepts. Adorno believes that the construction of this sort of philosophical and conceptual system is no different from doing violence to the particularity of the object. It is not at all a genuine understanding but just compelling the individuals into the conformity to the universal system. Adorno’s philosophy is in this sense “anti-system”.[72]

However, Adorno is not then committed to the irrationalism that we should abandon all kinds of rational thinking, or usage of concepts. He is indeed not suggesting that on the ground of the failure of systemization we should thus turn to some mythical, immediate, intuitive grasp of reality. He insists on the necessity of concept and language in our inquiry of the world. Nevertheless, how can Adorno construct his philosophy, that is, how can he criticise the “identity thinking” and reveal the reality through concepts without annihilating the individuality of the object? He says, “[t]he cognitive utopia would be to use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal”.[73] However, how can we attain such a cognitive utopia? Adorno’s answer to this is “the constellation of concepts”. “The constellation of concepts” is a “positioning of those concepts around the matter under analysis.”[74] For one thing, the series of concepts do not attempt to exhaust the concepts since the object can always be viewed and understood from an undiscovered perspective. The ‘constellation of concepts’ merely amounts to an attempt to capture the object from one perspective to another perspective. It is not a definition or an exhaustive, once-and-for-all understanding of it. For another, the different concepts in the constellation are not “a system in that they are not inferentially or deductively interconnected.”[75] They are therefore irreducible to each other, though they all point to the very same object. He said:

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[72] Adorno, Theodor W. (1973) *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Preface
[73] Ibid., p.10
[74] O’Connor, Brian (2013) *Adorno* Oxford: Routledge, p.17
[75] Ibid., p.199

> …from my theorem that there is no philosophical first principle, it now also results that one cannot build an argumentative structure that follows the usual progressive succession of steps, but rather that one must assemble the whole out of a series of partial complexes that are, so to speak, of equal weight and concentrically arranged all on the same level.[76]

"The constellation of concepts" is a writing style, and more importantly an irreplaceable and constitutive element in Adorno's philosophy. I take the *Zhuangzi*'s use of narrative similar to Adorno's 'constellation of concepts'. Even though there have been many religious and mythical readings of the *Zhuangzi* which are hostile to language all the way down, at the end of the day the *Zhuangzi* is a written text, a public discourse.[77] Just like Adorno, the real question is how to express its thoughts about life, value, and the world but yet not universalise, rationalise, and systematise them. In the *Zhuangzi*, the form of narrative and the "constellation of perspectives" are the answers.[78]

iv. Finding the Zhuangzi spokesman

Have people paid enough attention to this multi-perspectival character of narratives in the *Zhuangzi*? Is the 'constellation of perspectives' well-recognised? I contend that not only have they not, but the orthodox interpretative strategy of the Zhuangzi distort this very characterisation. That is, not only do they overlook the multi-perspectiveness of narratives, they are adopting an interpretation strategy that in effect demolishes the multi-perspectival nature of narratives, flattening the narratives into a "typical" contemporary philosophical text with a single perspective.

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[76] Adorno (1997), p. 365

[77] The philosophy of language in the *Zhuangzi* is indeed a large issue. It is impossible for me to pin down my thoughts on this in this chapter. In brief I believe that the *Zhuangzi* does criticise language, but it does *not* advocate the wholesale abandonment of language. If so, why did the author(s) express the ideas with language? After all, as mentioned, the *Zhuangzi* is a written text. Moreover, the *Zhuangzi* explains its special use of language in one of its chapter, i.e. the Yuyan ('寓言'). The chapter would have been almost incomprehensible if the *Zhuangzi* were to go for a wholesale abandonment of language. Many scholars have rightly pointed out that the issue is not language itself but the way we use it. See De Reu, Wim (2015) "A Ragbag of Odds and Ends? Zhuangzi 26 as Philosophical Collage Writing" in Meyer and Gentz. (2015); and Yang Ru-Bin 楊儒賓 (2016)《儒門內的莊子》臺北:聯經出版, Ch.4. I will have a more detailed discussion on the issue of language in the "Irony" and "The Philosophical Significance" chapter.

[78] Note that Adorno explains his form of writing in a famous article titled "The Essay as Form". Interestingly, "The Essay as Form" aiming to explain the form of essay is itself an example of the form of essay. It strikes me as surprisingly similar to the "Yuyan" 寓言 chapter of the*Zhuangzi*.

In doing so, they are not denying the different and sometimes contradicting points of view involved in the narratives of the Zhuangzi. It is an obvious and undeniable feature about the narrative of the Zhuangzi: who can deny that there are different characters, and thus different perspectives, e.g. the Kun 鯤, the Peng 鵬, the cicada 蜩, and the little dove 學鳩, in the Xiaoyaoyou chapter? For instance, the Kun-Peng was accelerating thousands miles high 上者九萬里 whereas the cicada and little dove "stop flying when reaching an elm or sandalwood " 槍榆枋而止; the Kun-Peng was travelling to "the Dark of South" 南冥 whereas the cicada and the little dove were teasing at its attempt, asking "why is anyone flying ninety thousand miles up and travelling to the South?" 奚以之九萬里而南為. The divergence among the Kun-Peng's perspective and the cicada and little dove's perspective on life is obvious.

So, what they are often doing is to privilege one of the points of view and to say that one of the characters exemplifies the Zhuangzi's ethically preferable, or even ideal, person. Shuen-fu Lin puts it explicitly that "the author of the Zhuangzi is just masked under one of the characters of the narrative".[79] Accordingly, our major interpretative task is to find out which character exemplifies the ideal person according to the standard of the *Zhuangzi* and comprehend his mode of living. Meanwhile, the other characters, usually the interlocutors to the "ideal" character, are merely to exemplify the inferior views, perhaps the Ru or Mo's view, that the Zhuangzi wishes to criticise, condemn, or simply make fun of. The meaning of those "inferior" characters in the narratives is just to highlight those "ideal" characters. In doing so, we are believed to be able to access the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*.

In the light of this approach to the Zhuangzi, what an interpreter has to do is to first identify the "ideal" character(s) in the narrative. How do they identify which of the characters is the ideal one? They may appeal to the internal textual hints as evidence at best, or appeal to their own "pre-understanding" about the *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy at worst. After identifying the Zhuangzi's spokesperson, the next step is to interpret the sayings, actions, choices, endings of the "ideal" characters. The major task is to figure out what the "ideal" characters are representing. The more successful this two-step task is done, the more successful our reconstruction of the *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy will be. I refer to this as the interpretation strategy of *finding the Zhuangzi's spokesperson*.

[79] Shuen-fu Lin(2005), "Those Who Can Fly Without Wings: The Depiction of the Ideal Persons in the Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi" in《中國文哲研究集刊》200503(26): 1-35

It is not exaggerating to say that it is one of the dominating approaches to read the *Zhuangzi* in the field of Chinese philosophy. We can easily find examples from both the Chinese and English-speaking academia. For instance, Chen Gu-ying 陳鼓應, in explaining the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, writes:

> [F]rom the "great heart-mind" of the parable of the Kun-Peng, Zhuangzi introduces the "tangled heart-mind" of the cicada and little dove. The little-dove-like 'tangled heart-mind' is confined to viewing problems with a one-sided and narrow mind. It is impossible for the cicada and little dove to care about the world outside their little corner. That is why Zhuangzi comments that 'what do these two insects know?[80]

It is clear that Chen interprets the narratives in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter from the orthodox approach just explained. He believes that the author of the chapter is drawing an evaluative contrast between the Kun-Peng, and the cicada and little dove. The contrast is evaluative in the sense that the former is to be praised as an ideal (or the preferable at least) whereas the latter is to be criticised. According to his way of interpretation, the '*Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson' is clear: the Kun-Peng. The '*Zhuangzi*'s counter-spokesperson' is also clear: the cicada and little dove. The moral of the story is thus straightforward: be like the Kun-Peng, but not the cicada and little dove.

There is an even bolder example from Chris Fraser. In his paper "Wandering the Way: A Eudaimonistic Approach to the Zhuangzi", he attempts to argue that "the Zhuangzi presents a distinctive normative vision of how to live well."[81] In order to reconstruct a theory of human flourishing from the *Zhuangzi*, the dominant reading strategy, i.e. "finding the *Zhuangzi* 's spokesperson", comes into play again. In taking a story about Zi Gao 子高 consulting Confucius as textual support of his theoretical reconstruction, Fraser writes,

> In Piān 4, "The World Among Humans," Master Gāo, Duke of Shè, is assigned a difficult, hazardous diplomatic mission and within a day finds himself feverish from stress. He doubts whether he is capable of carrying out the assignment or has the dé needed to do so without ruining his health (4/34–53, W59–61). In response to his predicament, Confucius, the text's spokesperson, emphasises that the world often presents us with circumstances that are 'inevitable' (bùdéyǐ 不得已) or that we

[80] Chen Gu-ying and Jiang Li-mei (2013)《莊子》2nd edition with reading guidance and annotation 香港:中華書局, p.26
[81] Fraser, Chris (2014) "Wandering the Way: A Eudaimonistic Approach to the *Zhuangzi*" *Dao* 13:541, p.3

> "cannot do anything about," specifically responsibilities arising from political and kinship relations.[82]

Fraser explicitly takes Confucius in the narrative as "the text's spokesperson". After identifying Confucius as "the text's spokesperson", he takes the saying of Confucius as the positive conceptualisation of the *Zhuangzi*'s ideal state. Based on the saying of "the text's spokesperson", he concludes that the moral of the story is that "recognise and make peace with what we cannot control".[83] As Confucius in the narrative suggests, it would be the "pinnacle of *de*" 德之至也. Again, it seems that insofar as we successfully find "the Zhuangzi spokesperson" we are then able to spell out the moral of the narrative.

Fraser adopts the same interpretive approach to other narratives in the *Zhuangzi*, such as the story about Wang Tai 王駘 and Confucius. For the classical narratives in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, he even puts the different characters into an "ethical hierarchy". He argues that "[t]he passage that explicitly mentions wandering implies that it represents an ideal mode of action, as it occupies the top of a hierarchy of four types of activity and corresponding attitudes."[84] He puts the cicada and little dove in the lowest rank. Just slightly better is Song Rongzi 宋榮子. Still better is Liezi 列子. The holy man living in the mountain of far-off Ku-yi 藐姑射之山神人 is on the top of the ranking as he overcomes all the shortcomings of all other characters and thus is truly wandering. After the reconstruction of the ranking, our interpretative task is merely to comprehend the mode of activity and the attitudes represented by these different characters. In so doing, we understand, so he claims, what is endorsed and what is viewed as a flaw by the *Zhuangzi*. Again, the moral of the story is: cultivate yourself to be the holy man, transcending the cicada and little dove, Song Rongzi, and Liezi one by one.

Nonetheless, is this interpretative project of "finding the Zhuangzi spokesperson" well grounded? I doubt it is. Not only does this approach fail to give enough weight to the literary form of narrative, the way it interprets the text distorts the very characteristics and value of the narrative. As explained earlier, the value of narrative is the "interplay between diverging perspectives". However, this multi-perspectiveness of the narrative is now dissolved under the "finding the Zhuangzi spokesperson" approach. We can see from the examples of Chen's and Fraser's interpretation that they in effect turn the narratives in the Zhuangzi into

[82] Ibid., p.12
[83] Ibid., p.13
[84] Ibid., p.15

something similar to the conventional prose in academic philosophy: single-perspectival, straightforward, linear argumentation. Explicating and reconstructing the "ideal" perspective in the text is our sole interpretive task. We could and even have to derive the straightforward moral from the narrative. The multi-perspectival, dialectic, manifold, dynamic, and "messy" narrative world in the Zhuangzi becomes the unified, static, and ordered territory under the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson's sovereignty.

Moreover, an inevitable question has to be answered: why narrative? If the meaning of the narrative is nothing more and nothing less than the straightforward morals as exemplified by the interpreters, why does the *Zhuangzi* not also present the very moral straightforwardly? Why does the *Zhuangzi* express seemingly straightforward philosophical ideas in such a twisted, "messy", way? What is the reason for the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter to be written in narratives if all it expressed is the "ethical hierarchy"? These questions are especially appealing because it is clear that the "ethical hierarchy" in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter proposed by Fraser could have been expressed straightforwardly.

A quick response would be that the plain and narrative expression differs in their pragmatic power. It is often believed that a narrative is more emotionally appealing than the plain conventional academic prose as it comprises vivid descriptions of characters, actions, and events. Some may thus say that the narrative is a better medium than the conventional academic writing style in which the moral is contained. That is, although the moral, and the philosophical ideas are straightforward, it is still better to express them in a non-straightforward way, namely the narrative form, since the ideas are more appealing, convincing, and impressive if they are expressed in the form of narrative. For example, the moral of the story of the cicada and little dove is that we should avoid being confined to viewing problems with a one-sided and narrow mind, and becoming accustomed to the "tangled heart-mind".[85] Nobody would be moved if the *Zhuangzi* stated it plainly. The text gains its power only when the thought is expressed through the story of the cicada and little dove. The point of using narrative is merely to make the discourse more accessible, comprehensible, or reader-friendly.

Does this provide a satisfying answer to our initial question: why narrative? I believe not. It is because it turns the use of narrative in the *Zhuangzi* into purely pragmatic but not theoretical matters, and the relation between forms and content into a means-end relation, not

[85] Chen (2013), p.26

constitutive relation. Consequently, the form of narrative could in principle have been abandoned, and the abstract ideas could in principle have been expressed in the conventional academic style. In other words, the story of the cicada and the little dove in principle could have been abandoned from the *Zhuangzi*. This makes no change in the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* but only undermines the pragmatic appeal of it. It would thus be that the Zhuangzi is written in the form of narrative simply for the sake of communication. On these grounds, I contend that the 'finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson' approach could not provide a satisfying explanation of the fact that the Zhuangzi is in the form of narrative (at best it could only explain the fact instrumentally as we have seen). After all, the approach fails to accommodate the value of the narrative form, namely the multi-perspectival character or 'the constellation of perspective'.

Moreover, I believe that the task of identifying the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson is doomed to failure. This is because the *Zhuangzi* always contains counter-statements that undermine our confidence in the identification. Following Meyer, I refer to this structural characteristic as 'ironic twist'. I will provide a detailed analysis of this literary form in the next chapter. However, I briefly explain it in this chapter as it can also be seen in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. The literary phenomenon of the "ironic twist" suggests that there is no such thing as the Zhuangzi spokesperson. To better understand the meaning of the *Zhuangzi*, we should abandon the "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" project.

However, why is the approach so prevailing among academia in the first place? I believe that the major motivation underlying such an approach is the fear of loss of meaning. That is, unless we can successfully carry out the "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" project, we cannot understand the meaning of the *Zhuangzi*. If we fail to do so, we might fall into a hermeneutical vacuum. Consider the basic motivation of Fraser's study on different narratives in the *Zhuangzi*. What Fraser tries to do is to interpret the *Zhuangzi* as presenting us "a eudaimonistic ideal, in the sense of a normative conception of a flourishing, happy, or well-lived human life."[86] With the purpose of explicating this unified, coherent, normative, "eudaimonistic ideal" from the Zhuangzi in mind, Fraser is naturally led to the "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" enterprise since it could make all the different perspectives presented in the text now under the "control" of the privileged perspective. In order to make these "messy" narratives systematic, and thus meaningful, it is natural to single out one of the

[86] Fraser (2014), p.2

perspectives as the preferable, and thereby interpret the text straightforwardly. If the "text's spokesperson" does not exist, if there is no character under which the author is masked, how could the narrative be philosophically meaningful? If we cannot identify the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson in the narratives, how could we grasp the meaning of those narratives? This worry, I believe, is the chief motivation of the "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" strategy.

Is this worry valid? There is a puzzle similar in the study of Plato's *Republic*. Just like the Zhuangzi, the *Republic* is also written in literary forms that differ from the conventional style adopted in academic philosophy. The *Republic* is composed of dialogue, narrative, metaphor, among other devices. It is, again, quite "messy" from a modern perspective. In order to make this "messy" piece of work acceptable, philosophical and meaningful that fits the modern standard, the interpreters attempt to make it "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid".[87] Similar enough, the interpreters set to themselves the task of identifying Plato's mouthpiece and figuring out whether the character Socrates speaks for Plato or the historical Socrates. This common reading approach has been reviewed critically recently as it leads to the same problem that the literary forms, namely the form of dialogue and narrative, have been turned into a neutral and meaningless medium in which the philosophical ideas are expressed. Jill Gordon in his book *Turning toward Philosophy: Literary Device and Dramatic Structure* has suggested otherwise, much similar to the literary-form approach I adopt in this thesis.[88] Regarding the motivation of the orthodox reading approach, Gordon also thinks that it is due to the worry of the hermeneutical vacuum, the loss of meaning. Nevertheless, Gordon argues that the worry is ungrounded. She writes:

> [O]ur experience and understanding those plays need not be affected one iota whether or not we ever know how closely they reflect the historical personages they portray nor whether we ever come to know Shakespeare's innermost thoughts on love, betrayal, or political rule. Plato's dialogues also have meaning for us—profound, human meaning—whether or not we ever figure out Plato's or the historical Socrates's views.[89]

[87] Nussbaum (1992), p.14
[88] Gordon, Jill (1999) *Turning toward Philosophy: Literary Device and Dramatic Structure* Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press
[89] Ibid., p.4

That is, just like the interpretations in other literary works, finding out the text's spokesperson is unnecessary. The failure or unconcern in finding out the text's spokesperson would not obstruct us from understanding the profound meaning of the work. Quite the contrary, reading the text through such lenses would in effect deprive us of the thorough appreciation of the meaning of the text.

To sum up: first, the dominating "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" approach fails to accommodate the value of the narrative form. Secondly, it cannot account for the fact that the *Zhuangzi* is written in the narrative form. Thirdly, it ignores the phenomenon of ironic twist, and more importantly. Lastly, it is motivated by an invalid worry. I argue that it is better to liberate ourselves from the chains posed by the assumed "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" approach. Leaving the chains behind, we could still understand, and even better, the meaning of the narratives in the *Zhuangzi*. We can see it in the case of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter.

v. The "Xiaoyaoyou" 逍遙遊 Chapter Revisited

While the literary form of narrative is ubiquitous in the *Zhuangzi*, its very first chapter, the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, is also mostly in the narrative form. In this section, I would take the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, especially the story of Kun-Peng and the little birds as a paradigm example for my analysis. In doing so, it can be seen how the literary form of narrative is inherently connected with its philosophical content.

I choose the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter for various reasons. First, the chapter is one of the most popular chapters of the *Zhuangzi*. Some might not know any other story of the Zhuangzi but still heard of the story of Kun 鯤 and Peng 鵬. Second, the philosophical content and narrative form are best connected in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. As the title suggests, the major theme of the chapter is "carefree wandering" 逍遙遊. I would argue that the "constellation of perspectives", which is the value of narrative, is constitutive to the very idea of "carefree wandering". Moreover, there are also meta-narrative elements in the chapter. The analysis of them also helps us understand better the relation between the meta-narrative elements and narrative elements. It would then improve our understanding of other chapters in the *Zhuangzi* as many of them are also a mixture of these two literary forms.

Last but not least, the "Xiaoyaoyou chapter" is a good place to start with because the chapter has been subject to a great controversy for a long time. There has been a famous debate on the evaluation of the Kun-Peng, and the cicada and the little dove 蜩與學鳩. Whether or not the Kun-Peng is superior to the cicada and the little dove. Guo Xiang 郭象, the most important editor and commentator of the *Zhuangzi* famously argues for a negative answer to the question. Many scholars vehemently disagree with him and criticise his interpretation. Almost every interpreter of the Zhuangzi since then would say a word on this "old debate" concerning which character embodied the virtue of *xiaoyao*. I believe that the debate has again shown the domination of the "finding out the *Zhuangzi's* spokesperson" approach. The focus on the narrative form could give us inspiration on the debate.

We start with Guo Xiang's interpretation. Guo Xiang comments on the title of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter that "as a matter of fact the great and the little are different. Yet when they both relax in the field of self-attainment, things would let their nature unrestricted, working in accordance with their abilities, fulfilling their own roles. *Xiaoyao* are equal. How could winning and losing get involved?" 夫小大雖殊, 而放於自得之場, 則物任其性, 事稱其能, 各當其分, 逍遙一也, 豈容勝負於其間哉 The main idea of Guo Xiang's interpretation is that the difference in size between myriad things has nothing to do with the question of whether one could achieve the state of *xiaoyao*. Not only can the great be *xiaoyao* but also the little. In other words, one does not need to cultivate oneself to be great in order to attain *xiaoyao*.

The key to *xiaoyao*, Guo Xiang writes, is "insofar as one is satisfied with one's nature then even the great Peng has nothing to be feeling superior to the little bird, and the little bird would not long for the Lake of Heaven. So glory and yearning have already been redundant. It is, therefore, the little and the great are different yet *xiaoyao* is equal." 苟足於其性, 則雖大鵬無以自貴於小鳥, 小鳥無羨於天池, 而榮願有餘矣。故小大雖殊, 逍遙一也 Guo Xiang believes that the only way to attain *xiaoyao* is to be "satisfied with one's nature" 足其性. One should "relax in the field of self-attainment", let alone one's nature, fulfilling one's role, and do what one's nature supposes one to do. The only obstacle that thwarts our attainment of *xiaoyao* is the interference of one's nature. When one tries to do something that exceeds one's nature—forcing oneself to act as the great for instance—one would be "restrained" 困 and "exhausted" 窮.

Guo Xiang thus concludes that the Kun-Peng, and the cicada and the little dove are equally *xiaoyao* because they are both doing things in accordance with their nature: the Kun-Peng is a great creature and thus taking a journey to the Lake of Heaven, whereas the cicada and the little dove are little creatures and hence flying up to "the elm or the sandalwood" 榆枋 then stop.

Guo Xiang's interpretation has led to one of the most important controversies in the *Zhuangzi* scholarship since then. Up to the present day, many sinologists and Chinese philosophers have objected to Guo Xiang's reading despite Guo Xiang's being the primary editor of the transmitted *Zhuangzi*.[90] Chien Mu 錢穆, for example, criticises Guo Xiang that "in the seven Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi, it is well-known that there is a detailed notion of self-cultivation. Its purpose is to attain the ideal state. The ideal state is not just letting oneself go naturally. How could it be anything like what Guo Xiang thought in mind that it is appropriate insofar as everything is given to the nature?" 莊子內七篇, 都知有一番細密工夫, 又求能達到一種理想境界, 並非純任自然, 何嘗如郭象心中所想, 一切付之自然而即當. Chien's criticism demonstrates a general dissatisfaction about Guo Xiang's reading: Guo Xiang makes *xiaoyao* way too easy. *Xiaoyao* and the other "ideal states" in the *Zhuangzi* are never something taken for granted, but something achieved through the specific practice of self-cultivation discussed in detail in the *Zhuangzi*. If *xiaoyao* is nothing more than "satisfied with one's nature", we can attain it without any effort on practising the self-cultivation proposed in the text. As long as *xiaoyao* is to be attained by self-cultivation, it cannot be "satisfied with one's nature" as he thinks.

The critics of Guo Xiang also disagree about his "ranking" of the characters in the narrative of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. According to his understanding of *xiaoyao* as nature-fulfilment, the Kun-Peng and the small creatures are equally *xiaoyao*. The critics of Guo Xiang argue that the ideal state of *xiaoyao* is exemplified *solely* by the Kun-Peng, but not by the small creatures. Liu Xiaogan thus writes, "in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, the great Peng is the subject and symbol of *xiaoyao* whereas the little bird is the negative representative of ignorance of the great Peng and *xiaoyao*. In the primary text of the *Zhuangzi*, that stance of honouring the great Peng and teasing the little bird is pronounced." 在〈逍遙遊〉中, 大鵬是

[90] One famous contemporary supporter of Guo's reading is Mou Zongsan 牟宗三. Mou has a detail explication and explanation of Guo's understanding of 'Xiaoyao' in his book《才性與玄理》. I believe that Guo's reading makes much more sense than its appearance in the light of Mou's formulation. To understand Mou's formulation of Guo's reading requires the understanding of Mou's own immense philosophical system, which goes way beyond the scope of this chapter. For those who are interested, see Mou Zongsan, (2020)《才性與玄理》臺灣:學生書局, Chapter 6

逍遙遊的主體和象徵, 小鳥則是不理解大鵬, 不理理逍遙的反面代表。莊子原文歌頌大鵬, 嘲笑小鳥的立場是十分鮮明的.[91]

It can be seen that Liu, like Fraser, thinks that there is a sort of evaluative ranking in the narratives of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. According to this ranking, the little birds are of the lowest rank whereas the great Peng is at a higher level. Liu even believes that this evaluative ranking is very obvious. That is why Liu thinks that Guo Xiang's commentary did not really take the interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* as its primary purpose; it rather aimed at the construction of his own philosophy.[92] Moreover, Liu also thinks that the function of the great Peng and the little bird in the story are formally the same: they both serve as exemplifications. While the great Peng exemplifies the ideal state of *xiaoyao* and hence is the 'subject and symbol' 主體與象徵 of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, the little birds exemplify ignorance and hence is just the "negative representative" 反面代表. Putting it in my terminology, the great Peng is "the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson" whereas the little bird is just an inferior character or counter-spokesperson whose value is merely to highlight the great Peng.

Whom do I agree with? Guo or Liu? My answer is: neither Guo nor Liu. I cannot agree with Liu, for his criticism of Guo is clearly motivated by the "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson" approach. I have already pointed out four problems with such an approach at the end of the last section. Liu's reading of this particular story demonstrates these general problems. To avoid repetition, I would put it in short. First, Liu takes both Peng and the little bird as mere means to represent the abstract philosophical notion: Peng represents *xiaoyao*, the little birds represent the otherwise. However, if it were the case, for what reason does *Zhuangzi* build its arguments in the form of narrative? Why wasn't the *Zhuangzi* written in the plain essayistic or propositional form, i.e. "*Xiaoyao* is X"? Second, Liu claims that it is "pronounced" 十分鮮明 that Peng is praised whereas the little birds are mocked in the story. That is, Liu believes that the evaluative hierarchy is very obvious and therefore very easy to identify. I am highly doubtful on this sort of "obviousness", for ambiguity is essential to narratives as explained, and there is the phenomenon of "ironic twist" existing in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. If "multi-perspectiveness" and "ironic twist" are taken into account, it is clearly wrong hat the evaluative hierarchy is "very obvious".

[91] Liu Xiaogan (2009)《詮釋與定向：中國哲學研究方法之探究》中國:商務印書局, p.186
[92] Ibid. p.198

Ironically, Liu complains that Guo's reading of the Xiaoyaoyou chapter is affected by his reading of the "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter. That is, Guo, according to Liu, "smuggles" the idea from the "Qiwulun" chapter into his reading of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. In doing so, Guo has "placed the 'Xiaoyaoyou' chapter on the same level with the 'Qiwulun' chapter, suppressing a three-dimensional system of thoughts into a flat theoretical structure of the 'ever-transforming myriad things'" 把〈逍遙遊〉和〈齊物論〉擺在同一個層面, 將一立體結構的思想體系壓縮成一個萬物獨化的平面化的理論結構.[93] In effect, I argue that Liu's own interpretation also distorts the multi-perspectival narratives in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, and suppressed it into the flat and straight-forward evaluative hierarchy.

How about Guo? I do think that Guo's reading is slightly better than Liu's since he does not treat the little birds merely as means for the sake of highlighting the great Peng as Liu does. But Guo's reading too is somehow committed to the "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson" just like Liu. The dispute between Guo and Liu is apparent: they disagree with each other on who is the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson. Liu thinks it is the great Peng whereas Guo thinks it is both the great Peng and the little birds; Liu thinks the great Peng exemplifies the ideal state of *xiaoyao* whereas Guo thinks both the great Peng and the little bird do the job. At the fundamental level, Guo and Liu are the same: the story and the characters in the chapter are merely a means or an example to represent the *Zhuangzi*'s voice. In the light of Guo's reading, the Zhuangzi's voice to be exemplified is that "to attain *xiaoyao* is to be adaptive to one's nature" 適性逍遙. This proposition somehow exhausted the philosophical meaning of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. Both the great Peng and the little birds are merely pragmatic tools to represent such a thesis specifically and vividly. They constitute no meaning or content but just effect. In other words, Guo, like Liu, turns the form of narrative into something inessential. The multi-perspectival character of narratives is not fully appreciated since the key to *xiaoyao*, according to Guo's reading, is to be adaptive with one's own nature. There is no genuine importance of understanding the "constellation of perspective" and sticking with one's own perspective would not undermine one's attainment of *xiaoyao*. Hence Guo's reading, like Liu's, contradicts with my literary-form approach that takes the form of narrative as constitutive and essential. In this regard, Guo himself also boldly admits that "[t]he substance of Peng-Kun is something I have not investigated in detail…It can be skimmed insofar as it does not harm the general thesis." 鵬鯤之實, 吾未所詳也 (…) 自不害

[93] Ibid, p.201

其弘旨，旨可略之耳. Thus, both Guo and Liu trivialise the literary form of narrative, and so they undermine the dynamics and "constellation of perspectives" of it.

I think we should stop joining the "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson" game and fundamentally change how we appreciate the meaning of the story. The attention to the feature of "constellation of perspectives" is our key to this.

Here is the first paragraph of the chapter:

> In the Dark of North there is a fish, and its name is Kun. Kun is so huge that no one knows how many thousand miles it measures. It transforms into a bird, and its name is Peng. The back of Peng is so huge that no one knows how many thousand miles it measures. It bursts into flying; its wings are like the clouds hanging from the sky. This bird will travel to the South Darkness when the ocean heaves. The Dark of South is the Lake of Heaven.
>
> The book of Qixie records strange things. The words of Xie say: "In Peng's journey to the Dark of South, the water is splashed away by three miles long. It beats and mounts the whirlwind, and rises ninety thousand miles high. It sets off on the six-month gale." The heat-hazes, the dust, the living things blowing breath at each other. Is the hazy-green of the sky its true colour? Does it extend infinitely? When it is looking down, all it sees is also just like this. That is it.
>
> 北冥有魚，其名為鯤。鯤之大，不知其幾千里也。化而為鳥，其名為鵬。鵬之背，不知其幾千里也；怒而飛，其翼若垂天之雲。是鳥也，海運則將徙於南冥。南冥者，天池也。齊諧者，志怪者也。
>
> 諧之言曰：「鵬之徙於南冥也，水擊三千里，摶扶搖而上者九萬里，去以六月息者也。」野馬也，塵埃也，生物之以息相吹也。天之蒼蒼，其正色邪？其遠而無所至極邪？其視下也亦若是，則已矣。

If we read this paragraph like Guo whose aim is just to grasp the "general thesis", we would then see just the major plot of the great Peng taking a journey to the Dark of South but overlook the subtle narration strategy. By contrast, if we take the narration strategy seriously, we would then discover how the multi-perspectival character of narrative subtly drifts.

The meaning of the first few lines seems obvious: they are describing the location, size, name, and transformation of the Kun-Peng. However, if we take a closer look at them, they are in effect puzzling. "Kun is so huge that no one knows how many thousand miles it measures...The back of Peng is so huge that no one knows how many thousand miles it measures" 鯤之大, 不知其幾千里也(…)鵬之背, 不知其幾千里也. Whose voice is that? Who is the one who doesn't know? For the sake of convenience, I translate *bu zhi* as "no one knows". However, in fact the meaning here is ambiguous. It can be read in various ways. First, it can be read as the narrator, or the implied author of the chapter, making a universal claim that Kun is so big that no one really knows its size. But how can that be possible? Can the narrator possibly be in the right position to say that no one really knows Kun's size? It is therefore difficult to judge confidently that it is a universal claim made by the narrator. Second, it can be read as a subjective claim made by the narrator. On this reading, *bu zhi* should be translated as "I do not know". The narrator merely claims that he or she does not know the size of Kun. But this reading would be unappealing too, for there are no subject words like *wu* or *wo* indicating that the narrator is making a subjective claim, and it also implies that all other seemingly objective descriptions are merely subjective assertions made by the narrator. This all-the-way-down subjectivation is too costly. Third, it can be read as a robustly objective claim. It is not a universal claim by the narrator who is pretending to be objective. Nor is it a subjective claim describing the belief of the narrator. Rather, it is simply an objective claim made by no one who is viewing the Kun from nowhere. This very last possibility is again unconvincing since the "focalization"is an essential feature of narratives. Considering these difficulties, I believe that there is no determined answer to the question of whose voice it is. As a reader, we can never be certain from whose perspective the sentences are written. We cannot really know who does not really know the size of Kun, and who is viewing the Kun-Peng transformation.

The uncertainty of perspectives is not only common but also very important in the literary form of narrative. It plays a vital role in the constitution of meaning in narratives. In this respect, Goldie writes: "we are not entirely sure who 'owns' the word…there is, as there ought to be, no determinate answer to the question of whose sentiments are being reported."[94] The indeterminacy is not the guilt of the interpreter or the literary form of narrative. Rather it "must be seen as an interpretative gain and not a loss."[95] At the very beginning of the chapter,

[94] Goldie (2008), p.35
[95] Ibid, p.36

the uncertainty and indeterminacy of the 'ownership' of perspective appear. We are not entirely sure who is viewing the Kun and who is the one that "doesn't know" 不知. This indeterminacy should raise our awareness of the idea and importance of perspectives which would then be the key to *xiaoyao*.

As the narrative unfolds, other puzzling lines come up. After describing Peng's journey to the south and quoting words from *Qixie*, the last few sentences of the paragraph are somewhat problematic. "The heat-hazes, the dust, the living things blowing breath at each other. Is the hazy-green of the sky its true color? Does it extend infinitely? When it is looking down, all it sees is also just like this. That is it." 野馬也, 塵埃也, 生物之以息相吹也。天之蒼蒼, 其正色邪？其遠而無所至極邪？其視下也亦若是, 則已矣. The reason why they are puzzling is that the point of view is drastically drifting. The paragraph begins with a 'neutral' perspective of an uncertain owner, be it the narrator's perspective, or the narrator-pretending-objective perspective, or the perspective from nowhere, and then shifts to the perspective of the book of *Qixie*. What happens here is that after the quotation of *Qixie* the point of view suddenly and dramatically shifts to the perspective of Kun-Peng, which is so different from the previous perspectives.

I read the line of "[t]he heat-hazes, the dust, the living things blowing breath at each other" 野馬也, 塵埃也, 生物之以息相吹也 as a description of what can be seen by Peng who is flying in the sky. Since Peng "beats and mounts the whirlwind, and rises ninety thousand miles high" 摶扶搖而上者九萬里, Peng is now looking at the ground with a bird's-eye view. From a perspective of thousands miles high, everything on the ground looks insignificantly small. In the eyes of Peng, everything looks like "heat-hazes" and "dust" floating on earth. Viewing from such a detached distance every activity on earth no matter how important it seems becomes insipid and ordinary. In the eyes of Peng, what all the living things are all doing is simply that "blowing breath at each other" 以息相吹.

The point of view does not stop drifting after changing from the perspective of *Qixie* to that of Peng. The point of view continues to drift: after looking from the sky as Peng, the text then asks a question from the ground. I read "[i]s the hazy-green of the sky its true colour? Does it extend infinitely?" 天之蒼蒼, 其正色邪？其遠而無所至極邪？ as questions asked by someone who is on the ground. Unlike Peng who is in the sky or even looking down at the sky, we have to look up at the sky. Living on the ground, the sky always looks profound to us.

We would therefore wonder its genuine colour and boundary. By contrast, these would not be the questions asked by Peng since it is already there.

Having both the perspective from the sky and the perspective from the ground, we can make a comparison. Is any one of them more valuable and thus should be prioritised? It writes, "[w]hen it is looking down, all it sees is also just like this. That is it" 其視下也亦若是, 則已矣. In respect to the "reality", i.e. the true colour and boundary of the sky, the two perspectives are simply equal. None of them is superior or inferior to another. They are equal perspectives viewing the reality from different angles. Can we say anything more about their comparison? No, "that is it" 而已矣.

In short, this is the trajectory regarding its perspective in the first paragraph of the chapter: the perspective of the narrator → the perspective of *Qixie* → the perspective from the sky (Peng's) → the perspective from the ground (ours? Or narrator's). The "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter presents a "constellation of perspective" to us without prioritising any one of them.

Reading the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter in such a way faces obvious difficulties. As mentioned in the previous section the chapter contains paragraphs not only in the narrative form like the first paragraph but also in the essayistic form. The essayistic paragraphs occur right after the first paragraph:

> If the water is not piled deeply enough, it lacks the strength to carry a great boat. (…) So when the bird is ninety thousand miles high with the wind underneath it, only then it rests its weight on the wind like now; and when it shoulders the blue sky without any hindrance, only then it now sets its course to the south.
>
> 且夫水之積也不厚, 則負大舟也無力。(.....) 故九萬里則風斯在下矣, 而後乃今培風;背負青天而莫之夭閼者, 而後乃今將圖南

Moreover, after a narrative description of the cicada and little dove, an essayistic paragraph again appears:

> "Little understanding cannot keep up with great understanding. The short-lived cannot keep up with the long-lived. (…) Yet nowadays Pengzu is uniquely famous for living long and the common folk all want to match with him. Isn't it pathetic?"
>
> 小知不及大知, 小年不及大年 (...) 而彭祖乃今以久特聞, 眾人匹之, 不亦悲乎！

It seems that the second and the fourth paragraph misfit the proposed reading and even contradict it. The drifting of perspective is not involved in the second and the fourth paragraph. There is no "constellation of perspectives" but just a single-perspective argument. The second paragraph argues for the importance of "deepening" oneself and the fourth paragraph argues for the distinction between the small and the great. These paragraphs serve as the important evidence in support of the 'orthodox' reading like Liu's and Fraser's: putting Peng at the top of the evaluative hierarchy.

My suggestion concerning the interpretation on these lines is that we should treat them as one of the perspectives that constitutes the whole "constellation of perspectives". Although, similar to the situation above, we cannot know exactly who "owns" the words, we could say that these comments implied the existence of a commentator. And therefore these words can be attributed to such a "stipulated" and implied commentator.[96] Accordingly, these lines do constitute the whole meaning of the text but do not exhaust it since they are just the implied commentator's comments on the narrative. The implied commentator's point of view is one of the perspectives demonstrated and should not be privileged. Perhaps it is true that the second and the fourth paragraph really show that Kun-Peng is praised whereas the little birds are condemned (though it is not entirely certain). Nonetheless, it does not imply that the whole text is simply to praise Kun-Peng and condemn the little birds. I think the mistake committed by the "orthodox" interpreters is that they take these paragraphs to be the true meaning of the chapter. In doing so they undermine the playful dynamic and fluidity of the chapter.

What is playful here is that the text keeps drifting its point of view. The text not only shifts its point of view within the narrative (narrator's → *Qixie*'s → Peng's → us) but also to the meta-narrative level. Reading through the chapter, we are first presented with a "constellation of perspectives". We are then presented a seemingly meta-level argument commenting on the "constellation of perspectives": Peng is good, and the little birds are bad. Nevertheless, this comment is in effect also part of the constellation. The implied commentator's perspective on other perspectives, together with other perspectives, constitutes the whole 'constellation of perspectives' presented in the text. We are thus led to another perspective in these paragraphs: the implied commentator's perspective. The trajectory is now extended as: narrator → *Qixie*

[96] I am thankful to Prof. Ted Hui for pointing out the attribution issue here. Initially I attributed these lines to the author of the chapter instead of the implied commentator. Although there might be reasons for equalising the implied commentator with the author, attributing these comments to the implied commentator is clearly a more assured option.

→ Peng/someone up in the sky → us/someone on the ground → implied commentator. This meaning of the text lies on the whole trajectory but not the implied commentator's perspective.

There is a very similar discussion in other categories of narratology. The "meta-language" theory in film and novel studies by Colin MacCabe is highly relevant here. MacCabe argues that the truth and the meaning of the text lie on the "meta-language" which talks about the "object language". The "object language" is something said by the character or the reality viewed from the character's perspective whereas the "meta-language" is not something said by any character within the narrative. In the case of novel, he thinks that "the sentences outside quotation marks give a privileged overview" of what is happening.[97] Likewise, in the case of narrative film, he thinks that the camera is the "meta-language" and therefore the camera is the one who speaks the truth rather than any one of the characters in the narrative. According to him, there is "a hierarchy of discourse rules narration in classical film" and novels i.e "meta-language" over "object language". It is similar to the "orthodox" reading of the chapter that puts the meta-narrative discourse over the narrative discourse.

The "meta-language" theory receives many criticisms. The chief objection is that the theory undermines the very value of narrative. As David Bordwell argued, "[f]ar from attempting to provide an unmediated literary representation of reality, the novel tends to criticise discourses which reduce reality in univocal ways (…) in these novels, visions of the world struggle in open battle."[98] That is, narratives are meant to be multi-perspectival without univocality. Any attempt to "univocalise" the narrative by constructing a "hierarchy of discourse" is just a "euphoric dream of scientificity".[99] We try to save the meaning of narrative by making it unambiguous, univocal, and scientific, but in effect, we undermine its very value in doing so.

Similarly, we would only undermine the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter if we read it with a hierarchy of discourse that puts the second and fourth paragraphs over the first and second paragraphs. We should not prioritise essayistic discourse and thereby prioritise the perspective of Peng and conclude that *xiaoyao* is to be Peng. Instead, we should deconstruct both the hierarchy of discourse (essayistic discourse over narrative discourse) and the evaluative hierarchy (Peng over the little birds) and wander among the constellation of perspectives presented in the text.

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[97] Bordwell, David (1985) *Narration in the Fiction Film*, University of Wisconsin Press, p.18
[98] Ibid., p.19
[99] Ibid., p.18

In this respect, the French novelist Pascal Quignard might do a better job than other scholars of the *Zhuangzi*. He thinks the drifting between essayistic discourse and narrative discourse is precisely the unique value of the Zhuangzi. He thus mimics this literary form when writing his works. His works are famous for his mixture of narrative and non-narrative discourses. The narrative and non-narrative discourse often jump together in his works. His stories are often accompanied by argumentative essays while his essays are like stories. I believe that Quignard rightly grasps the value of the *Zhuangzi*.[100] Rather than univocalise the Zhuangzi we should represent the "constellation of perspective" as far as we can.

Before ending the discussion on narrative, I shall introduce the concept of "ironic twist' as a setup for the later analysis of irony.[101] In the next chapter, I mainly focus on the "Tianzifang" 田子方 chapter. But the same literary phenomenon also occurs in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter and highly relevant to the "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesman" approach. I thus explain it briefly here.

By 'ironic twist' I mean the literary form that the *Zhuangzi* twists its own apparent "moral" of the narratives, and thereby ridicules the readers. That is, the apparent *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson or counter-spokesperson is often ironically subverted. It implies that the "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesman" approach is doomed to failure since we can never really pick up some character in the narrative as the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson. The status as a spokesperson is, soon or later, ironically deconstructed, twisted and subverted in the *Zhuangzi*. In the case of the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, it can be seen that the counter-spokesperson of the "orthodox" reading—the cicada and little dove— "resurrect" in an implicit way.

The "orthodox" reading regards Peng as the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson whereas the little birds as the counter-spokesperson. Peng is ideal for it is able to transform itself, and transcends its own limitations (it takes a long journey to the Dark of South). The little birds, by contrast, are anti-ideal for they are satisfied with the status quo and staying in their comfort zone (sometimes they cannot even reach an elm or sandalwood).

How is this "moral" twisted in the chapter? The "ironic twist" lies in the story of Yao 堯 and Xu You 許由. After the story of Kun-Peng and the little birds, the Xiaoyaoyou chapter contains a story of Yao and Xu You. It is about Yao, the well-known legendary ruler of

[100] Kemp, Simon (2010) *French Fiction into the Twenty-First Century* University of Wales Press, Ch.2
[101] A term first introduced to me by Dirk Meyer in a seminar.

ancient time, trying to 'pass the world-under-Heaven to Xu You' ("堯讓天下於許由"). In reply, Xu You refused Yao's offer and said to him:

> You are ordering the world-under-Heaven, and it is already well-ordered. If I were to replace you, would it be for the sake of name? Name is the guest of the substantial. Would I do it for the sake of the guest? Tits that nest in the deep wood want no more than one branch. Moles that drink at the river want no more than a bellyful. Go back home my lord! The world-under-Heaven is no use to me. Even if the cook is not cooking well, the priest and medium would not step over the wine jar and meat tray to replace him.
>
> 子治天下, 天下既已治也。而我猶代子, 吾將為名乎？名者, 實之賓也, 吾將為賓乎？鷦鷯巢於深林, 不過一枝;偃鼠飲河, 不過滿腹。歸休乎君！予無所用天下為。庖人雖不治庖, 尸祝不越樽俎而代之矣

In his reply, Xu You explained why he rejected Yao's offer. The chief reason is that he had no desire for *ming* 名 at all. He thinks that he should not rule the world-under-Heaven just like 'the priest and medium would not step over the wine jar and meat tray' to cook. He would not change his status quo for the sake of *ming*. Therefore, the world-under-Heaven is not attractive to him.

Many scholars pick up Xu You as the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson for his sayings apparently fit our general understanding of the Zhuangzi's philosophy. For example, Chen Gu-ying 陳鼓應 writes: "Zhuangzi conveys his message through Xu You, pointing out that name is the shadow of the substantial. He thoroughly portrays *wu ming* 無名 here."[102] Moreover, the *Zhuangzi* often mocks the sage of Ru such as Confucius. From this general feature (though a very doubtful feature), one could thus reasonably infer that Yao must be the *Zhuangzi*'s counter-spokesperson whereas his interlocutor Xu You must be the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson.

Nonetheless, if we have a second look at Xu You's reply and read it together with the little birds' sayings, we would discover the "ironic twists" in the chapter. The little birds are criticised for laughing at Peng and thinking that there is no point in flying ninety thousand miles up and travelling to the south. Also, the purported spokesperson Xu You in refusing Yao says that "[t]its that nest in the deep wood want no more than one branch. Moles that drink at the river want no more than a bellyful." 鷦鷯巢於深林, 不過一枝;偃鼠飲河, 不過

[102] Chen Gu-ying (2015)《莊子的開放心靈與價值重估》香港:中華書局

滿腹. In this line, Xu You mentioned a kind of little bird living in the deep wood. It is a striking similarity to the cicada and little dove. What is ironically twisted here is that Xu You is not at all criticising the tits for being satisfied with only one branch. Quite the contrary, Xu You uses the tits and moles to demonstrate that every creature has its own way of living. There is no point, or even harmful, in stepping over the ordinary way for the sake of name.

Interestingly enough, the purported spokesperson Xu You is now on the same side with the counter-spokesperson cicada and little dove. Their visions of the world and life are very much the same: enjoy one's own way of living and 'transcending' is laughable. Xu You's reply forces us to rethink about the purported 'evaluative hierarchy': if the little birds are the counter-spokesperson who should be put under Peng, then should we equally regard Xu You as the counter-spokesperson too? If Xu You is the ideal, should we equally regard the little birds as the ideal? I think this kind of puzzle can never be settled. The point of the "ironic twist" is the twist itself.

The "ironic twist" also brings the "constellation of perspectives" to another level. It brings our perspectives into the constellation too. For the "ironic twist" to function, *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson has to be spotted. If we have no sense of the little birds in the previous story being criticised, Xu You's sayings would twist nothing since there is no purported 'evaluative hierarchy' for him to twist, no purported spokesperson for him to subvert. In other words, we, the readers, are involved in making the "ironic twist" twisting. Not only the 'ironic twist' twists Peng and the little birds but also twists us who had "illegitimate" expectations for the text (that there would be a static evaluative hierarchy).

Unfortunately, the orthodox reading is again not taking this literary form seriously. For example, Chen does not even realise the relevance of Xu You and the little birds. On the one hand, he takes Xu You as the mouthpiece of the *Zhuangzi*. On the other hand, he believes in the evaluative hierarchy in which Peng stands over the little birds. The "ironic twist" is overlooked in his reading.

To conclude, instead of a static evaluative hierarchy, the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter presents us the drifting of perspective and the "ironic twist". I conceive the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter as a dynamic and on-going narrative world, a fascinating constellation of perspectives. As interpreters, our mission is not to undermine such a constellation and flattening it into a static, hierarchical, unified 'philosophical system', but to sketch it as far as we could.

Accordingly, *xiaoyao* is not represented as one (or two) of the perspective as Guo and Liu might propose. Rather, wandering among different perspectives in the constellation is *xiaoyao*. Any static statement cannot render us the knowledge of *xiaoyao* or the taste of what it is like to be *xiaoyao*. The dynamic state of *xiaoyao* can only be known and experienced via the very activity of reading through the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. Neither could we learn about *xiaoyao* by modelling the great Peng nor by modelling both the great Peng and the little bird. We can only learn about *xiaoyao* via drifting from the perspective from the great Peng to the little bird, to Yao, to Xu You, to the narrator, to the unknown, and to your own self.

After all, who is the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesperson? Who represents the ideal of *xiaoyao*? Who is right about the question of how one should live? Kun-Peng? The cicada and little birds? Yao? Xu You? The narrator? The implied commentator? The author? We? No determined answer is given in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. The idea of *xiaoyao* cannot be pinned down as one or two or three of them. *Xiaoyao* is infinitely moving back and forth in the constellation of perspectives.

Irony

The *Zhuangzi* is full of humour. The narratives in *Zhuangzi* demonstrate a sense of playfulness. The characters in the stories sometimes interacted with one another in what we might think is an ironic way. In the previous chapter, I have discussed how *Zhuangzi* takes the literary form of narrative as one of its major ways of doing philosophy. I have argued that the "constellation of perspectives" is the most important feature of narrative and how the prevailing interpretative strategy of "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman" undermines it. The irony of the narratives in *Zhuangzi* further supports my claim that "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman" is doomed to fail: you could never be certain that the character identified as "the Zhuangzi's spokesman" is really representing the Zhuangzian ideal person. More importantly, if you think you succeeded in doing so, you are often set up by Zhuangzi.

In this chapter, I am going to examine the aspect of irony in the *Zhuangzi* to which I refer as "ironic twist". The "Tianzifang" 田子方 chapter will be my target of investigation. The chapter included eleven stories that mainly deal with the problem of language, learning, and social convention. I argue that when studied in detail the text somehow "resists" a straightforward and linear interpretation and poses its reader twists after twist. There are manifold ways of "ironic twist": internal irony within a character, irony between characters within a story, irony between characters across stories, irony between characters and the narrators, and irony between characters and us, the readers.

My argument will be processed as follows: firstly, I shall provide a detailed textual analysis on the "Tianzifang" chapter. In my analysis, it will be shown that there are many hidden ironic twists that would run counter any linear reading. Secondly, I argue that the concept of irony as a philosophical concept is not merely a literary device but an important feature of human life. The ideas in Jonanthan Lear's *The Case for Irony* will be my major references. His characterisation of the irony of Socrates and Kierkegaard will serve as a reference point for the irony in the *Zhuangzi*.

i. The “Tianzifang” 田子方 chapter

1.

田子方侍坐於魏文侯, 數稱谿工。文侯曰:「谿工, 子之師邪？」子方曰:「非也。無擇之里人也, 稱道數當, 故無擇稱之。」文侯曰:「然則子無師邪？」子方曰:「有。」曰:「子之師誰邪？」子方曰:「東郭順子。」文侯曰:「然則夫子何故未嘗稱之？」子方曰:「其為人也真, 人貌而天虛, 緣而葆真, 清而容物。物無道, 正容以悟之, 使人之意也消。無擇何足以稱之！」子方出, 文侯儻然終日不言, 召前立臣, 而語之曰:「遠矣全德之君子！始吾以聖知之言、仁義之行為至矣, 吾聞子方之師, 吾形解而不欲動, 口鉗而不欲言。吾所學者直土梗耳, 夫魏真為我累耳！

Tian Zifang was sitting in attendance on Marquis Wen of Wei and has praised Qi Gong several times. Marquis Wen asked: “Is Qi Gong your teacher?” Zifang answered: “No.he is my neighbourhood. He praised the *dao* appropriately several times and therefore I praised him. Marquis Wen asked: “Have you no teacher then?” Zifang answered: “I do” Marquis Wen asked: “Who is your teacher?” Zifang said: “Shunzi from the Eastern Wall” Marquis Wen asked: “Why have you never praised him then?” Zifang answered: “He is an authentic person. He has the appearance of a human and the emptiness of Heaven. He follows along with others and yet keeps his authenticity. He is limpid and yet encompasses all things. When things have no *dao*, he inspires them with appropriate encompassment and thereby dissolves people’s intentions. How could I be good enough to praise this?”

Zifang left and Marquis Wen remained silent with a vacant look for the rest of the day. He then called the ministers to stand in attendance and said to them: How far away is the gentleman of complete virtue! I used to think the words of sage and wisdom, and the practices of benevolence and righteousness are already the utmost. But now I have heard about Zifang’s teacher. My body has fallen apart and I have no desire to move; my mouth has been fettered and I have no desire to talk. What I have learned before is nothing more than clay dolls. This state of Wei is really my burden!”

The chapter of "Tianzifang" begins with the story of Tian Zifang. The story is mainly constituted by a conversation between Tian Zifang and Marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯. A third person called Shunzi from the Eastern Wall is mentioned in Tian Zifang's speech.

The importance of this opening story is that it sets the philosophical agenda for the rest of the chapter that somehow unifies the whole chapter into a meaningful whole. There are 11 stories in total in the chapter of "Tianzifang". To some extent, they are all independent in the sense that they carry meaning in their own right and can thus be understood independently. However, there are also obvious connections between different stories though they do not explicitly mention each other. Apparently they do not share many common characters and philosophical terms.[103] But in fact the chapter is connected by its common philosophical themes. The story of Tian Zifang and Marquis Wen of Wei set up the central philosophical themes for the succeeding stories. In this story we can find that Tian Zifang and Marquis Wen of Wei had a conversation on the matters of *learning* and *language*. The story puts forward some initial ideas on these two matters and the chapter then unfolds itself around these themes and ideas. The succeeding sections can be viewed as a continuing response to them.

However, in order to appreciate the dialectic in the chapter we cannot miss its literary form of "ironic twist". That is to say, if we missed its literary form we would also miss its dialectical discussion on learning and language. When the chapter is read in a linear way that overlooks its implicit "twisted" form, the philosophical content of it also becomes dull. It is dull in the sense that there are no dynamics and different stories are merely viewed as repetition of the same philosophical thesis already raised in the first story. The dynamic in the chapter can only be fully appreciated by paying one's attention to the literary form of the chapter. Such a literary form of "ironic twist" is also exhibited in the first story of Tian Zifang and Marquis Wen of Wei. The chapter is thus unified by the very first story in terms of both its form and content.

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[103] The term *yi* "言" ("language"/ "speech"/ "words"), for example, did occur for few times in different sections of the chapter: the term *yi* is mentioned in section 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8. So it is not true that different sections are mutually independent in terms of the term they used. But what I have in mind is chapter 26 of the *Zhuangzi*. Wim De Reu's article 'A Ragbag of Odds and Ends? Argument Structure and Philosophical Coherence in Zhuangzi 26' successfully argued for the philosophical coherence of chapter 26 by tracing the "verbal connections" in the chapter. De Reu found that there are three major terms-*suoyi* "所以" *yan* "言" *yi* "意"-used in different sections in the chapter. The chapter is unified by the usage of these terms. By contrast, I do not find that there are such verbal connections in the chapter of "Tianzifang". The chapter is rather unified by its literary form of "ironic twist" and its philosophical themes (as opposed to its "philosophical terms"). This is why I say that different sections in the chapter do not share common "philosophical terms"

The philosophical implication of the first scene of the "Tianzifang" seems to be straightforward. If one adopts the interpretative strategy of "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman", one might easily identify a hierarchy of characters in terms of their proximity to the *dao* just as the one Fraser believes he could find in Xiaoyaoyou.[104] There are four major characters in the scene: Tian Zifang 田子方, Marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯, Shunzi from the Eastern Wall 東郭順子, and Qi Gong 谿工. (Among these four characters, Qi Gong is the most difficult case to his role in the hierarchy. But precisely because of the difficulty of his case, his case serves as one of the hints of the "ironic twist" of this scene. I will soon show why.)

To begin with Marquis Wen of Wei, there is prima facie textual evidence that Marquis Wen of Wei should be placed the lowest in the hierarchy. For one thing, although Marquis Wen of Wei is the one who has the power to rule, in the scene he is also the one who asks question and behave like a learner; for another, the last words of the scene is the acknowledgement of Marquis Wen of Wei that "[h]ow far away is the gentleman of complete virtue!" 遠矣全德之君子. This sentence implies that Marquis Wen of Wei himself does not yet attain the gentleman of complete virtue. Marquis Wen of Wei also admits at the end of the scene that his previous learning and cultivation are all wrong-headed. He used to "think that the words of sage and wisdom, and the practices of benevolence and righteousness are already the utmost" 聖知之言、仁義之行為至矣. Only until he hears from Tian Zifang (and Tien's introduction of Shunzi from the Eastern Wall) he realises that he is misguided. From this observation i.e Marquis Wen of Wei is a student learning the *dao* who is used to being misguided it is therefore straightforward to put Marquis Wen of Wei at the lowest of the hierarchy.

Tian Zifang should be at the next upper level in the hierarchy. In the scene, there is no direct description of him: unlike Shunzi from the Eastern Wall and Qi Gong who is talked about by Tian Zifang no one tells a story about Tian Zifang. Nor does he make any explicit personal statement like Marquis Wen of Wei. The major thing he does in the story is that he introduced Shunzi from the Eastern Wall and Qi Gong to Marquis Wen of Wei. He is thus serving as a mediator among these characters. He is a "teacher" of Marquis Wen of Wei as Marquis Wen of Wei is learning from him while he is also a "student" of Shunzi from the Eastern Wall as

[104] Fraser, Chris (2014) 'Wandering the Way: A Eudaimonistic Approach to the *Zhuangzi*' *Dao* 13:541

he tells it. It is therefore natural for one to think that Tian Zifang is a level higher than Marquis Wen of Wei but a level lower than Shunzi from the Eastern Wall. Again, I am going to argue that Tian Zifang's role in the scene is not merely a mediator, his particular way of introducing the two persons to Marquis Wen of Wei is one of hints of the text's "ironic twist". But at this point we should follow the straightforward reading first.

Following this interpretative path, Shunzi from the Eastern Wall is at the highest level compared to the other three characters. He is the teacher of Tian Zifang and through Tien's praise we get to know why he is the "Zhuangzi's spokesman". According to Tien's praise, Shunzi is someone who :

人貌　而　天虛
the appearance of human　and　emptiness of the Heaven
↓　|
緣而葆真　|
follows along with others and yet keeps his authenticity　↓
清而容物
remains limpid and yet encompasses all things

We can see that the achievement of Shunzi is twofold: being both humane and heavenly. On one hand, he "has the appearance of human" 人貌. That is to say, he is living with others in the ordinary human world rather than leading a detached hermit-like way of life. What is special about his way of dealing with others is that he avoid direct conflict with them 緣 and yet sustain his genuine self 葆真. It is often the case that if one "follows along" one become fake or if one "keeps his authenticity" one would dispute with others. Although "follows along with things" and "being authentic" seem to be mutually exclusive, they are harmonised in Shunzi's way of living in the human world. On the other hand, he "has the emptiness of the Heaven" 天虛. That is to say, he is all-inclusive like the Heaven. The Heaven is flourishing everything living under itself without any intended selection. So Sunzi also "encompasses all things" 容物. Yet in his inclusion of all things, neither he is affected nor "contaminated" by them. He "remains limpid" 清. It is often the case that if one "encompasses all things" one gets "polluted" by them. How can the water of a pool remain clean and clear when everything can be thrown into it? Meanwhile, if one remains "limpid" one becomes aloof from politics and thus exclusive. Again, the two—"encompasses all things" and "remains limpid"—appear

to be mutually exclusive, Shunzi however reconciles the opposition. In short, there are three prima facie oppositions: the opposition of "human" and "the Heaven", the opposition within "human" i.e of "following along" and "authenticity", and the opposition within "the Heaven" i.e of "being limpid" and "being all-inclusive". Shunzi successfully harmonises all of them.

In addition to the harmonisation of the oppositions, Shunzi's achievement is also implicitly about language:

> 物無道，正容以悟之，使人之意也消。
> When things have no *dao*, he inspires them with his appropriate encompassment and thereby dissolves people's intentions

These lines are puzzling. They are about how Shunzi deals with others when they are off track. It is said that when things are not behaving in their proper way 物無道, Shunzi would not just leave them as they are. Nor would he instruct them by his words. Rather, he "inspires them with his appropriate encompassment" 正容以悟之. We do not exactly know how one could inspire others with one's encompassment since the text does not explain the process but we can be certain that when Shunzi hopes to get things back into their appropriate courses he does not do it by the means of language. The non-verbal "encompassment" 容 is what he relies on. It is the non-verbal attitude instead of the verbal instruction that changes others.[105]

Furthermore, there is one more important philosophical implication of these lines. The line "thereby dissolves people's intentions" 使人之意也消 suggests that in his appropriate inclusion of others their intentions would be dissolved. I believe that the introduction of the concept of *yi* 意 is related to the more general philosophy of *wuwei* 無為 in the *Zhuangzi*. The concept of "non-action" is puzzling in two ways: for one thing if *wuwei* is taken literally it means "doing nothing". But it is not clear why "doing nothing" would be an ideal to be attained. Why is "doing nothing" a prefered way of life? For another, even if *wuwei* should be taken literally and "doing nothing" as a preferred way of living is justified in *Zhuangzi* there would be a paradox of *wuwei* emerging—how can one cultivate oneself to attain such an

[105] *Rong* 容 could possibly "demeanour". For example, Burton Watson translated the term as "a straight face". One of the justifications for my translative choice is to keep the semantics consistency for *Rong*: in the previous line "清而容物" *rong* is translated as "encompasses". Moreover, it is even more puzzling about how one could inspire others with one's demeanour. Even so, perhaps some might still think *rong* should be translated as "demeanour" instead of "encompassment" but my point holds anyway. My point here is just to emphasise that Shunzi's way of "inspiring" others is non-verbal. Either "emcompassment" or " demeanour" is non-verbal.

ideal way of life? The paradox of *wuwei* is that insofar as someone tries to do something to achieve such an ideal state he or she is no longer "doing nothing" in doing so. Due to these difficulties, readers of the *Zhuangzi* often look for alternative interpretation, which is often much more sophisticated, on the concept of *wuwei*.[106] Almost no one in the field interprets *wuwei* as literally "doing nothing". That is to say, *Zhuangzi* does not recommend a completely passive way of life. Accordingly, the sophistication of the understanding of *wuwei* always lies in how *wuwei* as a kind of action (since it is not "doing nothing") is yet different from other usual kinds of action.

One important aspect of *wuwei*, I argue, is related to *yi*. In western philosophical tradition, the nature of action has been a topic of great concern since Aristotle. Western philosophers attempt to understand how action is different from mere physical movement—what is the difference between my fist moving in the air punching on one's face and a stone blown up in the air hitting someone? From a naive perspective, they are the same—just physical movement. We, however, believe that the former is a human action bearing moral value (perhaps a negative one) whereas the latter is not. Intention is one of the candidates of accounting for this differentiation. The former is performed by someone who holds a certain intention in mind. On this account, an action is understood as a realisation of intention— for something to be considered as action it has to be performed as a result of intention.[107]

In this respect, the philosophical interesting point of *wuwei* is that *wuwei* is a kind of action without any rigid fixed intentions. *Wuwei* should not be understood as purely passive "doing nothing" but rather a special kind of behavioural pattern that is flexible, adaptive and context-sensitive. Indeed, this account of *wuwei* would bring about another form of paradox of *wuwei* since intention seems to be one of the main characteristics of action. When something is not a realisation of a fixed intention it does not appear to be an action. This paradoxical feature of *wuwei* is well captured in the chapter of "Tianzifang" as there are some paradoxical expressions in the succeeding sections about knack: drawing in Section 7, fishing in Section 8, archery in Section 9. The most obvious one is the story between King Wen 文王 and a fishing man in Section 8: the way of fishing of that "mature man" 丈夫 is unusual that

[106] There is a huge amount of literature discussing the concept of *wuwei* in *Zhuangzi* or more broadly in Daoism, so to speak. For more discussions on *wuwei*, see Slingerland, Edward (2007) *Effortless Action: Wu-wei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China*. UK: Oxford University Press

[107] For the discussion on the relation between action and intention, see section II in "Action" of *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*

“his fishing is not really fishing” 其釣莫釣. How could something be fishing and yet not fishing? I would come back to this and explain it in more detail when I interpret those succeeding sections.

Let’s get back to the story. According to Tian Zifang, Shunzi’s achievement can be summarised into three major points: 1. being both humane and heavenly 2. inspires things with one’s encompassment but not one’s words 3. dissolution of others’ intentions. After Tian Zifang told all these to Marquis Wen of Wei, Marquis Wen of Wei responses by admitting that he is far away from the gentlemen of complete virtue 遠矣全德之君子. The ending of Section 1 i.e Marquis Wen of Wei’s response is easily considered as merely a re-confirmation of the “Zhuangzi’s spokesman” status of Marquis Wen of Wei. Marquis Wen of Wei’s confession provides reason to say that Shunzi is at the top of the hierarchy in the story. In such a linear reading the philosophical implication almost completely lies in Tian Zifang’s praise of Shunzi— the explanation of the meaning of the story could have just ended here.

Nevertheless, if we take a closer look at Marquis Wen of Wei’s response we will start to discover the “ironic twist” of the story. Before Marquis Wen of Wei’s verbal response, Marquis Wen of Wei responded to the teaching of Shunzi (or of Tian Zifang) by his behaviour. He “remained silent with a vacant look for the rest of the day” 儻然終日不言. It might be meant to say that Marquis Wen of Wei was processing the words of Tian Zifang since his teaching was too shocking. But I argue that it is rather meant to tell the readers how Marquis Wen of Wei adopts the teaching of Shunzi. It shows how he understand Shunzi’s achievement and what he have learnt from him. That he “remained silent with a vacant look” indicates his hostility to language. His silence is not what he needed in order to figure out what Tian Zifang’s words mean but rather what he has learnt from him. In my analysis of Shunzi’s achievement, it is to some extent true that Shunzi does not seem to get things back into their appropriate courses by talking. Moreover, Tian Zifang also demonstrated his hostility to language as he refused to praise his teacher— “how could I be good enough to praise all these?” 無擇何足以稱之. Although this line does not directly criticise language and refuse the possibility of someone’s being good enough to praise Shunzi, it implies that Tian Zifang should remain silent with regard to how good Shunzi is. It seems that language used by someone inferior to Shunzi would be a distortion of the achievement of Shunzi. Shunzi’s *dao* is thus beyond language. The skepticism of language is a extremely common philosophical theme in the *Zhuangzi* and can be found in many other chapters: for example,

in the "Qiwulun" chapter, it said: "the great *dao* is not praised"大道不稱. Tian Zifang's refusal to praise Shunzi seems to be in harmony with this line; in the "Zhibeiyou" 知北遊 chapter, it said: "the *dao* cannot be spoken, when it is spoken it is not what it was" 道不可言，言而非也. Again, it seems that *dao* is irreducible to language. Any attempt to put *dao* into words would be a distortion of it;[108] in his interpretation of the "Qiushui"秋水 chapter, Dirk Meyer said: "While there is an urge to communicate the experience of truth to the world, that action generally requires intellectualisation, systematisation and categorisation. But systematising truth means putting it into a rigid framework, which bears the danger of reducing it to an arbitrary set of definitions."[109] If we put Meyer's ideas in the current context, the problem would be: how could Tian Zifang communicate the achievement of Shunzi to Marquis Wen of Wei and the readers without distorting it? Due to the difficulty of this problem and the awareness of the limitation of language, it is natural to conclude that one better shut his mouth with regard to *dao*. On this ground, Yang argues that the "Tianzifang" chapter endorse a special kind of "silence" 沉默 to which he refer as "creative silence" 創造性沉默.[110] The creativity of this special kind of silence is that it could preserve the unity of the *dao*. Silence is not simply negative but rather positive in terms of the perseverance of the *dao*. This is why Marquis Wen of Wei "remained silent with a vacant look for the rest of the day" after hearing of the *dao* of Tian Zifang and Shunzi.

The concept of language that I am using in the chapter is not yet specified. This is intended because I want to remain neutral with regard to the debate on the concept of language in early China. Not only how language was understood but even whether there was something called language in early China is controversial in the field.[111] The anti-language interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* just introduced would be given totally different formulations according to the different views on language in early China. For some who believe that language in early China is descriptive, the anti-language stance could be taken as the position that the ultimate reality cannot be represented by or accessed via language. Mark Berkson, for example, is

[108] I am not meant to agree with the orthodox methodology in the field that decontextualised the lines from the argumentation of the chapter. Whether these lines really implies the skepticism of language, I believe, requires much more detailed examination, especially the forms of argument of the corresponding chapters. I quote these lines merely for the sake of convenience since they are some of the most frequently quoted lines in support of the view that the *Zhuangzi* are sceptical of language. See Yang Ru Bin 楊儒賓 (2016)《儒門內的莊子》臺北：聯經出版

[109] Dirk Meyer (2015), p.298

[110] Yang (2016)

[111] Geaney, Jane (2018) *Language as Bodily Practice in Early China: A Chinese Grammatology*. Albany:SUNY

very close to such a reading.[112] For some who argue that the major function of language in early China is to give action-guiding prescriptions instead of descriptive representation, the anti-language stance could be taken as the position that language might fail in offering concrete guidance. Chad Hansen is clearly the leading figure for such a position.[113] For some who disagree with the application of the concept of language in early China, the anti-language stance could be taken as the position that casts doubt on some related or more specific phenomenon rather than the unifying phenomenon of language. Jane Geaney, for instance, argues that it is mistaken to ascribe to early China the abstract concept of language in addition to speaking and writing. She explicitly criticises the anti-language interpretations "misidentify contempt for verbosity, rhetoric, reputation, textual authority, or binary discrimination as a language crisis."[114] Regardless of the surface conflict, I believe that my argument could also accommodate her bold position because the term "language" is used as a shorthand to describe the utterance, be it speaking or writing.

The idea of language skepticism could be translated as speaking skepticism, naming skepticism, or writing skepticism for some who believe that there was no abstraction called language over these phenomena. In the light of Geaney's framework, it is obvious that the chapter of "Tianzifang" deals with the issue of speaking since all the language related passages in the chapter are in effect *yan* related. The term "language" should therefore be replaced by "speaking" or "*yan*" if you agree with Geaney's arguments. After all, the term "language" I use in the chapter could be filled in with any substantive content according to one's own view on language in early China.

Despite the controversy surrounding the concept of language in early China , I argue that the *Zhuangzi* should not be considered as a straightforward "language-skeptic" in any sense due to the "ironic twist" that lies right on Marquis Wen of Wei's mimicking Tian Zifang and Shunzi. The irony of the story is of multi-levels. First of all, Marquis Wen of Wei wrongly reduces the teaching of Shunzi into a mere retreat from the ordinary word. According to the analysis above, Shunzi's achievement is to harmonise the opposition of the humane and heavenly. Marquis Wen of Wei, however, thought that he had to reject language (the humane) all the way down. He thought he was following the *dao* of Shunzi by keeping his mouth

[112] Berkson, Mark (1996) "Language: The Guest of Reality-Zhuangzi and Derrida on Language, Reality, and Skillfulness".*Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, Albany:SUNY
[113] Hansen (2000)
[114] Geaney (2018), p.xxiii

fettered. His reaction i.e “remained silent with a vacant look for the rest of the day” shows that he is only doing a clumsy mimic of Shunzi’s *dao* instead of really understanding it. Not only is Marquis Wen of Wei’s refusal to talk an indicator of his misunderstanding his claim that “this state of Wei is really my burden!”「夫魏真為我累耳！」also shows that he does not appropriate the words of Tian Zifang. This very last line of the story expresses Marquis Wen of Wei’s belief that anyone who is involved in political business is far away from *dao*. Again, Shunzi’s attitude is not to give up the social-political world thoroughly. Rather, the upshot of his *dao* is to posit himself in the mean of the humane and heavenly: Shunzi “remains limpid and yet encompasses all things" 清而容物.

But why did Marquis Wen of Wei have such a misunderstanding? I argue that the answer to this question takes the irony of the text to another level. As shown, there is a very common approach to the *Zhuangzi* that interprets *Zhuangzi* as a skeptic to the use of language. If one holds such a pre-understanding of the *Zhuangzi*, it is natural to read Tian Zifang’s words in the way of Marquis Wen of Wei. For example, although Yang emphasises the creative aspect of “silence” he still takes the chapter of “Tianzifang” as endorsing a kind of “silence” which is quite in line with Marquis Wen of Wei reaction.It is easy for one to project one’s own pre-understanding of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* in one’s understanding of the chapter and then take the chapter to be another evidence in support of the language-skeptic reading. But if one is taken off such an expectation of the *Zhuangzi* as a language-sceptic it is not clear whether Tian Zifang or Shunzi advocate a wholly refusal to language. Indeed there are some prima facie clues to such a reading such as Shunzi’s way of inspiring others and Tian Zifang’s denial of praising his teacher but their attitude remains kind of ambiguous. For this reason, I argue that Marquis Wen of Wei’s reading of Tian Zifang’s words can be seen as an exemplification of the common understanding of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. In other words, Marquis Wen of Wei’s clumsy mimicking of the *dao* of Shunzi is also a representation of our usual understanding of the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi*. While Marquis Wen of Wei is being made fun of, we the reader are also being made fun of.

Having said that, I am not here arguing against the important role of pre-understanding in understanding a text. It is a widely agreed thesis in the study of hermeneutics that pre-understanding is an inevitable background in our interpretation of a text. Since meanings of texts are not something that mysteriously exist out there in the texts and our reading of texts cannot begin from nowhere. Rather, meanings of texts are something that emerge from

the process of "fusion of horizon" between subjects and the texts.[115] For this reason, pre-understanding, including one's previous impression and expectation of the texts, is like a pair of glasses we cannot take off in our understanding. Without these there is no meaning either. I, myself, also understand the text with certain pre-understanding, engaging the text with my own horizon. Thus I am not arguing for an impossible position that requires one wholly abandons our pre-understanding. Still, according to hermeneutics, there is a question of whether one does justice to the text (although there is no question of whether one's interpretation corresponds to the objective meaning of the text, or one's reading is "true" in the correspondence sense). What I want to argue here is that the anti-language reading of Tian Zifang's words is too "much" affected by the conception of the *Zhuangzi* as a language-sceptic. We, the readers, and Marquis Wen of Wei too easily project our own expectation of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* into the text. *The irony of Marquis Wen of Wei not only lies in his coarse reduction of Shunzi's dao but also points to the reader: in reading the dao of Zhuangzi as anti-language are we any different from Marquis Wen of Wei who "remained silent with a vacant look for the rest of the day"*?

We have just seen the two levels of irony in Marquis Wen of Wei. There is a third level of irony that can connect to the irony of Tian Zifang. The third irony of Marquis Wen of Wei is that he seems to contradict himself. Right after Marquis Wen of Wei learn, from Tian Zifang and Shunzi, to remain silent, he "called the ministers to stand in attendance and said to them" 召前立臣, 而語之曰. In his calling for his ministers and talking to them, he practically refutes the idea that language is a distortion of the *dao*. He attempts to communicate his new understanding of the *dao* (of Tian Zifang and Shunzi) to his ministers: "how far away- the gentleman of complete virtue! I used to think the words of sage and wisdom, and the practices of benevolence and righteousness are already the utmost" 遠矣全德之君子！始吾以聖知之言、仁義之行為至矣. After he learns from Tian Zifang and Shunzi, he realises that the *dao* does not lie on "the *words* of sage and wisdom". Even if "the *words* of sage and wisdom" is not a distortion, it is at least not the end of the story (it is not "the utmost" 至矣). In other words, the *dao* is something beyond words and language. For this reason, while he encounters the *dao* that exceeds language for the very first time, he said that his "mouth has been fettered and I have no desire to talk" 口鉗而不欲言. Nevertheless, he just communicates this new appropriation of the *dao* to his ministers by the means of language. It

[115] Gadamer (2004)

is worth noting that this ironic ending of the first section shares the same pattern with the second section: someone explains his silence to (the inferior) others. It is Confucius who plays the similar role of Marquis Wen of Wei in the second section. The shared pattern forms an intersection irony which in turn strengthens the irony *in* the sections respectively.

Thus far my analysis of the irony in the first section focuses on Marquis Wen of Wei. Obviously my analysis cannot stop here since my ultimate aim is to deconstruct the so-called hierarchy of characters in terms of their "proximity" to *dao* and the assumed interpretative strategy of "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman". If the irony lies wholly in Marquis Wen of Wei the hierarchy still seems to hold: it is Marquis Wen of Wei at the bottom, and Tian Zifang is on the next level and Shunzi is at the top. One may agree with my interpretation that Marquis Wen of Wei is the target of mocking just like "the cicada and little dove"「蜩與學鳩」in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. We could still take Shunzi as "the Zhuangzi's spokesman". In other words, discovering one of the characters as a character of irony is not sufficient to deconstruct the hierarchy and shows the literary form of "ironic twist" of the entire story. I therefore argue that not only Marquis Wen of Wei exhibits irony, Tian Zifang is also a character of irony.

Although Tian Zifang is not the purported Zhuangzi's spokesman as Shunzi and also not the purported mocking target as Marquis Wen of Wei, his role in the story is still very special and important. His importance is that he bridges the gap between Shunzi and Marquis Wen of Wei. In the entire story, Shunzi has never directly spoken for himself or explained his *dao* to others. All the information about him is transmitted via the words of Tian Zifang. *If Shunzi is the assumed Zhuangzi's spokesman and Zhuangzi's dao is communicated via Shunzi as the exemplar, Tian Zifang is the spokesman of the Zhuangzi's spokesman and Zhuangzi's dao is communicated via Shunzi as the exemplar via Tian Zifang's words*. It is therefore not an exaggeration that the whole hierarchy and meaning structure are grounded on the reliability of Tian Zifang's words. That is to say, the reliability of his words provide the justification to think that Shunzi and Marquis Wen of Wei are at the top and the bottom of the hierarchy respectively.

Nevertheless, insofar as the readers start to examine the reliability of Tian Zifang's words, one would find that Tian Zifang's words are questionable— that's the "ironic twist" of both Tian Zifang and the whole story. For one thing, Tian Zifang is committed in the similar kind

of irony as Marquis Wen of Wei does. Tian Zifang refuses to praise his teacher Shunzi at the beginning and explains his silence about his teacher to Marquis Wen of Wei that " how could I be good enough to praise all these?" 無擇何足以稱之. While admitting that he is unqualified, he, however, still chooses to praise his teacher and explain the *dao* of his teacher to Marquis Wen of Wei. It is the similar form of irony with Marquis Wen of Wei (his third layer of irony) that one talks when one claims that oneself should not talk. Tian Zifang contradicts himself in the same way as Marquis Wen of Wei. This makes Marquis Wen of Wei's mimicking even more absurd—Marquis Wen of Wei even tries to copy Tian Zifang's self-contradiction!

This first layer of Tian Zifang's irony seriously damages the credibility of his words. Given that he himself admits that he is not qualified to praise his teacher, why should the reader, including Marquis Wen of Wei, trust his appraisal of Shunzi? For one thing, the content of Shunzi's achievement is subject to doubts: even if Shunzi is still at the top of the hierarchy the text provides no other hints with respect to Shunzi's way of living. Again, remember Tian Zifang's description is the sole source that the reader could understand the *dao* of Shunzi. When Tian Zifang's description is not reliable the reader has totally no idea what Shunzi has done. Furthermore, not only the *content* of Shunzi's *dao* becomes uncertain, his *status* in the hierarchy is in crisis too. Since the authoritative status of Shunzi is fully grounded on Tian Zifang's praise and his praise is questionable, there is a consequence that Shunzi's role as the Zhunagzi's spokesman is also questionable. In other words, while Tian Zifang's irony is uncovered, the hierarchy of the story which generates the meaning of such a story according to the orthodox reading strategy is deconstructed.

There is a further layer of Tian Zifang's irony that makes Tian Zifang's words even more untrustworthy. The whole scene begins with Marquis Wen of Wei wondering whether Qi Gong is the teacher of Tian Zifang since Tian Zifang "has praised Qi Gong several times" 數稱谿工. Tian Zifang replies that Qi Gong is not his teacher. But then why did Tian Zifang praise Qi Gong? Tian Zifang explains that "he is my neighborhood. He praised the *dao* appropriately several times and therefore I praised him" 無擇之里人也, 稱道數當, 故無擇稱之。. This is a very strange answer if it comes under scrutiny. First, whether or not Qi Gong is Tian Zifang's neighborhood 里人 is completely irrelevant here. That someone is one's neighborhood is obviously not a reason for one's praise. If one praises others simply because they come from the same native place, one seems to be committed to nepotism which is a

common criticism against Confucianism so to speak. This harms the reliability of Tian Zifang's praise once again: as opposed to praising someone because of one's *dao* Tian Zifang praises someone because of their relation. Second, perhaps it is grammatically better to read Tian Zifang's telling Marquis Wen of Wei that Qi Gong is his neighborhood as denying that Qi Gong is his teacher. He is rather telling Marquis Wen of Wei the true identity of Qi Gong instead of offering his reason for praising him. Accordingly, the only genuine reason is that Qi Gong "praised the *dao* appropriately several times" 稱道數當. If so, Tian Zifang is not committed to nepotism. Nonetheless, "praised the *dao* appropriately several times" is still a very odd explanation when put in the current context.

Its oddness can be analysed on three levels. Firstly, praising is a rare attitude toward the *dao* in the *Zhuangzi*— there is no other mention of "praise the *dao*" 稱道 in the entire text.[116] Maybe it is due to the sceptical attitude toward language in *Zhuangzi*. Because of the limitation of language, the *dao* is not the proper subject of praise. "Praising the *dao*"is therefore at odds with the usual conception of language and the *dao* i.e language is limited in grasping the *dao* and the *dao* is somewhat beyond language. Secondly, "praise the *dao*" is also at odds with Tian Zifang's description of Shunzi. As I have just analysed, Shunzi seems to be someone who does not rely on language— "when things have no *dao*, he inspires them with appropriate encompassment and thereby dissolves people's intentions". This is what Marquis Wen of Wei learned from him. Praising, however, is a special kind of language usage. There is a prima facie tension between the idea that Qi Gong "praised the *dao* appropriately several times" and the idea that the *dao* of Shunzi is to remain silent even when "things have no *dao*". It becomes a puzzling question whether one should follow Qi Gong to praise the *dao* or follow Shunzi to not talk about the *dao* even when things are off their proper courses. Thirdly, "praise the *dao*"is also at odds with Tian Zifang's self description too. Tian Zifang says that he does not praise Shunzi before Marquis Wen of Wei because he is not qualified to do so. It implies that praising something or someone has to be done by someone who is at least on a par with the target of praising. If you are not on a par with it, you should not praise the target. In the light of this idea, Shunzi's praise of the *dao* becomes bizarre. Qi Gong shows his overconfidence in praising the *dao* as he believes that he is good enough to praise the *dao*. *Cheng dao* 稱道 grammatically can also mean "call oneself to be the *dao*". Consider the case of *cheng wang* 稱王. I am not sure if the author of the chapter is

[116] There is only one occurrence in the "Tianxia" 天下 chapter and such an attitude is attributed to Mozi: "Mozi in his praise of dao said: '.....'" 墨子稱道曰:「.....」

playing with the ambiguity of the language here but if *cheng dao* 稱道 is read as "call oneself to be the *dao*" the point here will be made even stronger: Qi Gong is a arrogant person who believe that he himself is the *dao*. It is ironic that Qi Gong's arrogance becomes a reason for Tian Zifang to praise him, especially Tian Zifang is the one who raises the idea that some may not be qualified to praise someone.

What is interesting is that everyone in the section i.e Tian Zifang, Marquis Wen of Wei and his attendant do not realise the ironic twists and the oddness of their words. The scene is therefore a demonstration of miscommunication. Apparently, they all interact and communicate with each other but they do not really engage with each other's words. If the chapter is really about the limitation of language and the ethical value of silence, I believe this moral is not embedded in any particular saying in the narrative but in the entire unity of it. The story does not *tell* us that the *dao* is beyond language but gives us a *demonstration* of how language is sometimes defective in communicating the *dao* with each other.

To sum up: Tian Zifang's choice of praise and non-praise demonstrates an ironic twist. The twist is that he chose to praise Qi Gong before Marquis Wen of Wei for the reason i.e "praise the *dao*" that contradicts the text on different levels; and he also contradicts himself in his non-praise-but-praise of Shunzi. The ironic twist of Tian Zifang undermines the reliability of his testimony of the *dao* on which the whole purported hierarchy of the first section is relied. If Tian Zifang's words are doubtful, Shunzi's role as the Zhuangzi's spokesman is also subject to suspicion. Such a finding is a hermeneutical trouble for the reader adopting the "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman" strategy. By contrast, for me the ironic twist only enrichs instead of undermines the meaning of the text. The form of ironic twist enrichs the text in the sense that the form sheds light on everything I have said from page 69 to page 72 (the analysis of the *dao* of Shunzi). According to the linear and orthodox reading, the meaning of the first section is *just* the explanation of Shunzi's *dao*. According to my reading however, the text is full of twists that lead the readers to wonder if we could really pin down the *dao* and even question our pre-understanding of the *Zhuangzi*. Are we another Marquis Wen of Wei? Who should be trusted in this scene? Which of their *dao* is what I should follow? The scene poses the readers these questions and dynamically brings them toward philosophical reflection i.e reflection on characters' *dao*, *Zhaungzi*'s *dao* and readers' own *dao* instead of offering a static *dao* and asking everyone to follow.

2.

溫伯雪子適齊，舍於魯。魯人有請見之者，溫伯雪子曰：「不可。吾聞中國之君子，明乎禮義而陋於知人心，吾不欲見也。」至於齊，反舍於魯，是人也又請見。溫伯雪子曰：「往也蘄見我，今也又蘄見我，是必有以振我也。」出而見客，入而歎。明日見客，又入而歎。其僕曰：「每見之客也，必入而歎，何邪？」曰：「吾固告子矣：『中國之民，明乎禮義而陋乎知人心。』昔之見我者，進退一成規，一成矩；從容一若龍，一若虎；其諫我也似子，其道我也似父。是以歎也。」仲尼見之而不言。子路曰：「吾子欲見溫伯雪子久矣，見之而不言，何邪？」仲尼曰：「若夫人者，目擊而道存矣，亦不可以容聲矣。」

Wenbo Xuezi is journeying to the state of Qi and along the way stopped at the state of Lu. A man of Lu asked for a meeting with him and Wenbo Xuezi said: “No. I heard that the gentlemen of the middle states are sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but lacking in understanding people's heart-mind. I don’t want to meet such people.”

Wenbo Xuezi arrived in Qi and on his way back stopped at the state of Lu again. The man of Lu once again asked for a meeting. Wenbo Xuezi said: “In the past you wished to see me and now you wish to see me again. There must be something by which you wish to inspire me.” Wenbo Xuezi went out to meet the guests and came back with sighs; on the next day he went out again and came back with sighs again. His servant asked: “Everytime you meet the guests you would certainly come back sighing. Why is that?” Wenbo Xuezi said: “I have told you before- these men of the middle states are sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but dull in understanding people's heart-mind. The one I have just met- he walked forward and backward as though there is a path outlined by a compass and square ruler; he looked relaxed like a dragon at one point and a tiger at another; he admonished me as though he were my son and instructed me as though he were my father. That is why I sighed.”

Confucius remained silent after meeting him. Zilu asked: “You, my master, have wanted to see Wenbo Xuezi for long. But you didn’t talk after meeting him. Why is that?” Confucius said: “With that kind of man, a glance could show you the *dao*. There is no room for speaking.”

The second scene of the chapter is a story mainly about the interaction between Wenbo Xuezi and Confucius. It resembles the first scene in many ways, both in form and content. With respect to the content, the second scene is about Confucius seeking advice from Wenbo Xuezi and thus continues the philosophical theme of teaching and learning from the first scene. Moreover, the human activity in question is language: that is, the idea that the *dao* is always beyond language and reducing the *dao* into language would only be a distortion of it reoccurs in the scene. The anti-language attitude is exhibited at the end of the story, both in Confucius's behaviour and verbal expression: "Confucius remained silent after meeting him." 「仲尼見之而不言」and "Confucius said: 'With that kind of man, a glance could show you the *dao*. There is no room for speaking.'" 若夫人者，目擊而道存矣，亦不可以容聲矣.What does Confucius's behaviour and words mean? It needs further examination but at least they demonstrate a prima facie case for the hostility to language. Perhaps this is why Yang directly quotes the words from Confucius in this story to support his anti-language reading on the *Zhuangzi*. With respect to the form, the second scene is structurally very similar to the first scene. The second scene processes as follows:

Confucius wanted to learn from Wenbo Xuezi → his first attempt failed → Confucius succeeded in his second attempt → the lesson he learnt is to remain silence → Confucius explains his silence to Zilu

This process resembles the one of the first scene:

Marquis Wen of Wei wanted to learn from Tian Zifang → Tian Zifang clarified that Qi Gong is not his teacher and therefore Marquis Wen of Wei haven't learnt yet → Marquis Wen of Wei succeeded in learning from Tian Zifang → the lesson he learnt is to remain silence → Marquis Wen of Wei explains his silence to his ministers

Again, I begin with the linear reading of this story since the moral of the story seems very straightforward too. The Zhuangzi's spokesman in this scene is Wenbo Xuezi and the character who plays the "inferior" role is Confucius. By "inferior role" of Confucius in the story I mean two things. For one thing, he is a learner of Wenbo Xuezi. Confucius insisted on having a meeting with him. In this sense Confucius is like Marquis Wen of Wei in the first story (a learner) as opposed to the cicada and the little dove in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter (an arrogant character exemplifying someone who is way off from the *dao*). For another, he is

criticised by Wenbo Xuezi. Wenbo Xuezi, who is Zhuangzi's spokesman in the story, says that "these men of the middle states are sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but dull in understanding people's heart-mind" 中國之民, 明乎禮義而陋乎知人心. Confucius seems to be one of those "men of the middle states".

The first thing to be noted about Wenbo Xuezi is his physical movement. In the story, Wenbo Xuezi seems to be travelling. He is journeying to the state of Qi and after he arrives in Qi then he is going back to somewhere. That's why he is at the state of Lu for the second time in the story. As a result of his travelling, Wenbo Xuezi is always static and temporarily stopped at some point 舍. As opposed to Confucius who always stayed at Lu, Wenbo Xuezi stayed at neither Qi nor Lu. Although Qi was his destination, he didn't stay at Qi and rather travel somewhere again. The image of a traveller of Wenbo Xuezi, I believe, is highly relevant to the image of the *dao*. There are many other images of walking and travelling in the *Zhuangzi* and these are certainly not a coincidence. In order to understand these images, however, we have to introduce the conceptual metaphor theory and the situation-location metaphor. I therefore suspend such an analysis to the next chapter on metaphor in the *Zhuangzi*.

Apart from his physical movement, the philosophical implication of Wenbo Xuezi mainly lies in his attitude towards *li yi* 禮義 ("ritual and righteousness"). This is a new philosophical theme introduced to the chapter. The theme emerges again in scene 5 and 7. Wenbo Xuezi's attitude towards "ritual and righteousness" is not anything surprising given the context of the *Zhuangzi*. For example, there is a famous passage about self-cultivation in the *Zhuangzi* in the "Dazhongshi" 大宗師 chapter. In that passage, Yan Yuan 顏回 is discussing the way(s) of self-cultivation with Confucius. The famous notion of *zuo wang* 坐忘 ("sit and forget") is raised there. The two elementary stage of *zuo wang* is to "forget benevolence and righteousness" 忘仁義 and "forget ritual and music" 忘禮樂.[117] It is common to take this passage with the criticisms to Confucianism in other places e.g the "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter together as the exemplification of the overall anti-Confucianism stance in the *Zhuangzi*. It is therefore very similar to the situation in the first scene that one of the character in the narrative suggests something very "Zhuangzi" to us—Shunzi's prima facie anti-language attitude in scene 1 and Wenbo Xuezi's anti-ritual and Confucianism attitude in

[117] Although I believe the dialectic of the conversation is much more complicated than this rough recap. I intend here to merely take the passage as one of the most quoted examples in support of the anti-ritual stance in the *Zhuangzi*.

this scene—and thus the readers are "lured" to identify that character as the Zhuangzi's spokesman.

Wenbo Xuezi explicitly complains about the so-called "gentlemen" 君子 in "the middle states" 中國 that they are "sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but dull in understanding people's heart-mind" 明乎禮義而陋乎知人心. Initially, that's why Wenbo Xuezi refused to see Confucius. After meeting with Confucius, Wenbo Xuezi "came back with sighs" 入而嘆. When his servant asks him why so, he says: "I have told you before-these men of the middle states are sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but dull in understanding people's heart-mind." 吾固告子矣:「中國之民, 明乎禮義而陋乎知人心。」. In his meeting with Confucius, Wenbo Xuezi confirms his expectation of "these men of the middle states". According to Wenbo Xuezi's testimony, in the meeting Confucius "walked forward and backward as though there is a path outlined by a compass and square ruler" 進退一成規, 一成矩. *Gui ju* 規矩 ("compass and square ruler") is a familiar metaphor in the *Zhuangzi*: for example, in the famous conversation between Huizi and Zhuangzi in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, there is a huge and weird tree called *chu* 樗 which is said to be "at odd with compass and square ruler" 不中規矩. There is a close relation between the philosophical theme of ritual and "compass and square ruler": "compass and square ruler" as a kind of measurement is metaphorically referring to a universal standard, which is *li* purport to be. "Compass and square ruler" is fixed standards for the shape of circle and square while *li* is the fixed standard for all kinds of expression e.g. language, behaviour, dressing, etc. For that reason, when Wenbo Xuezi says that Confucius "walked forward and backward as though there is a path outlined by a compass and square ruler", he is criticising Confucius that he fits his every single step into the framework of the fixed standard. That is, Wenbo Xuezi sees Confucius as someone who cautiously sticks to the established practice and restricts his behaviour to the rule of *li*. Moreover, Wenbo Xuezi also criticises Confucius that he "admonished me as though he were my son and instructed me as though he were my father" 其諫我也似子, 其道我也似父. All *jian* 諫 ("admonish"), *dao* 道 ("instruct"), *zi* 子 ("son"), and *fu* 父 ("father") are *li* vocabulary. In the current context, "son" and "father" is not a mere biological notion but a notion embedded with a set of cultural norms that guide behaviour. It is rather a cultural role like *jun* 君 ("ruler") and *chen* 臣 ("minister") than a biological identity. "Admonish" and "instruct" is therefore a role-specific teaching. They do not differ in terms of their content but are defined in terms of who and to whom teaches. Wenbo Xuezi's criticism is, hence, pointing to Confucius's incapability of acting out of these

cultural roles and role-specific guidance of behaviour. These observations confirm Wenbo Xuezi's expectation to "these men of the middle states" and makes him sigh as he seems to be holding a "Zhuangzi" anti-ritual attitude.

In short, on the linear reading, Wenbo Xuezi exemplifies Zhuangzi's ideal persona whereas Confucius exemplifies the non-ideal "men of the middle states". There are two morals to take from the story respectively: for one thing, we understand from Wenbo Xuezi's attitude and words that "ritual and righteousness" is an obstacle to the *dao*. Acting in accordance with *li* is not good for human flourishing; for another, we understand from Confucius's reaction to the meeting for which he longs that there is no room for speaking to account for the *dao*. That is, the *dao* is resistant to any verbal reduction.

Like my analysis of the first scene, I do not intend to dismiss everything said in the linear reading. What I want to emphasise is that the linear reading does not exhaust the meaning of the story when the irony hidden in the story is ignored. The ironic twist of the scene is not as complicated as the first scene but still an important aspect of the scene which enriches the meaning of it.

First of all, the irony of Confucius is identical to that of Marquis Wen of Wei in the first scene: Confucius learns from the alleged Zhuangzi's spokesmen that one shall not speak with regard to the *dao* , and therefore remains silent. But soon after someone asks him why he is so, he *tells* him that "there is no room for speaking." 不可以容聲矣。. This is another preformative contradiction in the chapter.

More importantly, the alleged Zhuangzi's spokesmen—Wenbo Xuezi—like Tian Zifang in the first scene is also an ironic character. The upshot of the irony of Wenbo Xuezi is that he is not that superior to Confucius and Confucius is not that flawed compared to what is seen at the first glance. I have just analysed that Wenbo Xuezi dislikes the *li* framework—that is, the whole set of pre-established, fixed, role-specific thinking and behavioural rules. As opposed to the *li* framework, Wenbo Xuezi seems to endorse a kind of context-sensitive, flexible, non-restrictive way of thinking. Nevertheless, does Wenbo Xuezi really exemplify such a way of thinking and behaviour? Not necessarily so. Wenbo Xuezi insists on his impression of those "men of the middle states". He rigidly thinks of them as someone who is "sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but dull in understanding people's heart-mind". Even

though he meets Confucius at the end, he learns nothing new from the meeting. For him, meeting Confucius is simply a re-confirmation of what he thought. He says to his servant that "I have told you before" 吾固告子矣. This shows that he is also restricted in a kind of identity-thinking that Confucius is not a particularity in his own right but just an instance of "these men of the middle states"; and "these men of the middle states" are nothing more than people inhibited in the *li* framework.[118]In thinking of Confucius in this way, Wenbo Xuezi is just as restricted as "these men of the middle states" to which he criticises. That's the irony inherent to his character.

Furthermore, there is also an ironic twist in his description (or negative appraisal) of Confucius. The main point of Wenbo Xuezi's review of the meeting is to criticise Confucius's being restricted in the *li* framework, but his description also contains some elements indicating that Confucius is not really restricted. For one thing, he says that Confucius "he looked relaxed like a dragon at one point and a tiger at another" 從容一若龍, 一若虎. The most famous occurance of the term *cong rong* 從容 is in the last passage of the "Qiushui" chapter: "The minnows swim so freely and so relaxed. That's the happiness of fish." 鯈孫出遊從容, 是魚樂也. It seems that the term *cong rong* is rather a "positive" term. It is therefore puzzling to the reader why *cong rong* would be a problem rather than a good thing about Confucius.[119] The metaphor of "dragon" is also puzzling as its shape and physical movement is like those of a snake and thus a frequently-used metaphor for the idea of "following along with others". The metaphor of animals would be one of my main targets of analysis in the next chapter. I therefore suspend my detailed analysis again. The point to be noted here is that the sentence "he looked relaxing like a dragon at one point and a tiger at another" is puzzling if we think of it as a criticism of Confucius. For another, the line "he admonished me as though he were my son and instructed me as though he were my father" also hides a twist when it comes under scrutiny. As said above, the "problem" of the *li* framework is its rigidity. However, Confucius seems to be breaking through its rigidity by switching different roles. In normal cases, it is impossible or at least *wu li* 無禮 ("non-ritual") to speak both like a father and a son to the very same person: how could someone be the father and the son of the same

[118] The concept of "identity thinking" was invented by Adorno to describe that special problem of modernity. I have borrowed his concept to understand the problem of *li* here

[119] Brook Ziporyn translated the sentence into "when he was trying to be relaxed he was either like a dragon or like a tiger". This translation dissolves the puzzle since the sentence means Confucius *tries* to be relaxed instead of really being relaxed. But I cannot see any reason why the qualification of "was trying to" should be added. Ziporyn, Brook (2009) *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, Hackett

person? Or the ruler and the minister of the same person? This "chaotic" situation is exactly the "problem" *li* purported to prevent. It is therefore an ironic twist that Confucius deconstructs the *li* framework by acting apparently in accordance with the *li* framework. Confucius is not restricted to a fixed role; but rather he plays with these roles. If such a line of analysis is right, Wenbo Xuezi becomes even more ironic since he has noticed Confucius's flexibility without changing his understanding of Confucius!

To sum up, in addition to the theme of language, we find a new philosophical theme of ritual in the second scene. It is demonstrated once again that the "looking for Zhuangzi's spokesman" interpretative strategy is ineffective. The ironic twist lies in the details of the story. The purported exemplification of Zhuangzi's ideal and non-ideal person is not that straightforward as it seemed. In the next section, the problem of this straightforward mode of learning is directly addressed.

3.

> 顏淵問於仲尼曰:「夫子步亦步, 夫子趨亦趨, 夫子馳亦馳, 夫子奔逸絕塵, 而回瞠若乎後矣。」夫子曰:「回, 何謂邪？」曰:「夫子步亦步也, 夫子言亦言也, 夫子趨亦趨也, 夫子辯亦辯也, 夫子馳亦馳也, 夫子言道, 回亦言道也。及奔逸絕塵, 而回瞠若乎後者, 夫子不言而信, 不比而周, 無器而民滔乎前, 而不知所以然而已矣。」
>
> 仲尼曰:「惡！可不察與！夫哀莫大於心死, 而人死亦次之。日出東方而入於西極, 萬物莫不比方。有目有趾者, 待是而後成功, 待晝而作。是出則存, 是入則亡。萬物亦然, 有待也而死, 有待也而生。吾一受其成形, 而不化以待盡, 效物而動, 日夜無隙, 而不知其所終, 薰然其成形, 知命不能規乎其前, 丘以是日徂。吾終身與汝交一臂而失之, 可不哀與！女殆著乎吾所以著也。彼已盡矣, 而女求之以為有, 是求馬於唐肆也。吾服女也甚忘, 女服吾也亦甚忘。雖然, 女奚患焉！雖忘乎故吾, 吾有不忘者存。」
>
> Yan Yuan asked Confucius: "Master, when you walk I walk; when you trot I trot; when you run I run; when you accelerate into a dash that leaves all the dust behind I am stunned and stare after you." Confucius said: "Hui. what do you mean?" "When you walk I walk; when you talk I talk; when you trot I trot; when you argue I argue;

when you run I run; when you talk about the *dao* I also talk about the *dao*. Then you accelerate into a dash that leaves all the dust behind and I am stunned and stare after you. You are trust-worthy without talking; you are catholic and not partisan; you do not make yourself a tool but people still flock to you. You just don't know why all these are." Hui said.

Confucius said: "Oh! You have to look into this! There is nothing more pathetic than the death of a heart-mind, even the death of a man is minorer. The sun rises from the east and sets at the west, and none of the myriad things is not in accordance with their directions. Those with eyes and feet are all dependent on something before they succeed- they are dependent on the sunlight to work. When the thing on which they depend is present they survive; when it becomes absent they perish. So do the myriad things. Their death and life are both dependent. Once I have received this established form, I remain unchanged and rely on it until the end. I act for things day and night without break and I don't know what I will end up with. The established form affects me imperceptibly and I know no one could make any plan in advance of the arrival of destiny. This is how I have been going through all these days. In all my lifetime we passed by each other, isn't it pathetic? You only focus on how I appear to others- but those are all over. You are looking for something you thought to be existing. It is like looking for horses in an empty marketplace. I serve you by forgetting you and you should also serve me by forgetting me. Even so, why should you repine? Although my past self has been forgotten I still have something not to forget.

In this scene, the chapter continues its philosophical reflection on teaching and learning. Unlike the previous scenes, this scene does not contain many dynamic interactions and plots. Rather, it consists merely of the conversation between Yan Yuan and Confucius.

In the conversation between them, Yan Yuan demonstrates a failure of learning. He wishes to learn from Confucius by merely mimicking what Confucius does: "when you walk I walk; when you talk I talk; when you trot I trot; when you argue I argue; when you run I run; when you talk about the *dao* I also talk about the *dao*." 夫子步亦步也, 夫子言亦言也, 夫子趨亦趨也, 夫子辯亦辯也, 夫子馳亦馳也, 夫子言道, 回亦言道也。. Yan Yuan just does whatever Confucius does such as "talk", "argue" and "talking about the *dao*". Nevertheless,

this attitude of learning is a failure according to Confucius: “you are looking for something you thought to be existing. It is like looking for horses in an empty marketplace” 女求之以為有, 是求馬於唐肆也。. By merely mimicking, Yan Yuan fails to find out what he is looking for from Confucius. According to Confucius, Yan Yuan’s inflexible attitude is one of the worst things in human life, even worse than physical death: “there is nothing more pathetic than the death of a heart-mind, even the death of a man is minorer” 夫哀莫大於心死, 而人死亦次之。. The death or confinement of heart-mind is a familiar concept in the *Zhuangzi*, for example in the “Xiaoyaoyou” chapter, Zhuangzi refers to the state of mind of Huizi who upholds the common understanding of usefulness and deems the great gourd useless as the“heart-mind tangled by branches” 有蓬之心; and in the “Qiwulun” chapter, a passage describing the phenomenon of one being addicted to debate and argument states that “the almost-died heart-mind has no way back to the bygone vitality” 近死之死, 莫使復陽. It seems that in the *Zhuangzi* the heart-mind is of vital energy which enables us to remain flexible. Yan Yuan in the scene is thus committed to the similar problem i.e restricted by fixed conceptual framework and behavioural pattern and not make use of his own vital heart-mind.

The relevance of the scene to the previous scenes is obvious: Marquis Wen of Wei in scene 1 and Confucius in scene 2 are committed to the same problem as Yan Yuan in scene 3. If we first leave alone the irony of both scenes and stick to the linear reading, they both reduce the teaching of their teacher into a rigid and fixed doctrine: do not speak about the *dao*. Marquis Wen of Wei and Confucius like Yan Yuan awkwardly mimic their teacher by refusing to speak. The scene therefore provides additional textual evidence in support of my claim that the meaning of the previous scenes should not be reduced into a single moral that silence is preferred.

Moreover, there is another layer of the scene in which the irony lies. The scene not only points to the previous scenes but also points to us, the readers. The scene poses a question to its reader: are we also Yan Yuan? Are we also awkwardly copying the *dao* of the “Tiantzefang” chapter or the *Zhaungzi* in general? Do we also pass by the *Zhuangzi* in all our lifetime 吾終身與汝交一臂而失之 while we naively thought that we have learnt from the *Zhuangzi*? If so, “isn’t it pathetic” 可不哀與? I believe that these questions are the crucial philosophical point of the scene. Every reader of the *Zhuangzi* who tries to interpret it faces these questions as he or she inevitably reduce to the text into some straightforward statements

— for instance one should remain silence, *li* endorsed by Confucianism is bad for human society, etc — and thereby distort the dynamic nature of the text. The *Zhuangzi* like Confucius in the scene is always "accelerate into a dash that leaves all the dust behind" 奔逸絕塵 and the reader who tries to capture the meaning of it is left "stunned and stare at the back" like Yan Yuan 瞠若乎後者. And paradoxically, not only the linear reading against which I argued fails to capture the "accelerating" *Zhuangzi*, but my reading that emphasises the dynamic ironic twist of the text is also unable to fully capture the meaning of the text. It is because once I say that "the 'Tiantzefang' chapter is of dynamic ironic twist" the dynamic of the text has lost. Such a claim is already a static statement that fails to grasp the "accelerating" text. Scene 3 therefore is a reminder to the reader that any attempt to fully grasp the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi* is doomed to fail. Accordingly, what my analysis that focuses on the literary form of the text is doing is to keep the dynamic of the text as far as one could.

4.

> 孔子見老聃, 老聃新沐, 方將被髮而乾, 蟄然似非人。孔子便而待之。少焉見, 曰:「丘也眩與？其信然與？向者先生形體掘若槁木, 似遺物離人而立於獨也。」老聃曰:「吾游心於物之初。」
>
> 孔子曰:「何謂邪？」曰:「心困焉而不能知, 口辟焉而不能言。嘗為汝議乎其將:至陰肅肅, 至陽赫赫。肅肅出乎天, 赫赫發乎地。兩者交通成 和而物生焉, 或為之紀而莫見其形。訊息滿虛, 一晦一明, 日改月化, 日有所為而莫見其功。生有所乎萌, 死有所乎歸, 始終相反乎無端, 而莫知乎其所窮。非是也, 且孰為之宗！」
>
> 孔子曰:「請問游是。」老聃曰:「夫得是至美至樂也。得至美而游乎至樂, 謂之至人。」
>
> 孔子曰:「願聞其方。」曰:「草食之獸, 不疾易藪;水生之蟲, 不疾易水。行小變而不失其大常也, 喜怒哀樂不入於胸次。夫天下也者, 萬物之所一也。得其所一而同焉, 則四支百體將為塵垢, 而死生終始將為晝夜, 而莫之能滑, 而況得喪禍福之所介乎！棄隸者若棄泥塗, 知身貴於隸也。貴在於我而不失於變。且萬化而未始有極也, 夫孰足以患心！已為道者解乎此。」

孔子曰:「夫子德配天地, 而猶假至言以修心。古之君子, 孰能脫焉？」老聃曰:「不然。夫水之於汋也， 無為而才自然矣;至人之於德也, 不修而物不能離焉。若天之自高，地之自厚, 日月之自明, 夫何修焉！」

孔子出, 以告顏回曰:「丘之 於道也, 其猶醯雞與！微夫子之發吾覆也, 吾不知天地之大全也。」

Confucius saw Lao Dan. Lao Dan had just finished washing his hair and spread it over his shoulder to dry it. He remained totally stiff and did not look like a human. Confucius hid himself and waited for a while. He then presented himself and said: “Am I dizzy? Or what I have just seen is reliable? A moment ago your appearance and body looked coarse as a withered tree. You seemed to abandon things and get rid of people, and stand on your own.” Lao Dan said: “I let my heart-mind wander among the beginning of things.”

Confucius asked: “What do you mean by that?” Lao said: “a restricted heart-mind cannot know, and a fettered mouth cannot speak. I will discuss its rough outline for you anyway. The utmost Yin is gloomy and frigid, and the utmost Yang is bright and radiant. The gloomy and frigid come from the Heaven, and the bright and radiant come from the Earth. The two blend together and harmonise, and then things are born. Perhaps the two also discipline things but no one has ever seen its trace. silence and breath, fullness and emptiness, sometimes it is murky sometimes it is bright. The sun changes and the moon transforms. The sun accomplishes yet no one notices its achievement. Life has its sprout and death has its destination. Beginning and end oppose and yet revert to one another without any starting point, and no one knows where it comes to an end. If what I said is not the case, then who is the ancestor of all these?”

Confucius asked: “May I ask what it means to wander in such a state?” Lao Dan said: “The attainment of such a state is the utmost beauty and happiness. The one who attains the utmost beauty and wanders in the utmost happiness is called the utmost man.”

> Confucius asked: "I wish to know how one could attain it." Lao Dan said: "The plant-eating animals do not fret over the changes of pasture; the insects that live in water do not fret over the changes of stream. Their behaviour changes mildly and the important part is kept constant. Joy, anger, grief and happiness should not enter your breast. The myriad things living under the Heaven have something in common. If you attain that thing and be with it, then your four limbs and hundred joints will become dust and dirt, and life-and-death and beginning-and-end will become day-and-night-none of all these could fool you not to mention the insignificant gain-and-lose and misfortune-and-blessing! The one who abandons his servant like abandoning mud knows that his body is superior to his servant and his own self is what is valuable, and would not lose it in changes. That the myriad things transform without even the beginning of an end, how could they be significant enough to concern you with the heart-mind. Everyone who practises *dao* understands all these."
>
> Confucius said: "Your virtue, sir, is comparable to that of the Heaven-and-Earth. Even so, you have to temporarily employ the utmost language in order to cultivate the utmost heart-mind. Could the gentleman in ancient times get away with it?" Lao said: "No. The pouring of water is not an intended action but its natural quality. Similarly, the virtues of the utmost man is not cultivated and yet things cannot get rid of it. It is like the Heaven's own height, the Earth's own depth, and the sun and the moon's own brightness. What is there to be cultivated?"
>
> Confucius left and told Yan Yuan: "In terms of my attainment of the *dao*, I am merely a gnat in a vinegar jar.If my master did not uncover the lid on me, I would never know the great comprehensiveness of the Heaven-and-Earth."

This is the longest scene in the chapter. The conversation between Confucius and Lao Dan can, again, be read as a one-way teaching that Lao is representing the ideal person whereas Confucius is playing the inferior role. In the linear reading, we understand the philosophy of the Zhuangzi through Lao's words. Part of Lao's words have a strong metaphysical connotation, for example he talks about how the myriad things came into being from the "Yin" 陰 and "Yang" 陽 and what is in common among the myriad things 萬物之所一也. This is certainly a new philosophical theme introduced into the chapter, but I will not go deep into these puzzling issues since they seem to be unrelated to the previous discussion.

What is relevant for my analysis is Lao's attitude toward language. There is clear reference to the previous scene in his words: "a fettered mouth cannot speak" 口辟焉而不能言. This line is almost the same with the words from Marquis Wen of Wei — "my mouth has been fettered and I have no desire to talk" 口鉗而不欲言 — besides the obvious difference between "capacity"「能」and "desire"「欲」. Moreover, Confucius also directly asks about Lao's view on language. He asks: "[y]our virtue, sir, is comparable to that of the Heaven-and-Earth. Even so, you have to temporarily employ the utmost language in order to cultivate the heart-mind. Could the gentleman in ancient times get away with it?" 夫子德配天地, 而猶假至言以修心。古之君子, 孰能脫焉？. Confucius is concerned with the question whether language is inevitable in one's cultivation of his own heart-mind and others' heart-minds. Confucius seems to think that Lao does temporarily employ the utmost language for the sake of the cultivation of the heart-mind. The reason why Confucius assumes this might be the fact that Lao does talk to Confucius. The conversation itself is an example of Lao's temporal usage of the utmost language to cultivate one's (Confucius's) heart-mind. Confucius' assumption also fits the linear reading that Lao is the one who cultivates while Confucius is the one who is cultivated. Lao's reply to Confucius is negative. Lao introduces a familiar concept of "the utmost person" 至人 and his conception of it is also familiar. Lao says that the question of whether one inevitably employs language to cultivate heart-mind is misleading since "the utmost person" would not cultivate at all. Confucius' question is simply dissolved by Lao as according to him "the utmost person" is "self-sufficient" like the Heaven, the Earth, and the sun and the moon. Without any effort or "cultivation" 修, the Heaven has its own height, the Earth has its own depth, the sun and the moon has their own-brightness, so does "the utmost person" has its own virtue that attract the myriad things. 不修而物不能離焉. This is a familiar idea that occurs in the *Zhuangzi* quite often. For example, "the Heaven does not produce and yet the myriad things transform; the Earth does not grow things and yet the myriad things are nourished; the king 'wu-wei' and yet the deeds of the world get accomplished" ("天不產而萬物化, 地不長而萬物育, 帝王無為而天下功 in the "Tiendao" 天道 chapter. It seems that Lao as "the Zhuangzi's spokesman" in the scene demonstrates an anti-language attitude i.e language is not necessary.

However, the ironic twist lies in the details again. First of all, it is possible to read Confucius's attitude to Lao in an entirely different way: Confucius is setting up Lao in the whole conversation. Such an ironic reading is made possible by Confucius's last question on

language. The tone of the last question from Confucius demonstrates that Confucius himself also believes that language is something better to be avoided, and therefore he is only asking whether one can really get rid of it instead of whether it is good or bad. If so, the intention of Confucius of starting the whole conversation with Lao could be understood very differently. On the linear reading, Confucius is passionately asking about Lao's *dao*; but on the ironic reading, Confucius is setting up Lao in the sense that he knew language is to be avoided in seeking for the *dao* and he lures Lao to talk with him so as to prove that Lao is not really an ideal person. In his last question to Lao, he assumes that Lao did use language and thus might comparatively be inferior to "the gentleman in ancient times" 古之君子. On such an ironic reading, the whole relation between them and the purported role represented by them respectively is dramatically flipped. Lao in the scene is no longer "the Zhuangzi's spokesman" but someone to be set up and fooled.[120]

Moreover, there are several ironic self-contradictions in Lao's words:

1) at the beginning of the conversation, Lao says to Confucius that when his "appearance and body look coarse as a withered tree" 形體掘若槁木 and "seem to abandon things and get rid of people, and stand on [his] own" 似遺物離人而立於獨也 he "let[s] [his] heart-mind wander among the beginning of things" 游心於物之初. But when Confucius further asks about what it means, Lao replies that his "restricted heart-mind cannot know" 心困焉而不能知. The wandering heart-mind and the restricted heart-mind are clearly opposed to each other.

2) The idea of "the beginning of things" is, at least prima facie, in conflict with the metaphysics introduced in later moment of the conversation. Lao says that "beginning and end oppose and yet revert to one another without any starting point, and no one knows where it comes to an end" 始終相反乎無端, 而莫知乎其所窮. The metaphysic Lao is explaining seems to dissolve the very idea of "the beginning" and "the end" since he says that they "revert to one another" and form a loop with no starting point. If this is the metaphysical reality of the world, how could one say that there is "the beginning of things"? There should be no genuine beginning nor end at all.

[120] One might say that the interaction between Confucius and Yan Yuan at the end of the scene is a counter-evidence for such an ironic reading. But it is certain that the last line can also be read ironically: Confucius is not really prasing Lao Dan but just making fun of him as he thought that he is the ideal person.

3) in the middle of the conversation Confucius asks about the method of attaining such a state of Lao — "I wish to know how one could attain it" 願聞其方 — and Lao does provide his answer to Confucius. This seems to contradict with the later words of Lao that he does not cultivate himself to such a state while Confucius asks if language is inevitable in the cultivation of heart-mind. He asks rhetorically: "what is there to be cultivated?" 夫何修焉？. If he is self-virtuous like the self-bright sun and moon as he said he should have refused to answer the question concerning the method of self-cultivation of Confucius.

4) Lao also says "everyone who practices the *dao* understands all these" 已為道者解乎忘此. This is in contrast with the line "restricted heart-mind cannot know" 心困焉而不能知 again. "Understand[ing]" 解 is opposed to "cannot know" 不能知. Meanwhile, *jie* 解 could also mean "loosen", "unfasten", or "freed". These meanings are also contradictory to the image of kun 困 "restricted".

5) Finally Lao is also committed in a certain kind of a preformative contradiction. He says that "four limbs and hundred joints will become dust and dirt" 四支百體將為塵垢. Ordinary people thought that their physical body is of utmost importance but Lao seems to disagree with this common belief and believes that the physical body is nothing more important than "dust and dirt". This is another familiar notion in the *Zhuangzi*. But it pose a sharp contradiction with the very opening of the scene: Lao "had just finished washing his hair" 老聃新沐. It is puzzling to see why the author kicks off the whole scene with Lao's finishing his hair-wash while Lao does not care about his physical body at all.

It is certain that all these contradictions should not be thought of as mere coincidence. They might be related to a broader issue of whether the *Zhuangzi* adopts the law of contradiction which requires another thorough study. At least, I think that these are all hints suggesting the ironic reading.

More importantly, the conversation between Confucius and Lao is to some extent a failure of communication. The success of the communication between the two is only on the surface. Confucius asked three main questions in the whole conversation and Lao does not really answer his question every time:

i) Confucius asks: “what do you mean by that [let your heart-mind wander in the beginning of things]?” 何謂邪？. Lao replies to him by explaining the metaphysical reality of the world i.e “the utmost Yin is gloomy and frigid, and the utmost Yan is bright and radiant. The gloomy and frigid come from the Heaven, and the bright and radiant come from the Earth. The two blend together and harmonise, and then things are born.” 至陰肅肅，至陽赫赫。肅肅出乎天，赫赫發乎地。兩者交通成 和而物生焉. This metaphysical picture may be taken to be the annotation of the idea of “the beginning of things”. But Confucius is not asking what “the beginning of things” is but rather what letting your heart-mind wander in “the beginning of things” means. Lao does not mention the heart-mind at all and left this unanswered in his reply which focuses on metaphysics.

ii) Confucius asks: “May I ask what it means to wander in such a state?” 請問遊是. The reason why Confucius asks this is exactly the problem I have just raised. Lao in his first reply only answered what is “the beginning of things” and left the wandering of the heart-mind unexplained. Does Lao answer this time? No, his reply is hardly a direct answer. Lao in his second reply turns to introduce the idea of “utmost person” 至人, “utmost beauty” 至美 and “utmost happiness” 至樂. The relation between these concepts and the idea of the wandering heart-mind is obscure. It might be said that letting your heart-mind wander in the beginning of things is the “utmost happiness” and this is one of the qualities the “utmost person” has. Even so, Lao still does not explain to Confucius and the reader the content of letting your heart-mind wander in “the beginning of things”. What is it like to let your heart-mind wander in “the beginning of things”? Still a question unanswered.

iii) Confucius asks: “Could the gentleman in ancient times get away with it?” 古之君子，孰能脫焉 As said above, Lao does not really answer the question but instead dissolves the assumption of the question. “The gentleman” or “the utmost person” does not cultivate himself at all and thus the question of whether one must employ language to have self-cultivation is misguided.

All these communicative failures in the scene forms an excellent example of superficial communication: we always seem to be communicating but in fact talk past each other. Confucius and Lao Dan in the scene did not really form any meaningful exchanges of ideas. If one focuses on the substantial content of Lao’s words and ignores the way in which the conversation unfolds, one would simply miss the whole point of the scene.

The philosophical implication of this scene, which is demonstrated by the structure of the scene, extends the trajectory of the chapter: we miscommunicate with the chapter or the *Zhuangzi* in general by reducing its dynamic meaning into whatsoever static moral, be it language is problematic or *li* is harmful. Due to the threat of miscommunication, Scene 4 once again reminds us that in our reading of the *Zhuangzi* we might act like the you-walk-I-walk 亦步亦趨 Yan Yuan in Scene 3.

5.

> 莊子見魯哀公。哀公曰:「魯多儒士, 少為先生方者。」莊子曰:「魯少儒。」哀公曰:「舉魯國而儒服, 何謂少乎？」莊子曰:「周聞之:儒者冠圜冠者, 知天時;履句屨者, 知地形;緩佩玦者, 事至而斷。君子有其道者, 未必為其服也;為其服者, 未必知其道也。公固以為不然, 何不號於國中曰『無此道而為此服者, 其罪死』？」於是哀公號之五日, 而魯國無敢儒服者。獨有一丈夫儒服而立乎公門, 公即召而問以國事, 千轉萬變而不窮。莊子曰:「以魯國而儒者一人耳, 可謂多乎？」

> Zhuangzi went to see Duke Ai of Lu. Duke Ai said: “There are many followers of Ru in the state of Lu. But people studying Fang/the natural order like you are very rare here.” Zhuangzi said: “There are very few followers of Ru in the state of Lu.” Duke Ai said: “Everyone in the state of Lu is wearing the garb of Ru. How could you say there are very few followers of Ru?” Zhunagzi said: “I have heard that the followers of Ru who wear round hat know the order of the Heaven; those who wear square shoes know the shape of the Earth; those who tie ornaments made of jade in the shape of a broken disc at their strap is able to break things up when there is a situation. There are gentlemen practising the *dao* without wearing the corresponding garb and also people wearing the garb without practising the *dao*. You certainly do not think it is the case. Why don’t you issue an announcement in the state: ‘All those who wear the barb without practising the *dao* will be sentenced to death.’?” Duke Ai had then issued the announcement for five days and there was no one in the state daring to wear the garb of Ru. Only one mature man came in the garb of Ru and stood in front of the duke's gate. The duke immediately summoned him and asked for his opinion on the affairs of the state. Their endless conversation had a thousand turns and ten thousand

changes. Zhuangzi said: “There is only one follower of Ru in the state of Lu. How could one say there are many of them?”

Scene 5 takes us back to the theme of *li* from language, although in nature they are very much the same. As explained in my analysis on scene 2, the *Zhuangzi* is often thought to adopt a hostile attitude toward *li*. Scene 5 seems to echo this common understanding and scene 2. Back in scene 2, Wenbo Xuezi criticised the so-called “gentlemen” 君子 in “the middle states” 中國 that they are “sharp on the subject of ritual and righteousness but dull in understanding people's heart-mind” 明乎禮義而陋乎知人心. *Li* is to be accused as something merely external and thus trivial. Zhuangzi in scene 5 seems to agree with such a criticism (the recurrence of the state of Lu 魯 is also a explicit connection between the two scenes).

Zhuangzi in this narrative argues with Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公 on whether there are many followers of Ru 儒士 in Lu. Duke Ai argues for the claim on the ground that “everyone in the state of Lu is wearing the garb of Ru” 舉國而儒服 whereas Zhuangzi believes in the disassociation of one’s *dao* and clothing. Zhuangzi suggests that we should not judge one’s inner virtue by one’s external behaviour. Zhuangzi then challenges Duke Ai by asking him to issue a new announcement. As a result, there is only one person left in wearing the garb of Ru. Zhuangzi believes that such a result proves that he is right and Duke Ai is wrong, and in fact there is only one genuine follower of Ru. The story justifies the common understanding of the *Zhuangzi*’s view on *li* in the sense that the external pattern of behaviour including how one is dressed has nothing to do with one’s inner virtue. The mistake of Confucianism so to speak, expressed by Duke Ai in the scene, is to over-emphasize on the importance of *li*: they thought that *li* is an indicator of one’s inner virtue; one has to express one’s virtuous emotions in the form of *li*; one should modify one’s feeling according to the code of *li*; one could cultivate virtues in participating in *li*, etc. The scene shows that *li* to many people might just be a convinevent pretence and has nothing to do with *dao*. In such an interpretation, Zhuangzi as the character is “the Zhuangzi’s spokesman” whereas Duke Ai plays the inferior role.

However, such a linear reading overlooks the ironic twist in the scene again. The irony of the scene lies in the final judgement of Zhuangzi: “[t]here is only one follower of Ru in the state of Lu. How could one say there are many of them?”以魯國而儒者一人耳，可謂多乎？This is an ironic statement from Zhuangzi. Who is the only genuine follower of Ru Zhuangzi is

talking about? Zhuangzi does not explicitly tell us the answer but it seems that he must be talking about the mature man 丈夫 who still wears the grab of Ru after the new order. There is no other possible answer after all. Nevertheless, if it is so, Zhuangzi becomes the ironic figure in the scene. Zhuangzi as the character somehow falls from the position of "the Zhuangzi's spokesman" to an ironic figure in the very last line of the scene.

The upshot of the irony is that: how is Zhuangzi able to identify that mature man as the only true follower of Ru? On what grounds is he justified to do so? This is the question that the linear reading and most readers ignore. The only information we know from the mature man is that unlike most Lu people he still wears the garb of Ru after the severe law suggested by Zhuangzi was issued. But how could this be sufficient evidence for the belief that he is a true follower of Ru? Not only is it not sufficient but what is even worse is that Zhuangzi contradicts himself in believing so on such an insufficient ground. Zhuangzi is the one who breaks the purported connection between outler expressions and inner virtues when he argues against Duke Ai. When this is broken, how could he rely on someone's outfit to judge whether he is the gentleman who practises *dao*. Indeed, the situation changed: the severe law has already been issued. But I cannot see how this could restore the broken connection. What the severe law does is that it scares off everyone who is not confident enough in his or her participation in *dao*. Due to their lack of confidence and fear of punishment, they no longer wear the garb of Ru. I cannot see why they are automatically disqualified as someone practising *dao* then. On the other hand, what quality does the mature man show is simply his confidence in his participation in *dao*. He still dares to wear the barb of Ru even after the new law. This only shows that he *thought* he is a genuine follower of Ru and real gentlemen participating in *dao* but not that he is *in fact* one. His confidence is not sufficient evidence either. That is to say, it is too hasty for Zhuangzi to believe that the mature man is a real gentleman participating in *dao* and everyone besides him is not. He is ironically falling in the same trap and committed the exact same mistake as the duke which was first raised by himself.

The irony may be even stronger if we put the scene into a more general context in the *Zhuangzi*. The so-called Zhuangzian ideal person often refuses to have any claim on *dao*. They are virtuous precisely because of their humbleness. The trace of this idea can also be found in the chapter: for example, in scene 1 Tian Zifang refuses to praise Shunzi since he is not good enough to do so; in scene 4 Lao Dan sort of refuses to tell Confucius his *dao* i.e the

notion of letting “heart-mind wander among the primordials of things” 遊心於物之初. Lao only discusses the outline of it quite unwillingly. Accordingly, it seems that the claim on *dao* is a personal defect in the *Zhuangzi*. It is paradoxically true that one loses his claim on *dao* by claiming so. From this perspective, it is odd to believe that the mature man is truly participating *dao* since he wears the barb of Ru in such a very high-profile fashion i.e “stood in front of the duke's gate” 立乎公門.

The last irony of the scene to be noted is that Duke Ai and Zhuangzi actually agree with each other at the end of the story. Duke Ai and Zhuangzi have the same judgement on the mature man despite their previous dispute. Duke Ai invites the mature man to discuss the affairs of the state right after he sees the mature man standing outside his gate with the garb of Ru. This shows that Duke Ai also believes the mature man is a genuine follower of Ru. In other words, the purported inferior character and the purported “*Zhuangzi*’s spokesman” are of no difference after all. The hierarchy constructed from the linear reading is again deconstructed by the ironic twist.

Section 6 to 9

6.

> 百里奚爵祿不入於心, 故飯牛而牛肥, 使秦穆公忘其賤, 與之政也。有虞氏死生不入於心, 故足以動人。
>
> Boli Xi did not let his title and salary enter his heart-mind. This is why he fed the cows and the cows grew fat. That was what made Duke Mu of Qin forget his humble background and give the government to him. The clan of Yu did not let life and death enter their heart-mind and was therefore able to move people.

7.

> 宋元君將畫圖。眾史皆至, 受揖而立;舐筆和墨, 在外者半。有一史後至者, 儃儃然不趨, 受揖不立, 因之舍。公使人視之, 則解衣般礴, 贏。君曰:「可矣, 是真畫者也。」

Lord Yuan of Song was going to have some drawings painted. A lot of clerks gathered in the court and stood there making a bow with their hands. They then had their brushes licked and ink mixed. There were so many clerks that half of them were outside the court. A clerk arrived late but he was unruffled and not in a hurry at all. He did not stand up straight though he made a bow with hands. He then went back home. The Lord sent someone to keep watch over him. It was found that he had taken off his clothes, stretched out his legs and sat there naked. The Lord said: “He is qualified. He is the true painter.”

8.

文王觀於臧, 見一丈夫釣, 而其釣莫釣, 非持其釣, 有釣者也, 常釣也。
文王欲舉而授之政, 而恐大臣父兄之弗安也;欲終而釋之, 而不忍百姓之無天也。於是旦而屬之夫夫曰:「昔者寡人夢, 見良人黑色而髯, 乘駁馬而偏朱蹄, 號曰:『寓而政於臧丈人, 庶幾乎民有瘳乎！』」諸大夫蹴然曰:「先君王也。」文王曰:「然則卜之。」諸大夫曰:「先君之命王, 其無它, 又何卜焉！」
遂迎臧丈人而授之政。典洗無更, 偏令無出。三年, 文王觀於國, 則列士壞植散群, 長官者不成德, 鍥斛不敢入於四竟。列士壞植散群, 則尚同也;長官者不成德, 則同務也;鍥斛不敢入於四竟, 則諸侯無二心也。文王於是焉以為大師, 北面而問曰:「政可以及天下乎？」臧丈人昧然而不應, 泛然而辭, 朝令而夜遁, 終身無聞。顏淵問於仲尼曰:「文王其猶未邪？又何以夢為乎？」仲尼曰:「默！汝無言！夫文王盡之也, 而又何論刺焉！彼直以循斯須也。」

King Wen was sight-seeing at Zang. He saw a mature man fishing whose fishing is not fishing as he was not holding his fishing. Yet he is someone who fishes and fishes constantly.

King Wen wanted to promote him and hang the government over him. But the king was afraid that his uncle and the high officials would be discontent. He then no longer wanted to promote the mature man and got over the matter, and yet still could not bear to see the ordinary people living without the Heaven. Thereupon, at dawn, he told his ministers: “In my dream yesterday I saw a good man with black skin and beard mounting a dappled horse with red hoofs on one side. That man commanded on me, saying: ‘Hang over the government to the mature man from Zang and hope for the

healing of the people!'" The ministers, awe-struck, said: "That was the former king!" King Wen said: "Let's divine what we should do." The ministers said: "That's the command on you from the former king. There is no other alternative. What is there to be divine?"

The mature man from Zang was then invited to the court and given the government. The law remained unchanged and no inappropriate order was issued. Three years later King Wen looked around the state. He found that the local gentlemen broke their gate bar and disbanded their clique; the high officials did not achieve anything distinctive; the measuring vessels from the outside were not brought into the state. That the local gentlemen broke their gate bar and disbanded their clique meant that sameness is admired; that the high officials did not achieve anything distinctive meant that all sorts of work were treated as of equal worth; that the measuring vessels from the outside were not brought into the state meant that the lords were not having two standard. King Wen therefore thought of him as the master and, facing north, asked: "Could your way of running the state be extended to the entire world?" The mature man from Zang was obscure and did not respond. He mumbled and quited. When the announcement was issued in the morning he ran away at night of the same day. He was never heard of since then.

Yan Yuan asked Confucius: "King Wen is not that good after all. Why did he act according to his dream after all?" Confucius said: "Quiet! You should not talk! King Wen had done everything. How could there be any room for discussion and criticism of him? He just followed what needed to be done."

Due to their obvious connection and relevance, I group section 6 to 8 together for analysis. These sections continue the discussion of social convention i.e *li* and introduce the issue of knack, which is a familiar topic in the *Zhuangzi* (the Cook Ding in chapter 3, and the cicada-catcher in chapter 19). Section 7 is on drawing while section 8 is on fishing (section 9 which I decided not to analyse is also on archery).

From a non-ironic point of view, section 6, 7 and 8 contain the same lesson to learn with the previous sections: the conventional way of doing things is not the best way. There are four characters in these narratives getting promotion because of their unconventional behaviour:

i) Boli Xi 百里奚 does not care about his salary and use it to feed the cows instead of using it on himself. Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 thus let him govern the state (section 6)

ii) The clan of Yu 有虞氏 does not let life and death enter their heart-mind and thereby are able to "move the people" 動人 (section 6)

iii) An unnamed painter behaves very differently from other painters but thereby draw the attention of Lord Wan of Song 宋元君 and is claimed as "the true painter" 真畫者 by the Lord. He arrived late at the court and did not perform the *li* i.e bowing with one's hands 揖手之禮 like other painters. When he was at home, he took off his clothes and *ban bo* 般礴 ("sitting with stretching-out legs"), which is a very casual, informal, and even impolite gesture. His unconventional behaviour, however, made him win over other painters. (section 7)

iv) An unnamed mature man 丈夫 was fishing at Zang 臧 and noticed by King Wen 文王 who was sight-seeing there.[121] This man is said to be "whom fishing is not fishing as he was not holding his fishing. Yet he is someone who fishes and fishes constantly." 其釣莫釣, 非持其釣, 有釣者也, 常釣也. Three things can be noted in these seemingly paradoxical lines: first, "[w]hom fishing is not fishing" 其釣莫釣 means that his fishing is unusual. The first "fishing" in the line must actually have a different meaning with the second "fishing" of the line, though they appear to be the same. Otherwise, this line would be a straight-forward self-contradictory statement which cannot be true. Accordingly, the first "fishing" should mean the fishing of the mature man whereas the second "fishing" should mean the usual fishing of the others or what is commonly thought to be fishing. Understood so, the statement emphasise the mature man's finishing is unfamiliar. Second, "he was not holding his fishing" 非持其釣 explains how his way of fishing differs from the usual one. *Chi* 持 literally means "hold" and the extended meaning is "sustain", "support", and "uphold", etc. In the light of the

[121] Some commentators believes that this unnamed mature man is *Tai-Gong-Wang* 太公望 a.k.a *Jiang-Tai-Gong* 姜太公 who is the famous advisor of King Wen and King Wu 武王 and helped them to overthrow the Shang 商 dynasty. One of his legacy is that he fishes with a straight "fishhook" and thereby makes King Wen ask him to be his advisor.

analysis of *wuwei* 無為 and its connection with *yi* 意, "not holding his fishing" means "fishing without "holding" or "sustaining" an rigid intention of fishing, that is, the mature man might not aware of his fishing, not concentrate his mind on fishing, and finally not fishing for anything. All these features—awareness, concentration, and desire for getting a fish—are involved in the normal way of fishing. The absence of *chi* makes his fishing unique. Third, "[y]et he is someone who fishes and fishes constantly" 有釣者也, 常釣也 paradoxically praise the fishing of the mature man is the one who really fishes. This line shows that not only is his fishing unusual but also precisely because of its unfamility he has become someone who genuinely fishes. As a result his genuine fishing brought him the promotion from King Wen: King Wen decided to give him the government 授之政. He had ruled the state for three years and "no inappropriate order was issued" 偏令無出. This figure again confirms the moral that one who behaves unconventionally is to be promoted. (section 8)

All these figures from section 6 to 8 seem to suggest that deviation from the conventional practice is always good. They are the "Zhuangzi's spokesman" who benefit from their unconventional way of behaviour, and further strengthen the anti-*li* interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* in general.

Nevertheless, the ironic twist that lies in these narratives may invert this interpretation. The key to the ironic twist is the last line of section 8: 'Yan Yuan asked Confucius: "King Wen is not that good after all. Why did he act according to his dream after all?" Confucius said: "Quiet! You should not talk! King Wen had done everything. How could there be any room for discussion and criticism of him? He just followed what needed to be done."' 顏淵問於仲尼曰:『文王其猶未邪？又何以夢為乎？』仲尼曰:『默！汝無言！夫文王盡之也, 而又何論刺焉！彼直以循斯須也。』This line is a meta-narrative element of section 8 since it is Confucius and Yan Yuan commenting on the main narrative about King Wen and the mature man. Although it is the first time to have a meta-narrative element in the "Tianzifang" chapter, there are several structurally similar setting in the previous sections i.e section 1, 2, and 4.[122] Their structural similarity is that all these sections seem to end with a comment from the purported "inferior" character on the "Zhuangzi's spokesman".

[122] The difference between the ending setting of section 9, and section 1, 2 and 4 is that the commentator in section 9 is *not* involved in the major narrative and thus a meta-narrative element whereas the commentator in other sections *is* one of the characters in the major plot.

Section 1: ‘He then called the ministers to stand in attendance and said to them: “How far away- the gentleman of complete virtue! (...) What I have learned before is nothing more than clay dolls. This state of Wei is really my burden!”’ 召前立臣, 而語之曰:「遠矣全德之君子！ (.....) 吾所學者直土梗耳, 夫魏真為我累耳！」. Section 1 ends with Marquis Wen of Wei’s comment on *Shunzi*.

Section 2: ‘Confucius remained silent after meeting him. (...) Confucius said: “With that kind of man, a glance could show you the *dao*. There is no room for speaking.”’ 仲尼見之而不言。 (.....) 仲尼曰:『若夫人者, 目擊而道存矣, 亦不可以容聲矣。』Section 2 ends with Confucius’s comment on *Wenbo Xuezi*.

Section 4: ‘Confucius left and told Yan Yuan: “In terms of my attainment of the *dao*, I am merely a gnat in a vinegar jar.If my master did not uncover the lid on me, I would never know the great comprehensiveness of the Heaven-and-Earth.”’ 孔子出, 以告顏回曰:『丘之於道也, 其猶醯雞與！微夫子之發吾覆也, 吾不知天地之大全也。』 Section 4 ends with Confucius’s comment on *Lao Tan*.

In all these sections, after the major plot and conversation finished there is a concluding remark put at the end. And we can see a shared pattern here. It is always the “inferior” character (the name underlined) commenting on the alleged “Zhuangzi’s spokesman” (the name italicised). Due to this pattern, one should rethink the interpretation just stated. In the linear reading, one takes the one who deviates from convention as the “Zhuangzi’s spokesman” i.e the mature man but not King Wen. Nonetheless, the ending remark is not on the mature man but on King Wen. Meanwhile, not only is King Wen the target to be commented in the ending remark but he is *praised* by Confucius. In response to Yan Yuan’s doubts, Confucius defends King Wen by saying that “[k]ing Wen had done everything. How could there be any room for discussion and criticism of him? He just followed what needed to be done.” 夫文王盡之也, 而又何論刺焉！彼直以循斯須也。. It is King Wen to be praised at the end of the story. Moreover, Yan Yuan’s question i.e “Why did he act according to his dream after all?” 何以夢為乎？ seems to suggest that King Wen’s decision of giving the government to the mature man according to his dream is wrong. This means that Yan Yuan does not think the mature man is a good ruler after all even though King Wen thought he is the master of rulers. All these lead to a twist of the identification of the mature man as the

"Zhuangzi's spokesman". Whether the one who gives up the government or the one who is given the government is the genuine "Zhuangzi's spokesman"? King Wen or the mature man in this case? This is an unanswerable question that echoes the interpretative puzzle in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter: whether Yao 堯 or Xu You 許由 is the "Zhuangzi's spokesman"in the story of "Yao gives the world-under-Heaven to Xu You". I believe that the repeated occurrence of the same form of puzzle calls for doubts to the "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman" approach in general. Any identification of the "Zhuangzi's spokesman" is always twisted ironically in the text and thus such an approach is untenable.

ii. The Socrates' and *Zhuangzi*'s irony

We have just analysed the literary form of irony in the "Tianzifang" chapter in details. In this section I will introduce Jonathan Lear's conception of irony, which is inspired by Socrates and Kierkegaard, in order to demonstrate the philosophical relevance and significance of the irony in the *Zhuangzi*.

In his *The Case for Irony*, Lear dismisses the common understanding of irony as a mere form of expression, i.e "what irony means is simply expressing what we mean by saying something contrary to it". He quotes from Kiekegaard: "[i]n what did Socrates' irony really lie? In expressions and turns of speech, etc.? No, such trivialities, even his virtuosity in talking ironically, such things do not make a Socrates. No, his whole existence is and was irony." To Lear and Kiekegaard, irony is not a matter of "expressions and turns of speech" but rather a certain kind of experience and form of life. It is not only that Socrates *talked ironically* but also he *lived ironically* and he himself was an *ironic being*. Such an philosophical extension of the concept of irony perfectly fit the general methodology of the entire thesis since I also believe that irony is not simply a form of expression adopted in the "Tianzifang" chapter but also a constituent of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. To put in the context of the *Zhuangzi*, *Zhuangzi* is not only *written ironically*, but advocates a kind of *ironic living* through such a literary form.

The first thing to say about "irony" is that it is an existential form of "not being perfectly sure". Lear says:

> The contrast Kierkegaard draws is with everyone else who is "perfectly sure of being human and knowing what it means to be a human being." So irony would seem to be a form of not being perfectly sure—an insecurity about being human that is at once constitutive of becoming human and so remarkable that, in all of Athens, only Socrates embodied it.[123]

So the non-ironic/ironic contrast is a contrast between a "perfectly sure" way of living and a "not being perfectly sure" way of living. There are two things to be noted about the quote. First, it seems that the quote targets "being human", but it will be soon shown that the concept of "irony" could target any kind of practical identity, not limited to the identity of human. Kiekegaard paid his attention very much to the identity of "being a Christian" and Lear makes his own case by an example of "being a teacher". Second, one is easily led to think that the "not being perfectly sure" mode is equal to the *reflective* mode whereas the "perfectly sure" mode is equal to the *unreflective* mode. It is especially misleading when Socrates is taken to be the paradigm case of the ironic and "not being perfectly sure" way of living since Socrates is famous for his everlasting reflection and critique. But Lear explicitly dismisses such an interpretation of irony. He says: "[t]he important point for now is that the perfectly-sure/not-perfectly-sure divide does not coincide with the division between unreflective and reflective life."[124] The major reason for the two not coinciding is that "philosophical discourse about our ability to step back in reflection can function as ideology, reinforcing our confinement in the name of liberating us from it." According to Lear, it is only a "dreadful illusion" that reflection must lead one to step outside one's current identity and become "not being perfectly sure". It is more often that "reflection is the mode of recognition", that is, reflection only makes one being even more rigid with regard to one's identity.[125] Cephalus in Plato*'s Republic* is an example of this. The wealthy businessman Cephalus does enjoy the reflective conversation with Socrates at his home. But the result of the reflection is not that he turns into the "not being perfectly sure" mode from his ordinary identity of "being a businessman" but that he sticks to his identity and the related social norms with more confidence. It is thus wrong to identify the "not being perfectly sure" mode with "being reflective".

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[123] Lear, Jonanthan (2011) *A Case for Irony*, Harvard University Press, p.6
[124] Ibid., p.6
[125] Ibid., p.8

The relevance between Lear's irony and the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is already clear: as we have analysed, the *Zhuangzi* seems to oppose any rigid and fixed way of living and opt for a flexible and context-sensitive *dao*. This tendency fits the "perfectly sure"/"not being perfectly sure" contrast. The *Zhuangzi* also introduces a cluster of concepts which is closely related to the "not being perfectly sure" way of living, such as a character named as *hun dun* 渾沌 ("Chaotic Blob") in the "Yingdiwang" 應帝王 chapter, *chou chu* 躊躇 ("dawdling at ease") in the "Tianzifang" chapter and the "Waiwu" 外物 chapter, and *wang ji* 忘己 ("forgetting one's own self") in the "Tiandi" 天地 chapter, etc. I believe that these concepts can by and large be grouped together and put in the camp of "not being perfectly sure" way of living.

Of what the "not being perfectly sure" is? What exactly is the thing that the ironic being is uncertain of? This question has to do with Lear's concept of human pretence and the gap between practical identity and social norms. For Lear and Kiekegaard, "pretence goes to the heart of human agency". They both believe that "pretence" is the essential feature of human beings and thus "other animals don't pretend." "Pretence" is a unique human capacity to "put oneself forward or make a claim".[126] That is, human beings are able to think about one's behaviour reflexily. Not only do we do things but we also think of what we are doing. Lear says: "You see me bent over and ask, "What are you doing?" and I say, "Tying my shoes." Right there in that simple answer I am making a claim about what I am up to".[127] We, human beings, are capable of forming reflexive thoughts on our own self and expressing it via language. More importantly, the society and community in which we posit always provide and equip us the resources for forming such a self-understanding. This is the function of established social roles. We always make a claim on ourselves in terms of those available social roles and put ourselves forward *as* a certain social role(s). These roles are the conceptual framework that shapes our self-understanding of the *meaning* of our actions and the surrounding things, how we *evaluate* events happening in our life, and becomes the *guild book* of our life plan. We think in terms of them and project into the future in respect to them. For example, due to the pretence of "being a professor", one understands his speaking as *lecture-giving* or *transition of knowledge*, the human beings before him as *students*, the space he is inside as *a classroom*, and so forth. The meaning of everything in the scene is settled in

[126] Ibid., p.10
[127] Ibid., p.10

this *professor-world*. Everything can find their own place there. The pretence of "being a professor" also *guildes* how he acts in the future. He orders a book from an online bookshop because he needs it for research and his publication plan. He applies for a presentation in an academic conference next month because he needs others in his field to discuss his newly-written manuscript. He is doing all these due to the pretence of "being a professor": these are what one should do *as a professor*. Lear says: "[i]n this way a whole range of activity—including dress, mannerisms, a sense of pride and shame—can all count as pretence in that they are all ways of putting oneself forward as a professor".[128]

In spite of the power and usefulness of established social roles as pretence, these established social roles are also insufficient meanwhile. Although the established social roles and norms are the available resources for the execution of one's capacity of pretence, they often fail to *fully* provide the content of one's pretence. In other words, there is often a gap between the established norms and one's pretence. In this respect, Lear says:

> The possibility of irony arises when a gap opens between pretence as it is made available in a social practice and an aspiration or ideal which, on the one hand, is embedded in the pretence—indeed, which expresses what the pretence is all about—but which, on the other hand, seems to transcend the life and the social practice in which that pretence is made.[129]

It is a general structure of pretence that it often *transcends* the established social practices even though it is often made in them. This gap brings us "the possibility of irony". Due to this gap, it is made meaningful of Kiekegaard's question: "among all Christian, is there a Christian?" or Socrates' question: "among all politicians (in Athens), is there a single politician?".[130] These seemingly self-contradictory and meaningless questions are meaningful to us precisely because of the gap. We know that the pretence of "being Christian" or "being politician" could transcend the existing social understanding of "being Christian" or "being politician" so that one could be counted as a Christian or politician without genuinely being so. Accordingly, Lear says: "[i]t is a striking fact about us that we can immediately hear that there is a question being asked, rather than a meaningless repetition. The form of the question

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[128] Ibid., p.11
[129] Ibid., p.11
[130] Ibid., p.22

is a tautology; yet we do not hear it as a tautology".[131] These ironic questions would have been incomprehensible if the gap had not existed. For example, the question "among all the ducks, is there a duck?" is not comprehensible precisely because ducks do not have pretence: they do not put themselves forward as anything at all. Thus the pretence and the gap is the prerequisite of irony.

Here we can see the striking relevance between this philosophical conception of irony and the "Tianzifang" chapter here. The character Zhuangzi in section 5 is concerned with the question of "among all the followers of Ru, is there a follower of Ru?" It is not an exaggeration to say that Zhuangzi in the narrative is asking an ironic question with the exact same form as Kiekegaard and Socrates. We as a reader could understand Zhuangzi's ironic question because "the follower of Ru" is a pretence and social identity composed of the established practice and the aspiration. "The follower of Ru" is like "Christian" and "politician" and unlike "duck" that could provide the resources and terms for us to understand things surrounding us.

The gap between pretence and the established social knowledge brings us the experience of irony. Lear gives an example of a Christian encountering a beggar for illustration. In the story, a Christian just leaves the church and passes a beggar on the street. He then remembers the priest's sermon: loving one neighbour as oneself. He therefore gives the beggar a dollar. The beggar says to him: "You must be listening to your priest." The words from the beggar may be taken as a straightforward remark of his donation, but can also be taken *ironically*. The Christian "may take him to be speaking ironically in the familiar sense of exuding sarcasm about the paltry nature of my donation. He's telling [the Christian] in his "ironic" way—saying the opposite of what he means in a way that [the Christian] can recognize—that [the Christian] should have given him a twenty." This is the experience of irony.[132] The irony is that the established social practices of being a Christian *ironically* make one fall short of being a Christian. The Christian in the story donated a dollar to the beggar precisely because of his loyalty to the priest's teaching and "the hallmark of Christian life" i.e loving one neighbour as oneself. This act of Christendom, however, caused him to fail as a Christian. As a result, there is a disruption and disorientation of the Christian's practical identity and pretence. The upshot of such an event and experience of irony is that he is *shaken.* In this

[131] Ibid., p.12
[132] Ibid., p.14

regard, Lear says: "It is as though Christianity has come back to show [the Christian] that everything [the Christian] have hitherto taken a Christian life to be is ersatz, a shadow. Even when [the Christian] am pricked by conscience and experience myself falling short—that entire package [the Christian] learned in Christendom bears at best a comical relation to what it would actually be to follow Jesus' teaching."

Due to the importance of practical identity in our lives just argued, such a disruption of it has serious consequences on our lives too. According to Lear, such an experience is "a peculiar species of uncanniness".[133] That is to say, the experience of irony turns everything that has been familiar to me into something strange and unfamiliar. In other words, it is not only an identity-disrupting but also world-disrupting experience since our practical identity is the background in which everything is located. The meaning of things is understood with reference to such a background. When the background is shaken the meaning of things is also shaken and when the meaning of things is shaken the things no longer look familiar.[134] Moreover, one cannot even make sense of oneself, one's action and one's life. We put ourselves forward as something to others and to ourselves. In the experience of irony, we lost our practical identity and also the terms of which we make sense ourselves. We are no longer able to tell what we have been and would be up to. In short, Lear says: "the experience of irony has basically two moments: first, there is the bringing out of a gap between pretence and pretence-transcending aspiration. Second, there is an experience of ironic uptake that, I have suggested, is a peculiar species of uncanniness."[135]

It is easy to confuse the experience of ironic uncanniness with the experience of detachment. But they are not the same. According to Lear, although the experience of irony is a world-disrupting experience it does not cause one to detach from the social world. It is a "would-be-directed uncanniness". Back to the example of Christian, although the encounter with the beggar disorients him as a Christian this is not meant to pull him away from Christianity. It rather calls the established social practices of being a Christian into question. That the world is shaken does not mean leaving the world behind all the way down. Lear thus says: "the point, then, is not about leaving the social world behind, but about a peculiar way

[133] Ibid., p.16
[134] This is different from encountering something new and odd. Encountering something new and odd is not world-disrupting but simply encountering something that cannot or does not yet find its place in your world. Such odd things do not make everything become unfamiliar.
[135] Ibid., p.16

of living in relation to it."[136] Such "a peculiar way of living" in relation to the social world echoes the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* to me. According to my analysis of the "Tianzifang" chapter, it is shown that the common impression of Zhuangzi as anti-*li* is too hazy and may even be untenable. Zhuangzi is not advocating an attitude of withdrawal and hermit-like style of life. Rather, the *dao* is in a dynamic relation to the established social world. Sometimes Zhuangzi criticises those practices, sometimes he calls them into question, sometimes he proposes a new way of doing things that is in contradiction with the established way. But he is not meant to ask his reader to abandon them altogether. I believe that "a peculiar way of living in relation to [the social world]" is quite a nice description of Zhuangzi's philosophy in this respect.

This ironic and "peculiar way of living" is embodied in Socrates's life. Many, including young Kierkegaard, misunderstood Soractes's irony by focusing merely on the negative side of it. The situation is quite similar to the misreading of the *Zhuangzi*: many readers focus solely on the negative side of his *dao*, such as his argument against Confucius' teaching. With this regard, the pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus criticises "Magister Kierkegaard for bringing out "only the one side" of irony." He thinks that Kierkegaard wrongly refers to his irony as "infinite negativity".[137] Lear agrees with Climacus and emphasises that "though he spends his life undermining each particular pretence to virtue, Socrates never falls into nihilism, questioning the reality of human virtue (…) The point of Socratic irony is not simply to destroy pretences, but to inject a certain form of not-knowing into polis life. This is his way of teaching virtue."[138] As illustrated by Socrates' life, the experience of irony is not merely a destruction and detachment but a unity of destruction and construction, detachment and attachment, knowing and "not-knowing". There is a well-known story in the "Qiwulun" chapter that echoes the importance of "not-knowing".

It is common to interpret this passage as strong evidence in support of the relativism reading of the *Zhuangzi*. They focus on the doubt raised by Wang Ni to the idea of *zhengse* 正色. They takes *zhengse* as an example of objective value and the passage is an epistemological argument against the existence of it: inferring from the epistemological phenomenon that we can never be certain and know what is *zhengse* to a metaphysical assertion that there are no

[136] Ibid., p.25
[137] Ibid., p.33
[138] Ibid., p.36

objective values. Although such a reading somehow gain further support from the following passage of "no winner in debate" "辯無勝", I believe that it missed the practical and ethical dimension of the passage. Strictly speaking, Wang Ni has never talked about whether *zhengse* objectively exists. He shows no concern about such a metaphysical question at all. Rather, he is merely saying that "how would I know that" 吾惡乎知之. Maybe it is because he lacks the capacity of knowing that as he also says "how would I be able to know that distinction" 吾惡能知其辯 but maybe it is also because he lacks the *interest* of knowing that. The latter line of reading explains why Wang Ni later explains the idea of "utmost person" 至人 to Nie Que 齧缺 that the utmost person is someone who is immune to the external harm instead of arguing for any metaphysical position. To Wang Ni, the established certainty and knowing is harmful to one's life. Rather than discussing the metaphysical question of whether values are absolute or relative, he is suggesting a way of life that embraces uncertainty and not-knowing. While Socrates' irony tries to "inject a certain form of not-knowing into polis life", Wang Ni tries to inject a certain form of uncertainty into one's life. Lear says: "Socratic ignorance is thus an embrace of human openendedness."[139] I believe that it is also true of the *Zhuangzi*.

To conclude, in the light of Lear's philosophical conception of irony, the irony demonstrated in the "Tianzifang" chapter in a way even more radical than Socrates because it is ironic on at least two levels. On the surface level, the text is ironic in terms of its questioning on different kinds of established social practices and practical identity, like "being a follower of Ru" in section 5, "being a printer" in section 7, "being a man who fishes" and "being a ruler" in section 8, etc. These sections all explicitly or implicitly ask the ironic question of "among all Christian, is there a Christian?".

On a deeper level, I argue that the whole chapter itself is like the beggar in the example of Christian's donation who says to the Christian "you must be listening to your priest.". The whole chapter directly appeals to us, the reader of the *Zhuangzi*, "you must be following the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi*". As analysed, we are always tempted to interpret these narratives in the *Zhuangzi* with the "finding the Zhuangzi's spokesman" strategy. We are tempted to identify the Zhuangzi's spokesman with reference to our preunderstanding of the *Zhuangzi*. For example, we take this character's words as representing Zhuangzi's ideas since his words are in accordance with our common impression of the *Zhuangzi*. It is like "he argues against the

[139] Ibid., p.36

usefulness of language so he must be the Zhuangzi's spokesman". What is most interesting about the irony of the "Tianzifang" chapter is that it is not only directed to the character in the story but more importantly to *us*, the readers. The chapter directly addresses its reader just like the beggar's words directly address the Chrsitian. The only difference is that the chapter poses its challenge with its ironic *form* while the beggar addresses the Chrsitian with his words. The "Tianzifang" chapter shakes the practical identity of "being a follower of Ru", and also "being a reader of the *Zhuangzi*" or even "being a follower of the *Zhuangzi*".

The "Tianzifang" chapter brings a certain form of uncertainty and not-knowing to whoever wants to be certain and know exactly what the *dao* is. And ironically the *dao* begins.

Paradox

Paradox has been a subject of philosophical reflection ever since Greek philosophy. The set of paradoxes devised by Zeno of Elea was one of the major philosophical disputes in early Greek philosophy. In modern times, the paradox considering the set of all sets that are not members of themselves discovered by Bertand Russell casts doubt on the naive set theory—especially its axiom of comprehension—and hence thoroughly influences the development of logic, set theory and the project of logicism. After studying the form of narrative and the related form of irony, I shall now turn to the literary form of paradox in the *Zhuangzi*. The paradoxical expressions are one of the reasons why the *Zhuangzi* looks so difficult to understand. I shall argue that paradox is not merely a fancy tool to get its reader perplexed but a substantive application of its philosophical insight.

I would like to begin with clarifying what I mean by "paradox" as it determines the scope of my study in the *Zhuangzi*. The definition of paradox is somewhat controversial and therefore whether a certain discourse constitutes a genuine paradox is subject to debate. However the common usage of the term "paradox" involves two connotations. Firstly, "by 'paradox' one usually means a statement claiming something which goes beyond (or even against) 'common opinion' (what is usually believed or held)".[140] That is, paradox is often something "counter-intuitive" so to speak. It is the case for those Zeno's paradoxes which lead to the conclusion that motion is impossible, which is obviously at odds with our ordinary experience. However, since philosophy itself is to some extent an enterprise of going beyond "common sense" and not all philosophy are paradoxical, it is obvious that being contrary to what seems obviously correct to us is not sufficient for statements to constitute a paradox. A further feature is needed to restrict the notion of "paradox". Consequently the second connotation is that paradox often involves contradiction. It is true for most paradoxes. For example, Russell's paradox leads to the conclusion that the so-called Russell set belongs *and* does not belong to itself.[141] This accounts for the fact that in common usage "contradiction" and "antinomy" are often interchangeable with "paradox". "Paradox" is therefore understood

[140] Cantini, Andrea and Bruni, Riccardo (2021) "Paradox and Contemporary Logic" *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*

[141] If the set of all sets that are not members of themselves is a member of itself, then it must not be a member of itself according to its condition. Meanwhile, If the set of all sets that are not members of themselves is not a member of itself, then it must be a member of itself according to its condition. The two conclusions are clearly contradictory. See

as discourses that put two contradictory yet equally justified statements or conclusion together as the term "antinomy" suggests.

The relation between the two connotations should also be noted since it is related to our analysis of the paradox in the *Zhuangzi* later. That paradoxes often involve contradiction is the reason why those paradoxes go against our "common opinion". That is to say, in our ordinary reasoning we hold the law of noncontradiction. The law of noncontradiction, formulated in Aristotle's terms, is that "contradictory propositions are not true simultaneously." The law is as undoubtful as Aristotle refers to this as "the most certain of all basic principles".[142] In other words, most paradoxes which assert contradictory statements go against our "common opinion" in the way that they violate the law of noncontradiction which is deeply rooted in our ordinary thinking. This also explains the reason why paradox is often viewed as a problem to be solved or dissolved at least in the western philosophical traditions. For instance, in order to get rid of Russell's set which is and is not a member of itself, modern set theories modify the axiom of comprehension in naive set theory in order to disallow the existence of such a set. In such contexts paradox is therefore a sort of "negative" thing—it reveals a flaw of a theory. By contrast, paradox in the *Zhuangzi* seems to have a more positive status at the first glance. It is a common and intended form of expression for the *Zhuangzi* to do its philosophy. Paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* are not a philosophical deficiency but rather what makes the *Zhuangzi* such a philosophically insightful text. Such a difference worths our attention and can serve as a preliminary guidance of our further analysis on its usage of paradox. Why does the *Zhuangzi* hold a rather positive attitude towards paradox instead of viewing it as a problem to be solved? This is one of the major questions we have to answer in our inquiry on the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*. As the law of noncontradiction is introduced, one quick remark worth mentioning is that some may explain the usage of paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* by saying that the *Zhuangzi* never holds the law of noncontradiction and therefore it never thinks of paradox as problematic. This is one of many possible explanations in dealing with paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*. Graham Priest, a prominent defender for dialetheism, famously argued for such an approach to Chan Buddhism and Daoism in recent research. This is not my own approach to the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* and, however, my arguments for my disagreement will be explained in the following.

[142] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011b13-14

Moreover, in my following analysis I will distinguish between the micro-level paradox and the macro-level paradox in the *Zhuangzi*. By "micro-level paradox", I mean the contradiction involved lies *within* a single statement whereas by "macro-level paradox" I mean where the contradiction lies *beyond* a single statement. For the former, the exemplary case is "the non-*dao dao*" 不道之道 from the "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter. These micro-level paradoxes is structurally similar to the probably most famous paradox in Chinese philosophy "white horse is not horse" 白馬非馬 by Gongsun Long 公孫龍.[143] For the latter, I choose two concepts in the *Zhuangzi* as my major examples—the concept of self and the concept of usefulness. I am going to analyse how the *Zhuangzi* constructs its view on self and usefulness paradoxically and the philosophical ground for its usage of paradox. The analysis on the marco-level paradox is the focus since it is relatively rare compared to the analysis on the micro-level paradox.

The chapter will be processed as follows: in section one I will take a quick look at the micro-level paradox and the semantic approach suggested by Wim De Reu. In section two to six, I will analyse my two cases of macro-level paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*, i.e the "paradox of self" and "paradox of usefulness." In section seven, I will analyse an important response from Zhuangzi to his disciple in the "Shanmu" chapter and make the case for my own approach, namely the performative and therapeutic approach. In section eight, I will compare different explanations on the usage of paradox in the *Zhuangzi*'s scholarship and the reason why I am dissatisfied with all of them.

i. Micro-level paradox

To begin with, Wim De Reu's article "Right Words Seem Wrong: Neglected Paradoxes in Early Chinese Philosophical Texts" can serve as an initial basis for my further investigation. It is helpful to introduce his analysis on paradoxes in Chinese philosophy. There are two major contributions that are relevant to my present concern.

First of all, De Reu extended the study of paradoxes in early Chinese philosophical texts from the "ready-made lists" to a broader context. By the "ready-made lists" I mean the lists of paradox that is often ascribed to the allegedly "School of Name" 名家, such as Gongsun

[143] Fraser, Chris (2020) "Paradoxes in the School of Name" in *Dao Companion to Chinese Philosophy of Logic*, Fung Yiu-Ming, ed., Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 285-307

Long, Deng Xi 鄧析, and Hui Shi 惠施 .[144] Apart from the few texts attributed to Gongsun Long in which the "white horse is not horse" paradox is articulated, most first-hand texts of these figures in the "School of Name" do not survive to the present time. The only textual source from which we can know about them are the "quotations" in other surviving texts. It includes the two lists of paradoxes in the *Xunzi* 荀子(the "Zhengming" 正名 chapter and the "Bugou" 不苟 chapter) and the *Zhuangzi* (the "Tianxia" 天下 chapter). The study of paradoxes in Chinese philosophy often refers to these lists, which is highly conjectural and speculative due to the lack of context in which these paradoxes are located.[145] In the "Tianxia" 天下 chapter, the text recorded a list of ten paradoxes associated with Hui Shi and also a list of twenty-one paradoxes with which the people who *bian* 辯 ("debate") response to Hui Shi endlessly and joyfully. For instance, there is a paradox that strikingly resembles the Zeno's paradox— "If you take away half of a one foot long stick each day, it cannot be taken away completely even after ten thousands generations" 一尺之捶, 日取其半, 萬世不竭. Although it is not at all a neglected subject matter in the history of Chinese philosophy, I am doubtful if we could provide any meaningful interpretation on these paradoxes since we do not know enough about these figures in the "School of Name". To dismiss any ambiguity, I do not intend to study any of these lists in the *Zhuangzi*. The subject of the chapter is the paradoxes raised by the author(s) of the *Zhuangzi* rather than those raised by others and merely recorded in the text.

Instead of limiting the study of paradoxes in Chinese philosophy to these "ready-made lists", De Reu set his analysis on a structural and semantics basis. From the perspective of structural and semantics analysis, one can discover a lot more paradoxes in Chinese philosophy outside the lists. More importantly, unlike the paradoxes in the "ready-made lists", these paradoxes discovered from the structural and semantics perspective are often situated in their own context. We can therefore interpret the paradoxes holistically with reference to the philosophical point of view in the texts, which is what I am going to do. De Reu divided the paradoxes in early Chinese philosophical texts (mostly in the allegedly "Daoist" text including the *Zhuangzi*) into three major groups.[146] The first group "are characterised by the

[144] So did other so-called "school" in the Pre-Chin period, the School of Name is just an invented classification by the archivists in the Han-dynasty.
[145] Fraser (2020)
[146] De Reu further divides the three groups into six sub-groups. It is, nevertheless, not so relevant to my concern here. I hence do not mention the sub-division. See De Reu, Wim (2006) "Right Words Seem Wrong: Neglected Paradoxes in Early Chinese Philosophical Texts", *Philosophy East and West* 56 (2):281-300

semantic relation of antonymy".[147]That is, the singular phrase put together two terms which often have opposite meanings. For example, "the greatest skill seems clumsy" 大巧若拙 from the "Quqie" 胠篋 chapter. The phrase is being paradoxical in virtue of the fact that *qiao* 巧 ("skillfulness") and *zhuo* 拙 ("clumsiness") are antonymy, and they are linked to each other by the connective *ruo* 若 (to be like). The second group "are typified by identity".[148] The second group of paradoxes contains repetition of a single term. For example, "the greatest benevolence is not benevolence" 大仁不仁. The phrase involves an negation of the term *ren* 仁 ("benevolence") itself, and hence asserts a contradictory status that is the greatest *ren* and is not *ren* at the same time. The last group of paradoxes "are characterised by implication".[149] The phrase involves a denial of the implication entailed by its subject term. For instance, "the greatest carving does not cut" 大制不割. *Zhi* 制 ("carving") is often considered as an act of *ge* 割 ("to cut"). The phrase nonetheless asserts a sort of *zhi* that does not *ge*. It is therefore paradoxical that the *zhi* (often) involves *ge* and does not involve *ge*.

In addition, there is a common feature shared by all groups in our examples. All three kinds of paradox qualify its subject term by *da* 大 ("great"). It is relevant to De Reu and also my explanation of the usage of these paradoxical expressions. We should note at this point that the paradoxical phrases not only simply describe a contradictory concept, matter or status but are also evaluative in nature. The text in using paradoxical expressions seemingly tries to explain what is the greatest *qiao*, *ren*, and *zhi*. It seems that the author(s) of the text attempts to provide their own "genuine" conception of the concept in question.

Apart from the extension of the scope of paradoxes in Chinese philosophical texts, another important contribution from De Reu is his own explanation of the usage of paradoxes. The discussion of the philosophical ground supporting the literary form of paradox is the focal point of the chapter and will be elaborated in detail in section 3. Among other approaches—including the "metaphysical-mystical interpretation", the "logical-dialetheism interpretation", and the "relativism interpretation"— I refer to his approach as the "semantic-pragmatic interpretation", which apparently resembles and substantially differs from my "interpretation". The "semantic-pragmatic interpretation" holds that the paradoxes constitute unorthodox redefinitions of important terms, and that they are formulated in order

[147] Ibid., p.282
[148] Ibid., p.283
[149] Ibid., p.283

to influence the behaviour and values of their intended audience".[150] De Reu, borrowing the philosophical insights from W. B. Gallie and Charles Leslie Stevenson, argues that there are important terms that constitute the major body of a culture. These important terms are the common vocabulary shared by the sub-groups or subcultures within the culture. *Dao* 道 is a typical example of important terms in early China. However, even though the subcultures all use these important terms to formulate their own ideas, viewpoints and discourses, there is no agreed understanding of these terms. In addition to their commonality, they are of a contested character. In the context of early China, whereas the term "*dao*" is shared by almost all philosophical texts, everyone in the game could be viewed as, to borrow A.C Graham's famous phrase, a "disputer of the *dao*". The subcultures are all arguing for their own interpretation of the "important terms". The important terms are "inevitably involving endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users".[151] One common way in winning this battle of "important terms", discovered by Stevenson, is to put forward one's "persuasive definition".[152] The "persuasive definition" often takes the form of adding qualifiers to the contested important term, such as "real" and "true". That is, one often tries to defend one's view of the important term X by saying that the "real" X is such and such. This leads De Reu to think that the paradoxical expression just stated is to put forward a kind of "persuasive definition". The whole point of the paradoxes is to argue against the common understanding of the important terms and redefine them. For instance, "the greatest benevolence is not benevolence" is to say that the "greatest", or "real", or "true", or "correctly understood" benevolence is exactly not what benevolence is commonly or typically understood. De Reu thus writes: "the paradoxes suggest new and alternative interpretation of important terms, but they do so by referring back to the target uses of these terms".[153] According to his "semantic-pragmatic interpretation" the paradoxes in early China philosophical texts are simply created by verbal ambiguity, and therefore not *genuine* paradoxes. For example, in the second of paradoxes the two occurrences of the same term should be understood as two different terms. The first *ren* of the *da ren* 大仁 is "benevolence[1]" and the second *ren* is "benevolence[2]". The former is agreed by the author whereas the latter is the common understanding against which the author tries to argue. Although they shared the same graphic they are not really semantically identical. In other words, the phrase is simply suggesting that

[150] Ibid., p.285
[151] Gallie, W. B. (1968) "Essentially Contested Concepts." In Philosophy and the Historical Understanding 2nd ed. New York:Schocken Books, p.158
[152] Stevenson, Charles Leslie (1938) "Persuasive Definitions" *Mind* 47: 331-350
[153] De Reu (2006), p.287

"benevolence[1]" is not "benevolence[2]" and there is nothing paradoxical at all. This interpretative consequence of his "semantic-pragmatic interpretation" is of great importance to be noted and remains my main dissatisfaction with his approach. I will argue for this in section 3.[154]

ii. Macro-level paradox

In what follows, I am going to further the scope of the study of paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*. The type of paradoxes to which I refer as "macro-level paradox" is the target of analysis. According to my characterisation of paradox at the beginning of the chapter i.e being counterintuitive and contradictory, I believe that the literal phenomenon of paradox in the *Zhuangzi* is clearly not restricted to a micro-level phenomenon. That is, the *Zhuangzi* not only combines contradictory ideas into a single statement like what has just mentioned it also puts forward contradictory ideas in different parts of the text. The study of paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* should not be limited to the ready-made list or the micro-level expression. The usage of paradox is a cross-chapter structural literal phenomenon in the *Zhuangzi*.

I could only think of one reason why some might object to my proposed extension. The possible objection is concerned with the authorship issue of the *Zhuangzi*. It is an obvious fact that the *Zhuangzi* is composed of different chapters written by different (groups of) authors and edited by Guo Xiang to become the transmitted version we can now read.[155] Although there has been a controversy concerning the classification of the chapters there is no doubt as to the multi-authorship nature of the text. That the *Zhuangzi* is not a production of a single author might provide a prima facie explanation for the macro-level paradox that I attempt to analyse. The underlying rationale is that if the *Zhuangzi* is written by different authors in different periods of time it is no wonder why the text contains contradictory views within itself. Consequently these contradictory views can hardly be genuine paradoxes since contradictory propositions are not true simultaneously. The "contradictory propositions" are rather held by different authors at different times. The situation is simply like philosophers arguing against each other, and it constitutes no paradox but philosophical debates. Such an

[154] I believe that I do justice to De Reu's view even though I have skipped the pragmatic part of his interpretation. It is because the pragmatic effects of the paradoxical expressions , according to his interpretation, is obviously based on the semantic mechanism underlying.
[155] Liu, Xiaogan (1995) *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters* University of Michigan Centre for Chinese Studies

argument from the authorship issue seems to be an obstacle I must tackle before my analysis.[156]

I have two responses to this authorship objection. First, if we have learnt a lesson from continental hermeneutics the objection loses its initial appeal. To put the hermeneutics lesson in short, the meaning of a text is not exhausted by its author's intention, and the obligation of an interpreter is to explore *meaning*. From the perspective of continental hermeneutics, to be an interpreter is not to act like an investigator investigating into the case of the author's intention. As Lawrence K. Schmidt put it: "the aim of interpretation, Gadamer argues, is not to bridge the temporal gap and reconstruct the original situation of the text, but to discover what the text has to say to us."[157] If we stick to the author's intention(s) we may easily conclude that the *Zhuangzi* is merely "a ragbag of odds and ends" containing miscellaneous writings written by all different people in different periods of time.[158] However, it is clear that the work of understanding the *Zhuangzi* is not done yet and it is a dereliction of the duty as an interpreter. In other words, the question is not whether the authors of the *Zhuangzi* themselves intentionally make use of paradoxical expression in putting forward their philosophy but whether we the interpreters can make sense of these paradoxical expressions and by analysing such a literary form enrich the philosophical insight in the *Zhuangzi*. Indeed, it does not automatically justify my interpretation, but any dissatisfaction with my interpretation should be a substantial one instead of rising from the outset authorship issue.

The hermeneutics lesson can be further strengthened by considering the transmission of the *Zhuangzi*. The trajectory of literal production in early China involves a dynamic interaction between texts, the commentaries, the concepts of authorship and of sagehood. The texts in the Pre-Qin period were gradually grouped together and given categorisation in the form of "school". And "at the end of the western Han these texts (*Mengzi*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*) were classified under the rubric of Masters Texts".[159] In addition to western Han scholars and bibliographers' efforts, Guo Xiang's edition of the *Zhuangzi* is undoubtedly pivotal, particularly when he cut off nineteen chapters in the Han version. As a result, the

[156] By contrast, such an objection has no appeal to the micro-level paradox. It is because the micro-level paradox is by definition a single expression containing contradiction and it is hard to say a single expression is not written at one point of time. Consequently, micro-level paradox is undoubtedly real paradox in the sense that it holds contradictory ideas true simultaneously

[157] Schmidt, Lawrence K. (2006) *Understanding Hermeneutics*, UK:Routledge, p. 104

[158] De Reu (2015)

[159] Puett, Michael (2017), "Text and Commentary, The Early Tradition" In *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature (1000 BCE- 100 CE)*, Oxford University Press, p. 117

Guo Xiang edited *Zhuangzi* became one of these "Masters Texts" which has been transmitted through Chinese intellectual history. Hence my argument is that in spite of the "originally" miscellaneous nature of the composition of the *Zhuangzi*, the *Zhuangzi* is a meaningful whole since it is a self-contained entity occupying a position in the long Chinese intellectual history. I therefore believe that the contradictory views elaborated in different chapters are held "true simultaneously" in the sense that they are both held within the *Zhuangzi*. They thus constitute a genuine paradox worth analysing.

Even if we do not take the hermeneutics upshot and liberate ourselves from the myth of author's intention, I contend that the macro-level paradoxes, especially the paradox of usefulness, is worth analysing. The paradox of usefulness provides us with an interesting case that the author of the outer chapter "intentionally" formulated their philosophical idea with *explicit* reference to the ideas in the inner chapter. We will soon see how the author(s) of the "Shanmu" 山木 chapter use an ironic story to contradict the view in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. That is to say, the contradictory views on the concept of usefulness is not a mere contingent fact caused by the multi-authors nature of the *Zhuangzi*. In other words, the literal phenomenon that the *Zhuangzi* holds contradictory views is not merely due to the historical fact that some gathered different writings together by giving the book title *Zhuangzi* to them and these writings happened to contradict each other. Rather, the author of the "Shanmu", whoever they are, were clearly aware of the view in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter and make a playful refutation to it. Such a playful refutation constitutes the paradox of usefulness in the *Zhuangzi* and brings the meaning of the text to the next level. I thus believe that the paradox of usefulness is somehow "intended" as shown by the textual evidence and philosophically relevant.

The study of the macro-level paradox is therefore of great importance to the understanding of the *Zhuangzi* whether or not you agree with the hermeneutics point that the author's intention is not relevant to our interpretation.

iii. Case one: the paradox of self[160]

Macro-level paradoxes are ubiquitous in the *Zhuangzi*. Instead of offering a comprehensive analysis of these paradoxes, I pick out two of the most interesting and representative cases These two paradoxes both deal with a central concept with great philosophical importance and share a similar structure. One is the concept of self and the other is the concept of usefulness. The literary form of paradox plays a pivotal role in dealing with these two concepts in the sense that the *Zhuangzi* does not talk about these two concepts in a straightforward way but rather paradoxically demonstrates its conceptions of these two aspects of human life.

As introduced in section one, by paradoxical expression I mean "contradiction" and "antinomy". Accordingly, by "the paradox of self" I mean the views of self expressed in the *Zhuangzi* are contradictory. Moreover, there is, at least apparently, no reconciliation between these views. In other words, I suggest that Zhuangzi's ideas about "self" seem to be of a "bipolar" character—his ideas about "self" can be divided into two groups contradicting one another. If it is put in terms of the literary form I have articulated in the "Narrative" chapter, it is that the *Zhuangzi* conceptualise the idea of "self" in a "constellation of perspective" which contains contradictory perspectives. The opposite views are: on the one hand, Zhuangzi proposes that we should keep a certain distance from the world and protect ourselves from being harmed by others. I refer to this as the "protecting the self" doctrine. On the other hand, Zhuangzi also tells us that there is no self and we should be in harmony and unity with the myriad things. I refer to this as the "no-self" doctrine.

The concept of "self" introduced here should be understood as thinly as possible. That is to say, my analysis of "the paradox of self" is not meant to take any side in the debate between "collectivism" and "individualism". The debate between "collectivism" and "individualism" is a debate concerned with whether the *Zhuangzi*, or Chinese philosophy in general, deals with the idea of self in the similar manner with the western tradition which is generally assumed to be mainly individualistic. This is a long-standing issue with lots of scholars supporting both sides. For example, Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 famously said that "the biggest

[160] This section is a revised and condensed outline of my master thesis. For more details, see Kwong, Chun Man (2014) "Tension between 'Protecting the Self' and 'No-self' in the *Zhuangzi*: the Paradox of the Self-cultivation of 'No-self'" National University of Taiwan

lacuna in Chinese culture is that the individuality has never been discovered".[161] Chung-ying Cheng emphasises that "relatability" either to the social context or to the whole cosmos is the main constituent of the ancient Chinese conception of "self".[162] And Donald J. Munro directly ascribes the ancient Chinese notion of "self" as "collectivism".[163] By contrast, Wm. T. de Bary suggests that the issue of self and individual was also the main subject in the ancient Chinese tradition, being discussed as much as in the West.[164] Xu Keqian 徐克謙 argues for a different type of "individualism" in *Zhuangzi* saying that "according to Zhuangzi, 'self' can be an integrated and complete individual 'one' existing independently from many others and the society, rather than an incomplete 'part' of a general 'whole.'".[165] And Edward Slingerland even argues that the SUBECT-SELF schema that underlies the western Cartesian conception of "self" does also underlies the Zhuangzian conception of "self"[166], resulting in no crucial difference between the western Cartesian "self" and the Zhuangzi's conception of "self". With regards to the controversial, the term "self" is merely used for the sake of convenience and is by no means intended to bring about all the philosophical connotations of the concept of self in the western tradition. Up to different readers, "self" here can be understood as "part of the general whole", or as "integrated and complete individual", or as "embodied self", or as "Cartesian self". The focus of this section is to analyse the contradictory attitudes toward "self", whatsoever the idea of "self" might be understood. The substantial content of the concept of "self" is not the focus.

The "protecting the self" doctrine

For the "protecting the self" doctrine, there is much textual evidence in support of the idea that one should sustain the internal purity of self instead of letting the external things i.e authority, reputation, benefit, the common people to affect you. In this view, we can find a cluster of associated ideas, including the endorsement of *bao ji* 保己 ("protecting self"), the unlosable *wo*, *nei wai zhi fen*内外之分 ("the distinction between internal and external"), *shou*

[161] Liang, Shuming (2005)《中國文化要義》上海:上海人民出版社

[162] Cheng, Chung-ying (1991) *New Dimensions of Confucianism and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* Albany: State University of New York Press, P.155.

[163] Munro, Donald J. (1985) *Individualism and Holism: studies in Confucian Value and Taoist values*. Ann Arbor : Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan.

[164] De Bary, Wm. T. (1991). *Learning for One's Self: Essays on the Individual in Neo-Confucian Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press

[165] Xu, Ke-qian (2011) "A Different Type of Individualism in *Zhuangzi*" *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10, p. 448.

[166] Slingerland, Edward. (2004). "Conceptions of the Self in the Zhuangzi: Conceptual Metaphor Analysis and Comparative Thought" *Philosophy East and West* 54:3, pp.322-342

zong 守宗 (“preserving the source”); and the criticism of *han ji* 害己 (“harming self”), *shi ji* 失己 and *sang ji* 喪己 (“losing self”). A quick review of the cluster is as follow:

- The endorsement of *bao ji* 保己 (“protecting the self”)

In the “Zeyang” 則陽 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes “the sage…… his approach to fellow humans is to enjoy the connections with them while keep hold on to what is his own. 聖人……其於人也, 樂物之通而保己焉. In this section, Zeyang 則陽 is having a conversation with Wang Guo 王果 after Zeyang missed the chance of meeting the king of Chu 楚王. Zeyang is wondering if Wang Guo is a good choice for recommending himself to the king. Wang Guo replies that Gong Yuexiu 公閱休 will be a better choice. In almost the end of Wang Guo’s praise for Gong Yuexiu, Wang Guo describes how Gong Yuexiu deals with other things and fellow humans. And it is evident that Gong Yuexiu is endorsed by Wang Guo in virtue of his *bao ji* even though he also enjoys communing with them. The idea of “protecting the self” is put forward as a virtue in the narrative.

- The endorsement of *wo* 我

In “Tianzifang” 田子方 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: “the one who abandons his servant like abandoning mud knows that his body is superior to his servant and his own self is what is valuable, and would not lose it in changes.” 棄隸者若棄泥塗, 知身貴於隸也, 貴在於我而不失於變. This is the scene of Confucius consulting Laozi and the line is taken from Laozi’s teaching. Although I have argued for the ironic nature of the chapter, Laozi is commonly interpreted as the *Zhuangzi*’s spokesman and therefore his endorsement of *wo* might be taken as the *Zhuangzi*’s view. In the scene, Laozi teaches that one should know what is truly valuable and what is to abandon. *Wo* is the thing that is truly valuable and unchanged by the transformation of things. The emphasis of *wo* echoes the first section in the chapter. The scene of Tian Zifang 田子方 and Marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯 contains a line from Tian Zifang that “[Qi Gong 谿工] follows along with others and yet keeps his authenticity.” 緣而葆真. This positive description of Qi Gong seems to suggest once again that some is to be praised in virtue of being *bao zhen* 葆真. The juxtaposition of going along with others and keeping oneself also echoes the line in the “Zeyang” chapter just quoted.

- The endorsement of *nei wai zhi fen* 內外之分 ("the distinction between inward and outward")

In "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "[Song Rongzi] firmly holds up the distinction between the internal and external." 定乎內外之分. Although Song Rongzi is said to be "having something unachieved" 猶有未樹 compared to Liezi 列子 he is introduced in the chapter as one of the example of virtuous person. It is said that Song Rongzi would be laughing at those who are complacent with their achievement of getting an external post 宋榮子猶然笑之. Song Rongzi finds them laughable because those people are letting their internal self lead by the evaluation from others. By contrast, he would not be goaded onward even if the entire world praised him; he would not be deterred even if the whole world condemned him 舉世而譽之而不加勸, 舉世而非之而不加沮. This is the sense in which firmly holding up "the distinction between the internal and external" is a virtue. Again, the passage seems to suggest that one should not let oneself be affected by people from the external.

- The endorsement of *bu yu wu qian* 不與物遷 ("not transferring along with other things")

In "Dechongfu" 德充符 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "life and death are a great matter, but even they cannot change Wang Tai 王駘. Even if heaven and earth are turned upside down, he would not lose himself with them. His discernment is not borrowed so he does not transfer along with other things. He regards the transformation of other things as fate and holds fast to the source." 死生亦大矣, 而不得與之變, 雖天地覆墜, 亦將不與之遺。審乎無假, 而不與物遷, 命物之化, 而守其宗也. In this scene, Chang Ji 常季 is consulting Confucius as to the reason why Wang Tai has as many followers as Confucius 從之遊者, 與仲尼相若, who is from the state of Lu and whose foot had been chopped off as a punishment 魯有兀者王駘. The praise for Wang Tai resembles that for Song Rongzi, and sounds very familiar to the reader of the *Zhuangzi*. The slight difference between Sung Junzi and Wang Tai is that whereas what Song Rongzi disregards is the external evaluation of himself, Wang Tai is being praised in virtue of his ability to disregard any changes cast on himself. Even the most dramatic changes—life and death—cannot affect him leading his own way of life. He simply takes these changes as *ming* 命 and thus nothing to do with himself. When facing all these fates happening to him, he *shou qi zong* 守其宗. Accordingly, the meaning of *zong* 宗

("source") is put in contrast to what happens to Wang Tai as fate. In other words, whereas Wang Tai disregards the external fates he upholds the internal *zong*. It can therefore be read as something from the inside which is closely related to the self, though the meaning of *zong* is sort of ambiguous and not explicitly related to self.[167]

- The criticism of *han ji* 害己 ("harming self")

In "Qiushui" 秋水 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "He who understands the *dao* is certain to reach the basic principles. He who reaches the basic principles is certain to be clear about balance. And, he who is clear about balance will not allow things to do him harm." 知道者必達於理, 達於理者必明於權, 明於權者不以物害己. This scene is the last scene where the conversation between the Lord of the River 河伯 and God of North Sea 北海 takes place. The two have been discussing the matter of the reality, the cosmic principle, and human virtues. The main point of the scene is that God of North Sea connects human virtues, *de* 德, with the cosmic principle,*dao* 道.[168] One of the substantial contents of the idea of *de* is "not allowing things to do harm". It is said that the one with perfect virtue 至德者 is able to protect himself from fire and water, heat and cold, and birds and beasts 火弗能熱, 水弗能溺, 寒暑弗能害, 禽獸弗能賊.

We can see a progression of virtue that one should not be affected by people's comments (Song Rongzi), fates (Wang Tai), and all other things (one with perfect virtue). These sayings collectively constitute the "protecting the self" doctrine.

- The criticism of *shi ji* 失己 and *sang ji* 喪己 ("losing self")

Meanwhile, not only the perseverance of oneself is admired in the *Zhuangzi*, but the lost of oneself is also criticised. In "Dazongshi" 大宗師 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "he who works for fame and thereby lose himself is not a distinguished man." 行名失己, 非士也. In this passage, the idea of *sheng ren* 聖人 ("sage"), *ren* 仁 ("benevolence"), *xian* 賢 ("worthy

[167] Some read the line as Wang Tai holds fast to *their* (other things') source instead of Wang Tai's source. I agree that this reading gain some support from the "Dazongshi" 大宗師 chapter which also talks a lot about the source of the myriad things. But I do not think this reading suits the rationale here. According to my analysis, the major concern of the passage is how Wang Tai is unaffected by the changes of other things. In other words, his virtue is about how he preserves himself rather than how he affects other things. The idea of holding fast to the source of other things would be abrupt. See Ziporyn (2020) p.45

[168] Meyer, Dirk (2015), pp.314-320

man"), *junzi* 君子 ("noble man"), *shi* 士 ("distinguished man") are explained one by one in the form of negative description. The *Zhuangzi* put forward its ideas of what these statuses are *not*. And it is said that the distinguished man is not someone who loses himself during the quest of fame. The passage echoes the ideas in "Xiaoyaoyou" as this kind of person is the exact opposite of Song Rongzi and is condemned. Moreover, these statuses of men are in a hierarchical order in the sense that sagehood is the ultimate goal of self-cultivation whereas *shi* is the least one could cultivate oneself to be. In other words, not losing oneself is the most basic thing one has to do in the process of self-cultivation.

And in "*Shanxing*" 繕性 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "Therefore it is said, those who forsake themselves for external things and lose their nature in the ordinary convention may be called the upside-down people." 故曰:喪己於物, 失性於俗者, 謂之倒置之民. The passage echoes the idea of not losing oneself in "Dazongshi". It is said that one confused the means and end if one "forsake themselves for external things". That is, one should make use of other things instead of being used by them. Again, the idea of losing oneself is viewed in a negative way.

Although the above analysis of different passages is to some extent de-contextualised and thus preliminary, I contend that these quotations provide enough textual evidence in order to show that reading the *Zhuangzi* as advocating the "protect the self" doctrine is indeed plausible. That is to say, the ideas of *bao ji* 保己, *wo* 我, *nei wai zhi fen* 內外之分, *bu yu wu qian* 不與物遷, *han ji* 害己, *shi ji* 失己 and *sang ji* 喪己 collectively constitute a cluster to which one may refer as the "protect the self" doctrine.

<u>The "no self" doctrine</u>

For the "no self" doctrine, it is also constituted by a cluster of related ideas which is explained in different places in the *Zhuangzi*. The main thesis of the "no self" doctrine is, in contrast to the "protect the self" doctrine, that instead of upholding yourself one should give up the distinction between the myriad things and you. These ideas are explained as follow:

- The notion of "unifying with the myriad things"

In "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "the Heaven and Earth were born together with me, and the myriad things and I are united." 天地與我並生, 而萬物與我為一.

This is the passage which contains a strong tendency of relativising distinctions. It is said that there is nothing greater than the tip of autumn hair and the Tai Mountain is small, and no one is more long-lived than a dead child, and Pengzu 彭祖 died an early death 天下莫大於秋毫之末而大山為小, 莫壽乎殤子, 而彭祖為夭. In such a context, the idea of self and its relation to the myriad things are put. Unlike the "protect the self" doctrine that endorses the distancing of self from the myriad things, the unification of "the myriad things and I" is rather praised. The merging of self with the myriad things implies that one no longer holds fast to himself, which is condemned by the "protect the self" doctrine. The "no self" doctrine therefore contradicts the "protect the self" doctrine.

- *Sang wo* 喪我 ("losing oneself")

Whereas the *Zhuangzi* criticises *shi ji* and *sang ji* as analysed above, it endorses *sang wo* in "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter. It writes: "You do well to ask that, Ziyou! This time I had lost my own self, did you know it?" 偃, 不亦善乎而問之也！今者吾喪我, 汝知之乎？" This is the scene in which Ziqi of Nanguo 南郭子綦 explains the difference between *ren lai* 人籟 "the pipes of man", *di lai* 地籟 "the pipes of Earth" and *tian lai*天籟 "the pipes of Heaven" to Yancheng ziyou 顏成子游. Yancheng ziyou inquires what Ziqi of Nanguo is doing when he saw him leaning against his armrest, gazing upward and breathing gently, and seemingly lose his counterpart 隱几而坐, 仰天而噓, 嗒焉似喪其耦. And Ziqi of Nanguo answers that he has lost himself. The state of "losing one self" is regarded as an ideal since it is a state comparable to "the pipes of Heaven", or caused by the hearing of it. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the idea of "losing oneself" is connected with the idea of "losing one's counterpart". The two states are two sides of the same coin: while one loses oneself one also loses one's counterpart as the sense of oneself and counterpart are bounded together. Such a phenomenal description of the state of "losing oneself" helps us fill more substantive contents in the notion of "unifying with the myriad things" just introduced. It is the ideal state in which one forsakes the boundary between oneself, one's counterpart, and the myriad things.

- *Wu ji* 無己 ("no self")

The concept of *wu ji* is involved in three passages. In "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, the *Zhuangzi* writes: "The utmost man has no self; The spirit-like man has no merit ; The sage has no

name.” 至人無己, 神人無功, 聖人無名. In this passage, “no self” is put as one of the highest goals of self-cultivation. Although we have no clue as to the relation between “the utmost man”, “the spirit-like” man and “the sage”, it is said that these are all superior to Sung Junzi and Liezi in terms of them being “dependent on something else” 有待. The state of “no self” is that one can “mount upon what is true to the Heaven and Earth, and ride on the process of six breaths, wandering endlessly” 乘天地之正, 而御六氣之辯, 以遊無窮. The difference between “no self” and “protecting the self” is obviously exemplified in the passage: the ideal state of “no self” holds a special relationship with the world whereas Song Rongzi ignores the others, keeping the distinction between inward and outward.

Secondly, the *Zhuangzi* writes in the “Qiushui” chapter: “The Man of *dao* wins no fame, the perfect virtue wins no gain, the Great Man has no self. For him the division has reduced to the minimum” 道人不聞, 至德不得, 大人無己, 約分之至也. In this scene, the concept of “no self” is mentioned in the context of the conversation between the Lord of the River 河伯 and God of North Sea 北海 about the vast and the subtle. The Lord of the River is wondering if he could consider the Heaven and Earth as vast and the tip of autumn hair as small, and whether the debater is right about the most vast and the most subtle. It thus resembles the context in which the idea of “unification of the myriad things and self” occurs. Moreover, the concept of “no self” is introduced in a way very similar to the “Xiaoyaoyou” chapter. The idea of “no self” is put as an ideal among two other ideals. *Bu wen* 不聞 is similar to *wu ming* 無名 and *bu de* 不得 is comparable to *wu gong* 無功. The two sayings are therefore structurally resembling. The additional information we can know about the state of “no self” is that the divisions between right and wrong, great and small are all shrunken to the minimum.

Lastly, the *Zhuangzi* also writes in “Zaiyou” 在宥 chapter: “The Great Man in his teaching is like the shadow that follows a shape, the echo that follows a sound. …… being the great unity with no self.” 大人之教, 若形之於影, 聲之於響……大同而無己. The idea of “no self” is again considered a virtue as it is from the teaching of the Great Man. It is emphasised in the present passage that the state of “no self” and “being the great unity” are the two sides of the coin. One who has “no self” is one who becomes a unification with others. It echoes the idea in the “Xiaoyaoyou” chapter that when being “no self” one holds harmony with the Heaven and Earth (that’s the reason why the utmost man can ride upon them). It is said that the no-self Great Man is also a friend of the Heaven and Earth 天地之友.

To conclude, the "no self" doctrine is a doctrine that considers "no self" as a virtue, and even the goal of one's self-cultivation: one should learn to have "no self". According to the doctrine, the self is something to be given up instead of upholding. Consequently, the "no self" doctrine is in direct conflict with the "protect the self" doctrine.When put together in the *Zhuangzi*, the paradox of self is thereby constituted.

The content of the paradox of self is explained, but one important structural feature of the paradox is yet to be analysed. I refer to the structural feature as "paradox over paradox". The main idea is that the paradox of self is constituted by the "protect the self" doctrine and the "no self" doctrine, and the "no self" doctrine alone is itself a paradox. There are two reasons why the "no self" doctrine is paradoxical. One is semantic reason; another is practical reason. For the semantic reason, it is paradoxical to suggest that the utmost man has no self due to the semantic implication of the term "man". That is, the notion of "man" conventionally implies "being self-awareness", and therefore the phrase "the utmost man has no self" contains a contradiction. Indeed, it is a matter of philosophical debate as to human nature. But the awareness of oneself and one's identity at least appears to be one of the plausible candidates of human nature. The aspect of self-awareness and self-identity seems to be what distinguishes us from other beings. In the intellectual context of early China, *xing* 省 "to reflect" serves as a important task of self-cultivation in the *Analects*. Zengzi 曾子 said that he "daily examines himself in three aspects" 吾日三省吾身. According to the Ru tradition, one should always keep an eye on oneself. In other words, human beings are considered as a sort of being that are aware of themselves, and one should better make the most of this capacity. However, the "no self" doctrine in the *Zhuangzi* argues that "the utmost man has no self". The doctrine is thus contradictory given the semantic implication of the notion of "man": when a man is commonly thought to be something with self-awareness, how can the utmost man have no self?

As to the practical reason, it is difficult to tell how the self-cultivation of "no self" is possible. While engaging in self-cultivation i.e the process of making oneself better or more virtuous, the self-awareness seems to be inevitable. If one is not aware of oneself, how can one engage in self-cultivation? If self-awareness is the prerequisite of self-cultivation, how can "no self" be the goal of it? The practical contradiction of the "no self" doctrine is that the condition and

the purpose contradicts each other in the process of the self-cultivation of "no self".[169] I am by no means suggesting that it is impossible. I believe that the *Zhuangzi* propose several ways of doing so.[170] But the upshot is that the self-cultivation of "no self" contains an apparent contradiction with regard to the process.

As a result, the "no self" doctrine is itself paradoxical. And since the "no self" doctrine is put together with the "protect the self" doctrine, a further paradox is generated— the "paradox of self". In other words, the "paradox of self" contains a "paradox over paradox". This structural feature is going to emerge again in the second case study (the "paradox of usefulness") and is of importance to my later analysis.

There are various ways to dissolve the paradox of self in the *Zhuangzi*. These approaches can be seen of an particular application of De Reu's semantic approach as they attempts to dissolve the paradox by saying that the term "self" has different meaning in the "protect the self" doctrine and the "no self" doctrine, though the term reoccurs in both doctrines. The major interpretative goal is to cancel the apparent contradiction between the two. If there is no contradiction, then there is no such thing as the "paradox of self".

The first common approach is the metaphysical reading of the "no self" doctrine. The basic idea is to read the *Zhuangzi* as advocating a philosophical view that there is no self at all metaphysically speaking. The metaphysical "no self" theory is not rare in other philosophical traditions and it is therefore common to compare the *Zhuangzi* to these other philosophies. For example, Buddhism and David Hume's bundle theory of self.[171] The potential similarity attracts scholars to read the *Zhuangzi* in terms of Buddhism and Hume. Kai-Yuan Cheng, for instance, reinterprets the "Qiwulun" chapter from the perspective of metaphysics instead of epistemology and takes the *Zhuangzi* highly similar to Hume. He writes: "In comparison, I see an entirely different lesson in the butterfly dream story: the story conveys a firm message

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[169] This kind of paradox might sound familiar since it does resemble other famous paradoxes concerning self-cultivation or the *Zhuangzi*. For example it looks similar to the "paradox of virtue" by Nivison and the "paradox of *wu wei* 無為" by Slingerland. But the "paradox of self-cultivation of no self" differs from them for different reasons. It is different from the "paradox of virtue" since the "paradox of virtue" is a paradox raised merely from the *formal* feature of self-cultivation. It is also different from the "paradox of *wu wei* 無為" since "no self" and "*wu wei*" is not exactly the same ideal. For more details, see Slingerland, Edward (2003) *Effortless Action: Wu-wei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China*, New York: Oxford University Press; and Kwong (2014)

[170] Kwong (2014)

[171] Hume, David. (1988) "Of Personal Identity." In *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford: Clarendon

that there exists no self. Hence, there is no self-identity for us to be ignorant or confused about…my reading comes down to a form of metaphysical nihilism concerning the existence of self." According to his metaphysical reading, the *Zhuangzi* assert the Humean "no-self" thesis that there is nothing called "self" hiding "behind our rich mental life and to govern the events that take place in it."[172] Such a reading explain the "paradox of self" in the way that the "no self" doctrine is now taken to be a form of "metaphysical nihilism concerning the existence of self" whereas the "protect the self" doctrine remains as an ethical doctrine whatsoever the meaning of "self" in the latter doctrine. In light of the metaphysical interpretation, the two doctrines have no contradiction.

The metaphysical reading dissatisfies me for two reasons. Firstly, the "no self" doctrine does not seem to be a metaphysical thesis. From what I have just quoted and analysed, the idea of "no self" is *always* taken to be an ideal. The *Zhuangzi* relates the idea of "no self" to *zhi ren* 至人, *da ren* 大人, and Ziqi of Nanguo 南郭子綦 who knows about "the pipes of Heaven". That is to say, "no self" is rather considered as a kind of virtue to be achieved but not a description of the present reality. If "no self" were a metaphysical thesis, the *Zhuangzi* should have been saying that *everyone* has no self since it is part of its metaphysical picture of the world. However, from the textual evidence quoted the idea of "no self" is only ascribed to a certain kind of people, namely the virtuous people. Secondly, the metaphysical reading also adds additional and perhaps unnecessary theoretical burden to the *Zhuangzi*. If the *Zhuangzi* was advocating the metaphysical "no self" thesis, then how could we make sense of all its ideas concerning self-cultivation? After all, there is no such thing as self? What is there to be cultivated and made virtuous? Such a difficulty emerged in the tradition of Buddhism. For example, "if there is no constant in the phenomenal level, and no constant subject in one's consciousness, thought, action and sensation, who is the one who is living? And who is the one who is suffering and happy?" 若使色無常，覺、想、行、識無常者，誰活？誰受苦樂？ (*Madhyama Āgama* 62《中阿含經第62經．頻鞞娑邏王迎佛經》). Buddhists have accordingly devoted many efforts to reconcile the conflict. Should the readers of the *Zhuangzi* follow a similar path? I do not think it is necessary given the first reason. In order words, not only is there not enough textual evidence (or perhaps enough counter evidence shown) but also the metaphysical reading unnecessarily puts the *Zhuangzi* in a difficult position. The metaphysical reading of the "no self" doctrine falls short, and the "paradox of

[172] Kai-Yuan Cheng (2014)

self" remains.

The second common approach is the "true-self vs fake-self" reading. Unlike the metaphysical reading, both the "no self" and "protect the self" doctrine remains as an ethical doctrine. The crucial point is to change the subject in the two doctrines: it is the "fake-self" in the "no self" doctrine whereas it is the "true-self" in the "protect the self" doctrine. According to the reading, the *Zhuangzi* believes that we are of two layers of self, one is fake and one is true. More importantly, we should forsake the fake one and protect the true one. There are too many scholars in the field taking this position to list them all. Just to name a few, Chen Guying 陳鼓應 writes that "The 'self' in the saying 'I had lost my own self' is referring to the "prejudiced-self" 偏執的我 while the 'I' in the saying is referring to the 'true-self'"[173]; and Wu Kuangming: "if this obtrusive self [*wo*] is let go of, then the authentic self, the self that has been doing the losing, the self-shed self will appear as the self-that-has-lost-itself, as empty as dry wood and dead ashes. Such *wu*-self is a catharted self, whose authenticity is certified precisely in its activity of self-catharsis."[174]. My strongest objection to the "true-self vs fake-self" reading is that the "Qiwulun" chapter contains a passage directly concerning the issue of "true-self" and the idea of "true-self" is doubted there.[175] In the "Qiwulun" chapter, after asking what aspect of our life is the alleged "true self", the *Zhuangzi* cast its doubt on the existence of the "true self". It writes: "is there really true ruler?"其有真君存焉？. I hence contend that the "true-self vs fake-self" reading does not fit well with the text, and is not the way out for the "paradox of self".

To conclude, the "paradox of self" in the *Zhuangzi* is a true paradox with the structure of "paradox over paradox". Though the possibility of dissolving it is not (and cannot be) exhausted here, the prospect of De Reu's semantic approach is very uncertain. In other words, instead of looking for an interpretation that reads "self" differently in the two doctrines, we should search for another approach to the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*.

[173] Chen, Guying (2002)《莊子今註今譯》臺灣:商務印書局, p.40.
[174] Wu, Kuang-ming (1990) *Butterfly as Companion: Meditation on the First Three Chapters of the Chuang Tzu* Albany: State University of New York Press
[175] Due to the length and focus of the chapter, I cannot provide all my arguments against the "true-self vs fake-self" reading. For more details, see Kwong (2014)

iv. Case two: the paradox of usefulness

In this section, I turn to my second case study: the "paradox of usefulness". The basic structure of the "paradox of usefulness" in the *Zhuangzi* is similar to my first case: the *Zhuangzi* argues for two types of attitudes concerning the question of "usefulness" which are in contradiction. Moreover, one of the two conceptions is itself paradoxical and therefore constitutes the form of "paradox over paradox" again. The two conceptions are the notion of "uselessness as usefulness" and "uselessness as not usefulness". They are mainly exemplified in the narratives in the text. The analysis of these narratives will be the focus of the section.

The "uselessness as usefulness" notion

For the "uselessness as usefulness" notion, the main idea is to argue that what is conventionally considered as useless is in effect 'useful'. More paradoxically, the *Zhuangzi* argues that the "uselessness" and the "usefulness" of a thing are not two features contingently co-existing upon it. It is rather that its "usefulness" is precisely due to its "uselessness". The *Zhuangzi* illustrates its paradoxical ideas on "uselessness as usefulness" by few narratives concerning a huge tree. The narratives is analysed as follow:

> 惠子謂莊子曰:「吾有大樹, 人謂之樗。其大本擁腫而不中繩墨, 其小枝卷曲而不中規矩, 立之塗, 匠者不顧。今子之言, 大而無用, 眾所同去也。」莊子曰:「子獨不見狸狌乎？卑身而伏, 以候敖者;東西跳梁, 不避高下;中於機辟, 死於罔罟。今夫斄牛, 其大若垂天之雲。此能為大矣, 而不能執鼠。今子有大樹, 患其無用, 何不樹之於無何有之鄉, 廣莫之野, 彷徨乎無為其側, 逍遙乎寢臥其下？不夭斤斧, 物無害者, 無所可用, 安所困苦哉！」
>
> Hui Shi says to Zhuangzi that "I have a huge tree that people called it Shu. Its big trunk is too bumpy and swollen to apply a measuring line to. Its small branch is too twisty and bent to apply the compass and square to. Even if it grows right on the road, the carpenters do not give it a second glance. Your words, too, are huge and useless and therefore everyone keeps away from them. Zhuangzi says: "Have you alone not seen the wildcats and weasels? They crouch and hide to await their prey. They bounce east or west with no hesitation to go high or low. They end up falling into the traps and dying in the net. There is a yak as big as the cloud draping across the sky. What it is good at is just being big and of course it cannot catch a rat. Now

> you have this big tree and worry about its uselessness. Why don't you just place it in the Countryside of Nothingness, the Field of Broad and Boundless? And loaf by its sides doing nothing and sleep carefreely beneath it? It will never be cut down by axe or saw. Things would not be harmed while they are of no use. What could entrap and bother it? (the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter)

In this scene, the *Zhuangzi* provides a counter example to Hui Shi's conception of usefulness and an example in support of his own view. The scene begins with Hui Shi's claiming that he has a huge tree called Shu 樗. Shu is too big and too abnormal that nothing can be made out of it. The real intention of Hui Shi's saying is not merely discussing this perhaps fictional tree and the abstract philosophical topic of usefulness with Zhuangzi. Instead, Hui Shi is meant to criticise the words of Zhuangzi. The line "Your words, too, are huge and useless and therefore everyone keeps away from them" 今子之言, 大而無用, 眾所同去也 makes the discussion of Shu and the related concept of usefulness" more important and more relevant to the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. Shu is intended by Hui Shi to be an analogy of the *Zhuangzi*. And Zhuangzi's argumentative strategy is not to deny the resemblance between his words with Shu but rather to defend the value Shu. In other words, while defending the value of Shu Zhuangzi is defending the validity of his own words. This important connection brings the discussion of usefulness to the next level.

In response to Hui Shi, Zhuangzi first put forward the case of "wildcats and weasels" 狸狌. Zhuangzi's argument is that the "wildcats and weasels" are considered useful in virtue of their agility and quickness. These "useful" characters are especially distinctive compared to Shu's bulkiness and unwieldiness. However, precisely due to these "virtues", others are attracted by them and even try to make use of them. And eventually they end up "falling into the traps and dying in the net" 中於機辟, 死於罔罟。. The moral of the case of "wildcats and weasels" is that their "useful" characters are not only useless but would at the end bring about harm to themselves. On this ground, Hui Shi's seemingly tautological view that usefulness is useful is defeated.

Furthermore, although Zhuangzi does not explicitly make the paradoxical claim that uselessness is useful, he implies it in his defence of Shu. Firstly, Zhuangzi points out Hui Shi's claim that Shu is useless reveals the deficiency of his mind. While lamenting that Shu

is useless, Hui Shi shows that he is trapped in a means-end mindset. His conception of usefulness is defined in terms of whether something could be made into a means, or whether something else could be made out of it, instead of considering the thing in his own term. Hui Shi's way of thinking is exactly an exemplification of the "identity thinking" I have introduced in the "Narrative" chapter. Zhuangzi objects to this way of thinking and endorses a more flexible attitude toward the world. One should simply minimise the interruption of the living of others, thinking their lives in their own terms, and live along with them. To put such an attitude into action is to "loaf by its sides doing nothing and sleep carefreely beneath it" 彷徨乎無為其側, 逍遙乎寢臥其下. The idea of *pang huang* 彷徨, *wuwei* 無為, and *xiaoyao* 逍遙 bring about the same point—one should remain flexibility and liberate oneself from any fixed ends. *Pang huang* 彷徨 and *xiaoyao* 逍遙 is the kind of movement with no determined destination but just aimlessly loafing and wandering around. It is the exact opposite to Hui Shi's attitude, which has a fixed end and makes everything instrument accordingly. In other words, Zhuangzi's argument is not to show Hui Shi what could be made out of Shu but to challenge the underlying mindset of Hui Shi's complaint. Secondly, Zhuangzi also argues that if we think of the "useless" character of Shu in his own term, its character is in effect useful. It is said that "it will never be cut down by axe or saw. Things would not be harmed while they are of no use. What could entrap and bother it?" 不夭斤斧, 物無害者, 無所可用, 安所困苦哉！. On the contrary to the "wildcats and weasels", Shu is useless and thereby not harmed by "axe and saw", and eventually lives out its life. Shu is useless compared with the "wildcats and weasels" but it also enjoys a longer life compared with the "wildcats and weasels" precisely in virtue of its uselessness. Thus, Shu's uselessness is useful to itself.

One last remark about the scene is its underlying evaluative standpoint. That living out one's life is considered valuable and important across the consideration of the "wildcats and weasels" and Shu. The "wildcats and weasels" are not valued because they die earlier whereas Shu is valued because it lives out its life. The idea would be more explicit while the *Zhuangzi* introduces the notion of "Heavenly lifespans" 天年 below, but it is already evident in the present passage. If life were not valued, Zhuangzi should have lost its ground in constructing his argument by the case of the "wildcats and weasels" and Shu. However, one should also note that the conception of life i.e whether it is valuable, value-neutral, or harmful in the *Zhuangzi* is uncertain and of controversy. In the case of "wildcats and

weasels", the *Zhuangzi* seems to consider death negative. However, there are also several passages where death seems to be considered neutral. One of these passages is the narrative in which Zhuangzi celebrated the death of his own wife in the "Zhile" 至樂 chapter. These observations might constitute another paradox i.e the "paradox of life and death" in the *Zhuangzi*. For the sake of argument I would however assume the conception of life and death demonstrated in these stories concerning usefulness.

匠石之齊, 至乎曲轅, 見櫟社樹。其大蔽數千牛, 絜之百圍, 其高臨山, 十仞而後有枝, 其可以為舟者旁十數。觀者如市, 匠伯不顧, 遂行不輟。弟子厭觀之, 走及匠石, 曰:「自吾執斧斤以隨夫子, 未嘗見材如此其美也。先生不肯視, 行不輟, 何邪？」曰:「已矣, 勿言之矣！散木也, 以為舟則沈, 以為棺槨則速腐, 以為器則速毀, 以為門戶則液樠, 以為柱則蠹。是不材之木也, 無所可用, 故能若是之壽。」

匠石歸, 櫟社見夢曰:「女將惡乎比予哉？若將比予於文木邪？夫柤、梨、橘、柚、果、蓏之屬, 實熟則剝, 剝則辱, 大枝折, 小枝泄。此以其能苦其生者也, 故不終其天年而中道夭, 自掊擊於世俗者也。物莫不若是。且予求無所可用久矣, 幾死, 乃今得之, 為予大用。使予也而有用, 且得有此大也邪？且也, 若與予也皆物也, 奈何哉其相物也？而幾死之散人, 又惡知散木！」

匠石覺而診其夢。弟子曰:「趣取無用, 則為社何邪？」曰:「密！若無言！彼亦直寄焉, 以為不知己者詬厲也。不為社者, 且幾有翦乎！且也, 彼其所保, 與眾異, 以義譽之, 不亦遠乎！」

Carpenter Shi travelled to Qi. When he got to Qu Yuan, he saw a tree of the shrine. Its huge size could shelter thousands of oxen and was measured over a hundred arm spans around. Its height overstretched the surrounding hills and its lowest branches were eighty feet high. It was huge enough to be made into dozens of ships. There were so many sightseers that made the place a fair. Carpenter Shi, however, did not give it a second glance and went on his way without stopping. His apprentice eventually got tired of admiring it and caught up with Carpenter Shi, and asked: "Since taking up the axe to follow you, Master, I have never seen any lumber as fine as this. And yet you do not bother to have a look and walk by without stopping. Why

is that?" Carpenter Shi said: "Enough! Say no more! It is just worthless lumber. If it is made into ships it sinks; into coffins it rots soon; into vessels it breaks soon; into doors it leaks sap; into pillars it is infested. This is a useless tree. There is nothing for which it could be used. That is how it has lived so long."

Carpenter Shi returned home, and the tree of the shrine appeared to him in a dream saying: "What are you comparing me with? With those cultivated trees? The cherry apple, the pear, the orange, the citron, the rest of those fructiferous trees and shrubs—when their fruit is ripe they get plucked and insulted. Their larger branches are broken off, and their smaller branches are cut. This is the way in which their usefulness burdens their lives, and why they fail to live out their Heavenly lifespans and die in the middle of their course of living. Their lives are striked by the common folks like all other things of the world. As for me, I have been trying for a long time to be useless. Although I almost died, I get it now. This is of great use for me. If I had been of some use, could I have grown to be so great? Also, you and I are both things. Why should we bother to objectify each other? How could a dying useless man know about a worthless tree?"

Carpenter Shi woke up and told his dream to his apprentice. His apprentice said: "If it tries to be useless what is it doing there at the shrine?" Carpenter Shi said: "Shhhh! Don't talk like that! It is only lodging there. It considers being surrounded by the ignorant crowd a disgrace. If it is not a tree of the shrine, how could it not be cut down? Also, what it protects is different from the crowd. To praise it in terms of the fulfilment of responsibility would be totally missing the point." (the "Renjianshi" 人間世 chapter)

Compared with the narrative of Shu in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter, this story in the "Renjianshi" chapter attracts less attention in the field. This is probably because readers treat it as a mere re-occurrence of the story of Shu (it is a quite common literary phenomenon that passages or sayings are repeated in different chapters in the *Zhuangzi*). Indeed the moral of the story is similar to that of the story of Shu, but I think that this story of the "tree of the shrine" 櫟社樹 is even more philosophically insightful.

Firstly, the relationship between Carpenter Shi 匠石 and his apprentice worths our attention. At the beginning of the story, the attitude of Carpenter Shi to the tree of the shrine reminds us

of the words of Hui Shi. While Hui Shi said that no carpenter take a look on his Shu, Carpenter Shi "did not give it a second glance and went on his way without stopping" as well 匠伯不顧, 遂行不輟. If the readers have already learnt a lesson from the story of Shu, one should soon be aware of the fact that Carpenter Shi is committed the same mistake as Hui Shi. Moreover, Carpenter Shi's reply to his apprentice that the tree of the shrine is useless since one can make nothing good out of it shows that Carpenter Shi was having the similar means-end mindset with Hui Shi. So we realise at the very beginning of the narrative that although Carpenter Shi conventionally served as a mentor in the relationship, he is probably not the virtuous person in the story. The deconstruction of the conventional mentor-apprentice hierarchy is further strengthened by the fact that the apprentice is the one who appreciated the tree of the shrine. In contrast to Carpenter Shi's disinterest, the apprentice was fascinated by the tree and did not even follow Carpenter Shi when Carpenter Shi went on his way. The apprentice had to catch up with Carpenter Shi after he walked away. And the apprentice praised the tree as the finest lumber since he practised with Carpenter Shi 未嘗見材如此其美也. Given the story of Shu, the readers are now informed that the conventional mentor-apprentice hierarchy is totally overturned. It is the apprentice who knows about the tree of the shrine instead of Carpenter Shi. This is the first twist of the narrative.

Then the narrative unfolds. The tree of the shrine appeared to Carpenter Shi in a dream. Its words to Carpenter Shi resemble those of Zhuangzi to Hui Shi but with a more explicit formulation. First, the notion of "Heavenly lifespans" 天年 is introduced. The tree said to Carpenter Shi that whereas other trees of fruit burden their lives by their usefulness 以其能苦其生 it lived out its "Heavenly lifespans" 終其天年 and did not "die in the middle of their course of living" 中道夭. It therefore concluded that its uselessness is the great usefulness to itself 為予大用. Second, instrumental rationality is also criticised by the tree of the shrine. The tree said that "why should we bother to objectify each other? How could a dying useless man know about a worthless tree?" 奈何哉其相物也？而幾死之散人，又惡知散木！. The mistake committed by Carpenter Shi is that he treats the tree as an instrument to help fulfil his own purpose, or to be made out of something else, be it ships, coffins, doors, or pillars. In other words, Carpenter Shi makes others objects 物物 instead of respecting others as a subject with their own courses of living. This is the real problem of Carpenter Shi. In effect, Carpenter Shi is not ignorant of the fact that the tree of the shrine is long-lived because of its uselessness. At the end of his reply to the apprentice, he already said so 無所可用，故能若是之壽。. The problem of Carpenter Shi is therefore not that he did not know the tree's

uselessness led to its longevity, but that *he did not consider its longevity as anything useful or valuable*. This is because Carpenter Shi was not thinking of the tree's uselessness in its own terms but in his or others' terms.

Furthermore, the identification of the real problem also further twists the narrative. I have just analysed how the text overturned the conventional mentor-apprentice hierarchy. In terms of their knowledge about the tree, Carpenter Shi is turned to be the one who should learn whereas the apprentice is turned to be the teacher. However, if we take a closer look at the apprentice's appreciation of the tree we would find out that he was just as ignorant of the tree as Carpenter Shi. It is because he approached the tree in the exact same way with Carpenter Shi, though their conclusions were different. Although he highly admired the tree, the reason for his admiration is that the tree was the finest *cai* 材 he had ever seen. There is no difference between the apprentice and Carpenter Shi regarding their way of thinking. They both took the tree as an instrument. Worse still, it is in fact everyone in the story that did not consider the tree in its own term. At the outset of the story, it is said that many people were attracted to the tree 觀者如市. Nevertheless their admiration of the tree was similar to that of the apprentice. They admired it in terms of its being the tree of the shrine. Perhaps they were thankful to the tree, or wished to have good fortune by visiting the tree. In other words, regardless of their actual comments on the tree, everyone objectified the tree. Thus, Carpenter Shi concluded the story by saying that "to praise it in terms of the fulfilment of responsibility would be totally missing the point." 以義譽之, 不亦遠乎. What is better is to respect the course of living of its own instead of subjecting it to any external end.

> 山木自寇也, 膏火自煎也。桂可食, 故伐之;漆可用, 故割之。人皆知有用之用, 而莫知無用之用也。
>
> The mountain trees plunder themselves. The candle fat burns up itself. The cinnamons are chopped down because they are edible. The lacquers are cut down because they are usable. Everyone knows the usefulness of the useful, but no one knows the usefulness of the uselessness. (the "Renjianshi" 人間世 chapter)

The "Renjianshi" 人間世 chapter ends with the passage explicitly advocating the notion of the "usefulness of the uselessness" 無用之用. In short, the "usefulness as the uselessness" notion exemplified in the story of Shu and the tree of the shrine is that one's uselessness

would disinterest others and thereby bring about longevity. Uselessness is in this sense useful. By contrast, usefulness often brings harm to oneself like the case of "wildcats and weasels", trees of fruits, and "cinnamons" and "lacquers" in the present passage. More importantly, anyone who is ignorant in discovering the usefulness of the uselessness is because they are constrained by their fixed instrumental mode of thinking.

Up to this point, it seems that De Reu's semantics serve perfectly in explaining the paradox of "usefulness of the uselessness". The semantics approach is to clarify different senses of the constituent terms of the paradox. It explains the paradoxical notion of "usefulness of the uselessness" in this way: although the term "*yong* 用" has two appearances in the paradoxical expression "*wu yong zhi yong* 無用之用", they in effect contain different meaning. The first *yong* qualified with negation refers to the ordinary or common understanding of usefulness whereas the second *yong* refers to the *Zhuangzi*'s conception of usefulness. The former is defined in terms of whether a thing could be made use of whereas the latter is defined in terms of its own i.e whether a thing could live out its Heavenly-lifespan. After the semantic translation of the apparently paradoxical phrase, there is no genuine paradox. Accordingly, the phrase of "*wu yong zhi yong* 無用之用" means "what is thought to be useless by the ordinary people is in effect useful to the thing itself". Instead of putting forward any genuinely paradoxical expression, the *Zhuangzi* is meant to *reconceptualise* the concept of usefulness. Rather than holding a paradoxical view on the idea of usefulness, the *Zhuangzi* is arguing against the conventional conception of usefulness.

Indeed, the semantics approach appears to be more promising concerning the notion of "uselessness as usefulness" than its explanation of the "paradox of self" as I have already argued how the "paradox of self" seems to be undissolvable. Moreover, the semantics approach is also a very common interpretative strategy to paradoxical expressions. For example, some poems of the Buddhist tradition. There is a text in Zen saying that one took a twenty years piligrim footing east and west but have not moved an inch.[176] One plausible interpretation of the paradox posed by the Zen poem might be that "his steps may be conventionally true, they are ultimately empty".[177] The basic idea is the same: his steps are counted as steps according to the conventional way of counting but ultimately they are not

[176] Stryk, Lucien and Ikemoto, Takashi (1995) *Zen Poems: Let the Spring Breeze Enter*, New York: Grove Press, p. xxi
[177] Priest, Graham (2008) "The Way of the Dialetheist: Contradictions in Buddhism" *Philosophy East and West* 58:3 pp.395-402

really steps. In the light of this interpretation, the paradox of movement is dissolved because the poem does not really suggest that he has moved and not moved.[178] So far so good.

The "usefulness as usefulness" notion

However, the paradoxical notion of "uselessness as usefulness" is merely half of the constituent of the "paradox of usefulness". That is to say, the conception of usefulness argued by the *Zhuangzi* is not exhausted by the notion. The *Zhuangzi* meanwhile argues for the exact contrary of the notion i.e "usefulness as usefulness". At the first glance, the notion may seem tautological and therefore not worth arguing. But if it is put in the philosophical context in the *Zhuangzi* the seemingly self-evident notion has profound implications. The other side of the "paradox of usefulness" is exemplified in a narrative concerning a huge tree (again!) in the "Shanmu" 山木 chapter:

> 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, 命豎子殺鴈而烹之。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;今主人之鴈, 以不材死。先生將何處？」
>
> Zhuangzi walked into a mountain seeing a huge tree whose branches flourished. But the lumberjacks stopped by its sides without taking it. A follower asked Zhuangzi why so. Zhuangzi said: "It is because there is nothing for which the tree can be used." Zhuangzi added: "the tree is able to live out its Heavenly-lifespan in virtue of its uselessness." Zhuangzi left the mountain and lodged in the home of an old friend. The old friend was happy and asked his servant to kill a wild goose for the meal. The servant asked: "One of which is capable of crowing and one is not. Whom should I kill?" The host said: "Kill the one incapable of crowing."

[178] The article classifies this type of strategy as the non-literal approach to the contradictions in Buddhism. It identifies a few more approaches. Although the Buddhist tradition and Chinese philosophy have their own intellectual and historical context, I still believe that there are lots of common grounds in the comparison of the two concerning the issue of paradoxical expressions. It is thus helpful for anyone interested in thinking about paradoxes in early China to take its classification into account.

> Next day, the follower asked Zhuangzi: "Yesterday the tree in the mountain was able to live out its Heavenly-lifespan in virtue of its uselessness. But now the wild goose of the host died for its uselessness. Where would you, master, be?"

Perhaps this is one of the most interesting passages in the *Zhuangzi*. Firstly, it is evident that the passage demonstrated the self-referring character of the *Zhuangzi*. That is to say, the *Zhuangzi* is a text talking about itself and reflecting upon the claims it made. It is a unique literal phenomenon in the *Zhuangzi* since its philosophy is especially threatened by the problem of self-refutation. If the *Zhuangzi* believes that the use of language is always subject to limitations, how could it express such a view on language in language? If the *Zhuangzi* argues that the argument between Confucian and Mohist is meaningless, how could it argue for such a position without first committing an argument? The "Qiwulun" chapter is famous for its awareness of the threat of self-refutation and its usage of the literary form of self-question. With regards to the limitation of language, It asked itself: "are there really words expressed? Or haven't words ever been expressed?" 果有言邪？其未嘗有言邪？. Concerning the argument between Confucian and Mohist, it asked itself: "now I have said something here. But I don't know if my words belong to the same category as 'this'? Or do my words not belong to the same category as 'this'? Belonging or not belonging, they form another category. Then it has no difference from 'that'" 今且有言於此, 不知其與是類乎？其與是不類乎？類與不類, 相與為類, 則與彼無以異矣。. The story of the "Shanmu" chapter is a more explicit occurrence of the literary form of self-question in marco-level.

The self-questioning character of the story is made more obvious when the story intentionally repeated the notion of "uselessness as usefulness" argued in other chapters. At the beginning of the story, the description of the tree in a mountain encountered by Zhuangzi and his follower seems to be identical to Shu and the tree of the shrine. It is said that it was a "huge tree whose branches flourished" 大木, 枝葉盛茂. Similarly, the tree was not cut off by anybody—"the lumberjacks stopped by its sides without taking it" 伐木者止其旁而不取也. The reason why was not at all surprising for the readers of the *Zhuangzi*—"the tree is able to live out its Heavenly-lifespan in virtue of its uselessness."此木以不材得終其天年. The arrangement of the story shows that the notion of "uselessness as usefulness" is not only a merely assumed context in which we read the story, but it is the notion explicitly put forward

at the outset. The seemingly repetition is to set up the theme of the story—the story is going to discuss its own notion of "uselessness as usefulness".

If the passage have ended at this point, it would have been no surprise. The passage would merely be another example illustrating the idea of "uselessness as usefulness" along with Shu and the tree of shrine. However, the story goes on and puts forward an example clearly at odds with the example of the tree in the mountain. After they went out of the mountain, Zhuangzi and his follower lodged in the home of an old friend. Perhaps for celebration the host asked his servant to kill a wild goose for the meal. The servant was indecisive as to which gooses to kill. "One of which is capable of crowing and one is not" 其一能鳴, 其一不能鳴. The host chose to kill the one is not able to crow. The case of the wild goose is clearly contradicting the case of the tree just described and the according notion of "uselessness as usefulness". The quick way out might be to argue that this case does not really contradict the case of the trees. Either one might say that crowing is not a kind of usefulness or that life is not valued by the *Zhuangzi*. From the former, one could conclude that the killed goose is not useless while it did end up badly; from the latter one could conclude that the killed goose did not end up badly while it was useless for its incapability of crowing. Either of these claims could save the "uselessness as usefulness" notion. However, neither of these is sound. Not only have I assumed the value of life at the outself of my analysis of the "paradox of usefulness" but also these ways do not fit with the reaction from the follower. The follower in the story also believes that the case of wild goose defeats Zhuangzi's own conception of usefulness.

This leads us to the second important character of the story: the scene is also very provoking to its readers. The provoking character is due to the natural self-projection to the character of the follower. That is to say, due to the setting of the story, readers are sort of invited to project oneself as the follower. For one thing, while the follower in the scene follows the teaching of Zhuangzi the readers are also reading the *Zhuangzi* and following the path set up the text. For another, the readers almost inevitably would have asked the exact same question to Zhuangzi if we were the followers. Given that the readers already know about the *Zhuangzi*'s idea of "uselessness as usefulness" which is also repeated at the beginning of the story, the readers are all surprised and puzzled by the case of the wild goose as the follower. Along with the follower, the readers of the story ask: if the *Zhuangzi* argues that things' uselessness enable it to live out its Heavenly-lifespan and uselessness is thus useful, how could it explain the case

of the wild goose? The wild goose is killed precisely because of its uselessness i.e its incapability of crowing whereas the other one survives precisely because of its usefulness ie its capability of crowing. The case of the wild goose thus overturned the apparently well-argued notion of "uselessness as usefulness" in the *Zhuangzi*.

In short, the *Zhuangzi* seems to argue for the notion of "uselessness as usefulness" and also its contrary notion. The "paradox of usefulness" is thus constituted. What is more puzzling is not how Zhuangzi explains the case but *why* the *Zhuangzi* brings about such a case to defeat its own insightful conception of usefulness. The answer to these questions is also the answer to the question of why the *Zhuangzi* use paradoxes to express itself.

v. The philosophical significance of paradoxical expressions

To begin with, Zhuangzi's own answer to his follower's challenge would be a good starting point. Zhuangzi replied to his follower as follows:

> 莊子笑曰:「周將處夫材與不材之間。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, 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。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！」
>
> Zhuangzi laughed and said: "I would posit myself somewhere in between the usefulness and uselessness. The position between usefulness and uselessness might look fine but it turns out not to be. It could not waive all the burdens. It would be a different thing as to mounting on the intrinsic power of the *dao*, and floating and drifting around. No praise and no blame, now a dragon and now a snake, transforming along with time and unwilling to act rigidly. Now above and now below, taking harmony as the measurement, floating and drifting within the ancestor of all things, making things as things without making things out of things, what could then burden you? This is the principle of the Yellow Emperor and Shennong. But it would be a

different thing as to the situations of the myriad things and the transmitted conventions of human relationship. Union leads to seperation, construction leads to destruction, the uncorrupt gets levelled down, the noble gets critiqued, intended action leads to depletion, the talented get schemed against, the untalented get cheated. How could anything be counted on whenever it is needed? Alas my follower, there is only one thing—the realm of the *dao* and its intrinsic power." (in the "Shanmu" chapter)

The first thing should be noted is the immediate reaction of Zhuangzi. Zhuangzi laughed when he heard the challenging question from his follower. Why did he laugh? What is the meaning of his laughing? There is no explicit textual description concerning his laughing but we could still have some speculations on Zhuangzi's instant response. I speculate that his laughing showed that the follower's apparently challenging question is not at all a surprise to him.[179] That is, his laughing showed that the question did not put him in an embarrassing position, or make him panic. As said, the follower's question is supposedly to be a genuinely challenging question. It cast serious doubt on the conception of usefulness of Zhuangzi since Zhuangzi seemed to fail in satisfying the basic requirement of consistency. In other words, Zhuangzi should have taken it seriously and explained his apparent contradiction carefully. Zhuangzi, however, laughed. It seems that he was in a totally calm and easy manner. It is probably because the follower's question was what he had expected—he knew that the follower, or his readers, would think he was inconsistent. It was like the follower and all the readers were all set up by Zhuangzi. His laughing resembles the ironic twist analysed in the previous chapter that we, the readers and the follower, thought we knew about Zhuangzi (it's conception of usefulness in the present scene) but in effect we are all wrong and teased by Zhuangzi. Zhuangzi's non-verbal reaction gives us the direction of further investigation—what was wrong with the follower and the reader's understanding of Zhuangzi? How naive were our understanding of Zhuangzi's conception of usefulness?

Our major misunderstanding, which is ironically constructed by the *Zhuangzi*, is that we rigidify the position of Zhuangzi. We considered Zhuangzi as upholding the notion of "uselessness as usefulness". That is, we thought that Zhuangzi was to defend the "useless" 不材. If it were Zhuangzi's genuine position, the case of wild goose would have certainly brought him serious trouble. But Zhuangzi was not meant to posit himself in the camp of

[179] For the philosophical significance of laughter in the *Zhuangzi*, see Yuan, Ai (2021) "Laughter in Early China-Zhuangzi and Beyond", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies

“useless” even when he appeared to praise the tree in the mountain. Nevertheless, if it was not Zhuangzi’s position, is the “usefulness as usefulness” notion what Zhuangzi advocated? It is not the case either. Zhuangzi first said: ““I would posit myself somewhere in between the usefulness and uselessness.” 周將處夫材與不材之間 In other words, neither the “usefulness” and the “uselessness” itself is what Zhuangzi wanted to defend and value. Accordingly, what is ironic is that one equals Zhuangzi’s conception of usefulness to either of these claims.

However, is the category of “somewhere in between the usefulness and uselessness” the best description of Zhuangzi’s position? Again, the answer is no. The idea of Zhuangzi did not stop evolving in this category. Zhuangzi said that “the position between usefulness and uselessness might look fine but it turns out not to be.” 材與不材之間, 似之而非也, 故未免乎累. It is said that even the position in between the usefulness and uselessness is subject to entangament, though it “might look fine”. In other words, it is a status seemingly better than the two positions but not yet the ideal. It “might look fine” because it is a position where one liberates oneself from the dichotomy of the usefulness and uselessness. It is, nowever, not yet the ideal because it is *a* position at the end. To describe Zhuangzi’s stance as the position “somewhere in between the usefulness and uselessness” is to locate Zhuangzi at a rigid position again—it is just a third position within the debate of usefulness. This third position might either mean both of the usefulness and uselessness are useful, or both of which are not useful. There would then be no genuine difference between the camp of usefulness, uselessness, and somewhere in between. But that is not where Zhuangzi is really located. Hence Zhuangzi in the scene denied such a description of his position.

Where was Zhuangzi then? That was also the initial question from the follower: “Where would you, master, be?” 先生將何處? Zhuangzi’s answer is: “mounting on the intrinsic power of the *dao*, and floating and drifting around.” 乘道德而浮游 This is a philosophically excellent answer to the question. The most distinctive feature of the answer is that Zhuangzi did not really tell his follower where he would be. The line paradoxically answered the question of location without really telling the exact location of Zhuangzi. That there would be no certain position where Zhuangzi would be is the answer to the question of where he would be! Zhuangzi said that he would be “mounting” 乘 and “floating and drifting around” 浮游. Rather telling his follower where he would be, he told how he would *move around*. Motion here is obviously metaphorical in the sense that the point is not really how Zhuangzi

physically moves around, but the way in which he considers and reacts to all the different issues in the world. And the way of Zhuangzi is to keep going with the momentum, not settling in any rigid places. The motion-metaphor is in effect embedded in the scene all the way long. In the scene Zhuangzi was travelling in the mountain, and then lodged with his old friend, after having the goose-meal he left and went on to somewhere again. Zhuangzi never resided in a place but temporarily lodged within (it echoes the "lodging-place words" analysed in Chapter 1). The mountain was not his place of residence, so was the notion of "uselessness as usefulness" not his conception of usefulness; the house of his old friend was not where he stayed thereafter, so was the notion of "usefulness as usefulness" not his conception of usefulness either. The problem of the follower and his readers is to mistake where he lodges as where he resides. The entire key of his way is not to reside but to lodge with all different places. Accordingly, the answer to the question of "where would you, master, be?" is that Zhuangzi would be nowhere and also everywhere.

Zhuangzi further explained his proposal for life saying that: "No praise and no blame, now a dragon and now a snake, transforming along with time and unwilling to act rigidly. Now above and now below, taking harmony as the measurement, floating and drifting within the ancestor of all things, making things as things without making things out of things, what could then burden you?" 無譽無訾, 一龍一蛇, 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. The line of "no praise and no blame" 無譽無訾 was to directly respond to the follower's confusion. It was to say that Zhuangzi did not really praise the uselessness while encountering the tree, or really blame the uselessness while seeing the goose get killed. He just "lodged" with the camp of uselessness and usefulness according to the situations. The metaphorical images of "dragon and snake" are not unfamiliar in the *Zhuangzi*. Their distinctive manner of movement is what is to be highlighted. Both dragon and snake move in the way that they move around and bypass the obstacles instead of removing them. And their elastic character enables them to fit in almost any place, even the gap where there is no one.Moreover, the aspect of time was also emphasised. Zhuangzi would transform along with time, and act like a dragon and a snake accordingly 一龍一蛇, 與時俱化. In other words, there is no fixed mode of action and any rigid purpose to be achieved 無肯專為. It echoes my diagnosis of the problem of Hui Shi who was confined within the means-end thinking. The mode of thinking put forward here is in contrast to the instrumental rationality often held by the ordinary people. Since Zhuangzi was not constrained by any determined end, he was able to go above and below 一上一下.

One normally could only stand with one side of the opposition e.g the "uselessness" or the "usefulness because one lacks the skill of "lodging" and rigidifies his position. By contrast, Zhuangzi could drift around all these oppositions not in the sense that he took up the third position but that he lodged within all the camps depending on the contexts. In the end, Zhuangzi would not harm or be harmed by the others. He could live in harmony with them 以和為量, and treat them in their terms without objectifying them 物物而不物於物. When there is no fixed end, how could things be instrumentalised? In short, the upshot of Zhuangzi's *dao* is the embrace of contextuality, flexibility and possibility. The follower's, and perhaps the readers', question was wrong-headed in the first place if he asked for the determined location of Zhuangzi, or tried to "pin down" Zhuangzi.

So, the remaining question is: how are all these ideas related to the usage of paradoxes? What is the connection between the idea of openness and paradoxes? Or, to put it in terms of content and form, how does the literary form of paradox itself express the philosophical content of flexibility? Why does the philosophical content of flexibility *have to be* expressed in the paradoxical form? These questions lead to my final analysis of the paradoxes of the *Zhuangzi*. I refer to my approach as the performative and therapeutic approach. The upshot of my pragmatic approach is that *the literary form of paradox creates a distinctive dynamic of the Zhuangzi and thereby enables the readers to realise the idea of flexibility merely through reading the text.*

Back to the beginning of the chapter, I have already said that one of the common features of paradox is its character of being in conflict with ordinary beliefs. In other words, paradoxes are themselves something that contradict and challenge the "common sense". In my two cases, there are two layers in which the "paradox of self" and "paradox of usefulness" destruct the rigidity of the "common sense". For one thing, they assert the contradictions simultaneously which is hard to believe: *person* with *no self* , *uselessness* as *usefulness*. For another, their assertions are also difficult to accept on the subtaintial level: given the conventional understanding of personhood, how could it be that an ideal person is someone with no self? Given the ordinary conception of usefulness, how could the tree of which nothing could make out be useful? That is to say, the "no self" notion and the "uselessness as usefulness" notion challenge its readers' commonly-held law of non-contradiction and the common understanding of the matter in question. Accordingly, the paradoxes bring its readers the pragmatic effects that the readers are shocked, and their most fundamental intuition and

"common sense" are instantly shaken. That is, the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* create an open space and possibility in its readers' mind.

More importantly, it is not the end of the story. The paradoxes of the *Zhuangzi* are not *statically* put forward but *dynamically* constructed. The structure of "paradox over paradox" is the distinctive character of the usage of paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*. The "no self" notion is paradoxical, but the *Zhuangzi* further contradicts it with the "protecting the self" notion and constructs the "paradox of self" in a more general level; The "uselessness as usefulness" notion is paradoxical, but it is further contradicted with the wild goose case and constructs the "paradox of usefulness". What is the meaning of such a structure? The answer is just the same as what is just said: to shock its readers and loosen their rigidly-held belief. The additional effect is that the "paradox over paradox" structure does not just shock its readers, but shock its readers *twice*. This is not only a matter of quantity but quality. The second astonishment creates a sense for its readers that the *Zhuangzi* is not going to stop its destruction of our "common sense". It shocks us once, and shocks us twice, and the process of destruction would be infinite. In the "Qiwulun" chapter, the *Zhuangzi* shows its subtle observation of human's cognitive behaviours and habits. It knows that only one layer of paradox is not sufficient to make its case on flexibility. It knows that its followers would mistake its philosophy and rigidify its point on self and usefulness, just like the one in the last scene. We are all used to "reside" rather than "lodging". Accordingly, the *Zhuangzi* contradicts its own view on self and usefulness and shocks its readers the second time. In the form of "paradox over paradox" it delivers its genuine message: we should be "lodging" rather than "residing".

To create flexibility with fixed words and sentences is not an easy task but paradoxes are of great help. And such a literary phenomenon is by no means a unique phenomenon for the *Zhuangzi*. Again, Buddhist texts are a very good reference point. In the Chan tradition, there is a distinction between "live word" and "dead word" which is highly relevant. Chien-hsing Ho writes: "Chan tradition distinguishes live words (huoju 活句) from dead words (siju 死句) and recommends the use of the former. According to the Chan master Dongshan Shouchu 洞山守初 (910–990), if there are words within words, the (latter) words are dead words; if there are no words within words, the words are live words. Basically, dead words are those that induce the listener to stick to their literal meaning and evaluate and react to the words in light of the commonly held sense of things, which may generate further explanatory words.

By contrast, live words are words that are seemingly nonsensical and run counter to our habitual way of thinking, which induces the listener to disregard their literal meaning and semantic function of representing things in the world.Clearly, paradox is a good candidate for the use of live words."[180] To put my point in the terminology of Chan tradition, the *Zhuangzi* is alive thanks to its structure of "paradox over paradox".

In short, the entire point of paradox is to loosen our rigidly-held beliefs. While the belief that self is important is held, the *Zhuangzi* asserts the "no self" notion. But while the readers accept the "no self" notion and turn it to be a new rigidified "common sense", the *Zhuangzi* put forward the "protecting the self" notion; while the uselessness is condemned, the Zhuangzi praises it with the paradoxical idea of "uselessness as usefulness"; while its followers thought he knows about its ultimate conception of usefulness, it offers you the wild goose example to defeat itself. The inner dynamic is thus constructed by the form of "paradox over paradox". The structure is itself the manifestation of the *Zhuangzi*'s reluctance to be "located". At the end, where would be the *Zhuangzi*? The *Zhuangzi* is "floating and drifting around".

vi. Other approaches: semantics, metaphysic, logic, and relativism

In the last major section of this chapter, I shall compare my approach with other approaches concerning paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*. I elaborate how my approach differs from theirs and explain the advantages over theirs. The purposes of such comparisons are to further clarify the performative and therapeutic approach, and the reason why it is preferable. The semantics, metaphysis, logic, and relativism approach are my major targets.

The semantic approach

I have already introduced the semantic approach from De Reu at the outset of the chapter, and how it fails to explain the "paradox of self". I would like to further explain the difference between the semantic approach and the pragmatic approach given its popularity in the face of paradoxes. Not only is such an attitude common in dealing with philosophical texts (as I have mentioned that it is also a common way out of dealing with contradictions in Buddhist tradition) but also in our ordinary response to contradictions. For instance, if you heard a

[180] Chien-hsing Ho (2020) "Paradoxical Language in Chan Buddhism" In Dao Companion to Chinese Philosophy of Logic, Dordrecht:Springer, pp.389-404

friend saying that "I am a rich man with no money", a natural interpretation of the saying is that the key term "rich" is meant differently from the conventional meaning, which often denotes the amount of money one possesses. That is to say, giving the key term(s) a renewed and special meaning is the usual way to dissolve the apparent contradiction.

Despite the popularity and naturalness, I have not yet done full justice to De Reu's analysis. It is because the label "semantic approach" might be misleading since he also noticed the pragmatic and rhetorical aspect of the paradoxical expressions in early China. He writes: "the paradoxes are formulated in order to produce an effect of surprise with the ultimate purpose of transforming and redirecting the intended audience toward a purportedly better form of knowledge, behaviour, and valuation (...) Rather than being theoretical in nature, they were in most cases designed to guide and direct their audience. In such contexts, one expects the use of rhetorical devices as a means of influencing people."[181] It might sound very similar to my pragmatic approach especially the pragmatic effect of "surprise" is mentioned as well.

However, there is a crucial difference. Although pragmatic effects are involved in De Reu's approach, the semantic implication is still the primary concern of paradoxical expression to De Reu. In other words, the pragmatic functions are subordinated to the semantic implication. In the light of his analysis, the paradoxes are meant to get involved in the endless debate of the "important terms", providing one's own conception. The form of paradox is considered as an effective way of having its readers accept the proposed conception. This is radically different from my pragmatic approach. The pragmatic effects we are talking about are different: for De Reu, he is talking about being persuaded by the new definition of the important term in question; for me, I am referring to the realisation of the experience of "lodging". He emphasises putting forward a "persuasive definition" by paradoxical expression whereas I emphasise that the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* is by no means giving any fixed definition but just "lodging" with different positions and challenging any rigid belief.

Apart from the difficulties explained above, I have two more objections to the semantic approach. Firstly, De Reu also realises that if paradoxical expression is successful in giving a persuasive definition, there are some conditions. He writes: "in order to realize a change in attitude, the audience should at least have some idea of the message to be conveyed."[182] That

[181] De Reu (2006), p.299
[182] Ibid., p.290

is to say, the passage should inform its reader the substantial content of its proposed definition either by the paradoxical expression itself or the context in addition to the paradox. If these conditions are not met, the paradox fails and "miss their rhetorical objective".[183] He mentions some successful cases and some failed cases such as a passage in *Huainanzi* 淮南子. I suspect that there might be a risk of downplaying the paradoxical expressions given that there are at least theoretically numerous cases in which the conditions are not met. For example, in my cases analysed above, it is doubtful whether the passage in the "Shanmu" chapter provides sufficient information concerning its renewed definition of "usefulness". The paradox in the chapter would then be seen as a failure of using paradoxical expression accordingly. For me, this just misses the point of paradoxes: it identifies the wrong objective of paradoxes and judges some of which are failures accordingly. The meaning of those "failed" paradoxes would just be overlooked such as the "paradox of usefulness". For another, it is also difficult for the semantic approach to explain the structure of "paradox over paradox". If paradoxes were the rhetorical device of the *Zhuangzi* to argue for its own definitions of the important terms, why would it defeat its own conception and construct another "larger" paradox? That is to say, if the *Zhuangzi* has already succeeded in arguing for its conception of self and usefulness by the paradoxical "no self" and "uselessness as usefulness" notion, why bother to argue for what is contrary and bring about the "paradox of self" and "paradox of usefulness"? The structure of "paradox over paradox" suggests the exact opposite to the semantic approach. The *Zhuangzi* is not to give any persuasive definition but to take away our persuaded definition about the myriad things in the world.

The metaphysic approach

The next approach I want to discuss is the metaphysic approach. The upshot of the metaphysic approach is that the paradoxical expressions are grounded on a specific metaphysical picture, namely a cyclical cosmology. Tha main idea of cyclical cosmology is that the entire universe undergoes a process of cyclical transformation. Whatever phenomenon is pushed to the extreme, it would then go back to the beginning point. For example, when life continuously proceeds it would arrive at its opposition: death. But just then it would return to life and continue to proceed again. For another example, the maximisation of benevolence would turn into non-benevolence, and the maximisation of non-benevolence would turn into benevolence again. Thus the binary opposition is cancelled

[183] Ibid, p.292

out in the worldly transformation in which everything is involved in a running circle. Such a cyclical metaphysical worldview is especially evident in the *Daodejing* 道德經. Chapter 40 of the *Daodejing* is frequently quoted in support of Laozi's assertion of the cyclical transformation. In chapter 40, Laozi writes: "turning back is how the *dao* moves" 反者道之動.[184]

Some believe that the Zhuangzi inherits such a cyclical metaphysics. In the *Zhuangzi*, the cyclical metaphysics is mostly formulated in the metaphor of "ring" 環. For example, in the "Yuyan" 寓言 chapter, it writes: "the myriad things are the seed of one another, they inherit each other in different forms. The beginning and the end is like a ring and therefore no fixed groupings apply." 萬物皆種也, 以不同形相禪, 始卒若環, 莫得其倫 It seems to explicitly assert that the world is running like a ring and the binary distinctions do not fit the metaphysical reality of the world. Even the passage I have analysed is involved in similar metaphysical sayings. After Zhuangzi explained how he drifts and wanders, he said: "union leads to seperation, construction leads to destruction, the uncorrupt gets levelled down, the noble gets critiqued, intended action leads to depletion, the talented get schemed against, the untalented get cheated" 合則離, 成則毀, 廉則挫, 尊則議, 有為則虧, 賢則謀, 不肖則欺. These lines appear to echo the *dao*'s movement of "turning back". The "union" turns into "separation" and the "construction" turns into "destruction". That is, the conventional oppositions are dissolved in the moving of the *dao*. In this regard, Steve Coutinho in his book concerning vagueness, transformation, and paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* writes: "what was previously a mysterious identification of opposites for no obvious reason is now given a context, that of a gradual transformation along a continuum. In the working of the natural grindstone then, the plains become mountains, the mountains become plains; what is lifeless comes alive, as what is alive gradually loses its life; what is small and dispersed accumulates to become great, or to become a single object, and what is one or great disintegrates into minuscule fragments. In all these processes, as in the process of growth, what is most general is that what is so, ran, imperceptibly and by degrees becomes what is not so."[185] The paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* are now given a sense because the opposites would run into each other in the circle: usefulness turns into uselessness while uselessness turns into usefulness.

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[184] Csikszentmihalyi, Mark and Ivanhoe, Philip J. (1999) *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, NY: State University of New York Press

[185] Coutinho, Steve (2016) *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation and Paradox*, New York: Routledge, p. 174

The “paradox of usefulness” for instance is simply a truth grounded on how the opposition of usefulness and uselessness behaves metaphysically speaking.

I have two doubts with regard to the metaphysics approach. Firstly, does such a metaphysical reading make the *Zhuangzi* philosophically more interesting and insightful? I am sceptical. The main reason for my suspicion is that cyclical cosmology hardly made sense after Kant’s famous criticism of traditional metaphysics. Many philosophers have given up doing metaphysics in the traditional way because of Kant’s critique. Kant argues that these ultimate cosmological and metaphysical questions concerning the “transcendent” go beyond the limitation of human’s rationality. Consequently, if one takes the philosophy of *Zhuangzi* to be based on its cyclical cosmology, I suspect that such a reading would only undermine its philosophical appeal and lead us nowhere. That is to say, the *Zhuangzi* would be downplayed if read heavily metaphysically. Indeed, some may argue that my first reply is misguided because one should interpret the text according to what the text really said rather than what we think is most philosophically insightful. If the *Zhuangzi* does assert cyclical cosmology and construct its paradoxical expressions out of this metaphysical worldview, one should just interpret the *Zhuangzi* accordingly. Not to mention the continental hermeneutics’ debunking of the myth of what the text really writes, the objection leads to my second textual reply. To this, my reply is that there is no sufficient textual support in the *Zhuangzi* to force the cyclical-cosmology reading. Although the *Zhuangzi* does introduce the ring-metaphor, it is uncertain as to the domain to which the cyclical model applies. Does it apply to all oppositions or only the opposition of life and death? It is unclear textually speaking. At least, when the *Zhuangzi* deals with the issue of self and usefulness, it is seen that the ring-metaphor is not introduced. For example, in my analysis of the “paradox of usefulness” none of the sayings asserting anything like “usefulness would turn into usefulness and uselessness would turn into usefulness”. Even the lines I have just quoted in Zhuangzi’s reply in the “Shanmu” chapter. The apparent metaphysical appeal of the lines is cancelled under scrutiny. Instead of depicting the ultimate reality, the lines of Zhuangzi are to draw contrast of how ordinary people conventionally act to the way of living of the “Yellow Emperor and Shennong” 黃帝神農. The process of the “union” turning into “separation” is not considered as the fundamental cosmology but depicted as how ordinary people behave in a bad way: they just end up getting the opposite of what they initially wanted. Moreover, the lines do not mention anything about the other direction too. Zhuangzi did not say that “separation” would turn into “union” but only “union leads to separation”. In other words, the lines are in effect

anything but textual evidence in support of the cyclical-cosmology reading. I hence believe that the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* should not be explained by its, if any, metaphysical worldview.

The logic approach

Third approach is the logic approach. At the beginning of the chapter, I have already introduced very briefly how dialetheism is relevant to the issue of paradox. Basically, dialetheism is the view that contradiction can be true, that is, there can be a true statement which its negation can also be true. That very statement, in other words, is both true and false. Accordingly, dialetheism rejects the law of noncontradiction that prohibits the truth of all contradictions, and asserts that there is at least one case of contradiction being true.[186] Dialetheism is certainly an unsettled issue of philosophical debates. There are many arguments for and against dialetheism in the field. It is not at all my intention to step into this debate here. My only purpose is to clarify the relation between dialetheism and paradoxes, and also argue that the logic approach as an account for paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* faces some serious problems.

The way in which dialetheism explains paradoxes is simple: paradoxes are problematic often because contradictions are involved. But dialetheism argues precisely that contradictions can be true. Paradoxes are thus no longer problematic merely because they assert contradictions. In other words, paradoxes are meant literally in the sense that contradictory statements are held true simultaneously in the form of paradox. For example, the major proponent of dialetheism, Graham Priest, has taken the texts from Heidegger, Buddhism, and Daoism as his examples. He writes: "Buddhisms of certain kinds are committed to dialetheism, the view that some contradictions are true, Those who take that adherence to the Law of Non-Contradictions is a necessary condition for rationality may well conclude that, to this extent, such Buddhisms are irrational. But modern developments in para-consistent logics have taught us that one need not draw this conclusion. Buddhism can be rational although inconsistent—indeed, ultra-rational, since the contradictions are the result of following a certain view of the world through to its logical conclusions."[187] His defence for the contradictions in Buddhisms is straightforward: those contradictions are logical results of

[186] Sometimes dialetheism is not only a thesis concerning whether contradiction could be *true*, but also whether contradiction could be *known* and *expressed*. For more details, see Priest, Graham (1998) "What is so bad about contradictions" *The Journal of Philosophy*,Vol. 95, No. 8, pp. 410-426

[187] Priest (2008), p.7

some basic thesis of Buddhisms, and they are committed to dialetheism. More recently, he analyses the *Daodejing* with the logical tool of paraconsistent logic.[188] He deploys the technique from paraconsistent logic to demonstrate how the contradiction in the *Daodejing* is not logically incoherent. The specific contradiction he focuses on is the phenomenon of "effable ineffable". The texts *talk* about something that is *ineffable*, even *explain* why it is ineffable. The thing, namely the *dao* in the *Daodejing*, is then both effable and ineffable. In his paper, Priest shows how such a contradiction could be given a coherent logic formulation with the tool of paraconsistent logic. Although Priest does not take the *Zhuangzi* as his example, his approach to paradoxes in those texts could be naturally extended to the *Zhuangzi*. So the remaining question is whether we should consider the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* in a similar way? Should we take the *Zhuangzi* as being committed in dialetheism and assert both the truth of "uselessness as usefulness" and "usefulness as usefulness" in a straightforward manner?

I believe the answer is no. In saying so, I am not rejecting dialetheism and even the possibility of the *Zhuangzi* being committed in dialetheism. My claim is more restricted: I am only doubtful whether the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* should be explained by its commitment to dialetheism. That is to say, dialetheism itself may or may not be true, and the *Zhuangzi* may or may not be committed in dialetheism. But even if so, the paradoxes should not be explained in such a way. I have two reasons for this. Firstly, the logic approach overlooks the context in which the contradictory notions are introduced. To consider the "paradox of usefulness" again, the contradictory notions— "uselessness as usefulness" and "usefulness as usefulness"—are introduced as a *response* to an interlocutor in a dialogue. For the "uselessness as usefulness" notion, it was Hui Shi who consulted Zhuangzi about the uselessness of his tree Shu. For "usefulness as usefulness" notion, it was the follower who asked Zhuangzi about the counterexample of the killed goose. What is important in both cases is that the interlocutors in these dialogues were someone who upheld a rigid and certain conception of usefulness. Hui Shi believed firmly Shu was uselessness based on his "usefulness as usefulness" conception whereas the follower thought the useless goose is useful based on his acceptance of Zhuangzi's notion of "uselessness as usefulness". It is therefore evident that Zhuangzi put forward his idea on usefulness with context-sensitivity: to

[188] Paraconsistent logic is a logic system that allows contradictions to be true. See Priest, Graham (2021) "Dao De Jing and Mulamadhyamakakarika Making Sense of Ineffability" *East Asian Journal of Philosophy* 1, pp. 57-69

counter Hui Shi, he proposed the contrary notion of "uselessness as usefulness"; to counter his follower, he proposed the contrary notion of "usefulness as usefulness". The entire process is a demonstration of the idea of "lodging". However, the logic approach does not account for this feature. In the light of the logic approach, it takes these "lodging" or contextual-assertions as straightforward assertions.[189] That is, the *Zhuangzi* is meant to assert both notions of usefulness atemporally, and this is fine because of its commitment to dialetheism. However, this is clearly not the case when we consider Zhuangzi's reply to his follower in the "Shanmu" scene. Zhuangzi did not answer his follower by saying that both "usefulness" and "uselessness" are asserted. Rather he said that he was to some extent located in between the two, and better went "drifting" and "wandering". I therefore reject the logic approach because such an interpretation disregards the way how these contradictory notions are brought about. Secondly, the logic approach is also incapable of accounting for the structure of "paradox over paradox". According to the logic approach, this distinctive form becomes redundant. That is, if the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* were all about its commitment to dialetheism, the first layer of paradox would be sufficient for revealing the commitment. When the paradoxical notions of "no self" and "uselessness as usefulness" are already contradictions to be taken as true, why does *Zhuangzi* bother to further contradict itself? The logic approach might help explain the first level of contradictions, but it offers no help in explaining why the *Zhuangzi* constructs a more general level of contradictions. Instead of any static commitment to logic, I have argued the dynamic is what is brought into the text with the form of "paradox over paradox".

The relativism approach

The last contender I would like to discuss is the relativism approach. The issue of whether the *Zhuangzi* is a relativist in any sense is a long-standing interpretative issue.[190] There have been many scholars debating whether the *Zhuangzi* supports relativism. In this section I could just name a few representatives and how they would account for the paradoxical expressions in the text. The relativist reading, in short, is that view that there is nothing good or bad *absolutely* but rather only things good or bad *for* someone, *relative to* a certain perspective. Something is good or bad according to the perspective. In other words, something might be

[189] I believe this is exactly the different modes of judgement analysed in the "Qiwulun" Chapter: 為是 vs 因是. See A.C Graham (1989) *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* La Salle IL:Open Court

[190] Kjellberg, Paul and Ivanhoe, Philip J. (1996) *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi* Albany: SUNY

good relative to one perspective and might be bad relative to another perspective. It is therefore meaningless to talk of something good or bad without fixing the perspective as the reference point. The *Zhuangzi* does appear to express such a view. In "Qiwulun" chapter for example, it writes: "when people sleep in a damp place, they get waist pain and deathly ill. But what about eels? When people sleep in trees, they are terrified and worried. But what about monkeys? Of these three, which knows the right place to live? People eat the flesh of their livestock, deers eat grass, snakes eat centipedes, hawks and eagles eat mice. Of these four, which knows the right thing to eat? Monkeys take female monkeys for mates, elks mate with deers, male fishes frolic with female fishes. And humans regard Mao Qiang and Lady Li as beauties. But when fishes see them they dart deep into the sea, when birds see them they fly up high into the sky, when elks and deers see them they run away. Which of these four know the right alluring?" 民溼寢則腰疾偏死, 鰌然乎哉？木處則惴慄恂懼, 猨猴然乎哉？三者孰知正處？民食芻豢, 麋鹿食薦, 蝍且甘帶, 鴟鴉耆鼠, 四者孰知正味？猨, 狙以為雌, 麋與鹿交, 鰌與魚游。毛嬙、麗姬, 人之所美也, 魚見之深入, 鳥見之高飛, 麋鹿見之決驟。四者孰知天下之正色哉？. The idea of *zheng chu* 正處 *zheng wei* 正味 and *zheng se* 正色 is put in doubt. There is no place good for living *absolutely* but only places good for living *relative to* human beings or monkeys. There is no good food *absolutely* but only good food *relative to* human beings or deers. There is no beauty *absolutely* but only beauty *relative to* human beings or fishes. Chad Hasen and Chris Fraser are the two prominent examples arguing for such a relativist reading. They extract two different arguments from the *Zhuangzi* to support its relativist position. Chad Hasen bases the relativism in the text on its epistemological skepticism. He argues that the *Zhuangzi* believes in relativism because it thinks that we could never know the absolute truth, that is, there is no way for which we could judge that our beliefs are true.[191] His textual evidence is the famous passage from the "Qiwulun" chapter concerning how to decide the winner in debates. By contrast, Fraser extracts a different philosophical reason for the *Zhuangzi* believing in relativism. He argues that the text's pluralism on values is the true basis for its relativism. On this regard, he writes: "I contend that Hansen is mistaken in taking this skepticism to be the basis for the text's normative stance. Rather, Zhuangist skepticism and the normative views are jointly grounded in a metaethical theory about the nature of value, according to which value is inherently plural, perspectival, heterogeneous, and contingent."[192] His major textual

[191] Hansen, Chad (1983)
[192] Fraser, Chris (2015) "*Zhuangzi* and the Heterogeneity of Value" In *New Visions of the Zhuangzi,* Livia Kohn ed., Three Pines Press, pp. 40–58.

evidence is the passage as to the relation of *cheng* 成 and *kui* 虧. He argues that the *Zhuangzi* believes in the plurality of value and therefore the text also believes that there is no *absolute* "action-guiding distinction" capable of capturing all the values in the world.

Although the rationale of the relativist reading could only be shown very briefly, its dealing with the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* could already be inferred. I have just noted that relativism rejects absolute value but only accepts relativistic and perspectival value. Contradictions are therefore a no surprise to relativism. To consider the "paradox of usefulness" again, the paradox poses no difficulties to relativists because relativists could simply say that the value of "usefulness" is perspectival. Something is useful *relative to* a perspective and useless *relative to* another perspective. There is nothing special for something being useful and useless simultaneously since it is just a usual result derived from relativism. The relativist explanation for paradoxes is that: 1) the talk of absolute usefulness is meaningless. 2) something is useful or useless only relative to a perspective 3) perspectives are often contradictory 4) Thus, things are often a combination of usefulness and uselessness. Such a relativist approach resembles that semantic approach in the sense that the relativist approach also offers us the genuine semantic meaning of the paradoxes: it is not really the case that things are both useful and useless *absolutely* but that things are useful *for* someone and useless *for* another.

Does the relativist reading really help explain the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*? I have two objections to such a relativist explanation. Firstly, even if the relativist reading is correct, its explanation for the paradoxes lacks textual support. The situation here resembles my response to the logic approach. I am not saying the relativist reading itself is right or wrong, but rather challenge that even if it is right, the paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi* should not be explained in terms of relativism. The major reason for my objection to the relativist explanation is that the idea of perspective is never involved in the conception of self and usefulness. As my analysis shows, neither of the "paradox of self" and "paradox of usefulness" introduce the claim that different perspectives render the concept contradictory. When the "no self" and "protect the self" notion are put forward, the *Zhuangzi* does not bring about these notions as the result of different perspectives. Likewise, the *Zhuangzi* does not emphasise the perspectival nature of both the "uselessness as usefulness" and the "usefulness as usefulness" notion. If the paradoxes were the result of the text's relativism, Zhuangzi in the goose-scene should have answered his follower by saying that the perspective of his old

friend was different from his perspective—whereas the former consider the goose useless the latter consider the goose useful. In other words, the text does not subject the contradictory notions to a reference point respectively, and also does not explain the paradox by the appeal to relativism. I thus think that the relativism approach has no support in the text.

Secondly, the relativist reading itself is also in conflict with what I have argued. I have argued that the literary form of paradoxes is a realisation of the *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy of "wandering" and open-mindedness. Although many believe that the tolerance of different perspectives is implied by relativism, I still believe that the ascription of relativism to the *Zhuangzi* would undermine its philosophy of "wandering". Indeed, relativists would often emphasise the tolerance of perspectives as its merit but relativism is after all a philosophical camp with a determined thesis to argue for. In other words, relativism as a fixed philosophical position is still inevitably exclusive in the sense that it distincts itself from anti-relativism or non-relativism. For example, in contemporary debate of relativism, Sharon Street has argued that relativism should *not* retreat from saying that relativism is true for everyone including the non-relativists. She writes: "[the right route for the relativist is to] argue that the relativist thesis is true for every A—that is, for anyone who is engaging in normative thought at all (...) it's a mistake to reject relativism about normativity. No matter what your normative attitudes, the thesis holds."[193] I therefore believe that any ascription of "-ism", even the most open-minded relativism, is a restriction of the *Zhuangzi*'s all the way reflections and doubts. The best way to preserve the dynamic of the *Zhuangzi* is to extract its "paradox over paradox" form instead of putting it under the umbrella of relativism.[194] To label the *Zhuangzi* "relativism" is to put a halt on its endless "lodging", "drifting" and "wandering".

That's the end of the comparison between my approach and other approaches concerning paradoxes in the *Zhuangzi*. I believe I have made a strong case for my approach and explained clearly what the advantages of my performative and therapeutic approach over others are.

More importantly, I have shown in this chapter how the literary form and philosophical content of the *Zhuangzi* is perfectly unified. When the *Zhuangzi* proposes "wandering" as a

[193] Street, Sharon (Forthcoming) "How to Be a Relativist About Normativity", p.17
[194] I think Wong's view on the relativism issue is comparatively closest to mine. See Wong, David (2005) "Zhuangzi and the Obsession with Being Right" *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22 (2): pp. 91-107

way of life, the text itself is written in a “wandering” style, that is, the form of “paradox over paradox”. The text endlessly questions the conventional beliefs, its own proposed notion, and also the questioning itself. It is a text that “lodges” within different positions without residing in any termination.

The Philosophical Significances

I have analysed several literary forms i.e narrative, irony, and paradox in the *Zhuangzi* which is of great importance to its special way of doing philosophy. In this chapter, I turn the focus to a relatively more theoretical and abstract level. That is to say, despite the fact that it is undoubtedly plausible to continue my analysis on a *particular* form since the forms I have analysed are clearly not exhaustive and there are forms such as metaphor worthy of study, I choose to reflect on the philosophical relevance, significance and foundation of these literary forms *in general*. In this chapter, the major questions I attempt to answer is: from a philosophical point of view what do these literary forms really do? Or, what are they capable of doing philosophically?

I have found that the unification of form and content is greatly relevant to the way out of the threat of self-defeating in the *Zhuangzi*, which I have briefly mentioned in the last chapter. The understanding of the threat of self-defeating is hence required in order to understand the philosophical significance of the forms. First, I would further introduce the idea of self-defeating and the common formulations of the problem. I would also discuss whether the *Zhuangzi* is committed to such a problem according to the common formulations. Next, I would argue that the real threat of self-defeating to the *Zhuangzi* is not its stance of relativism and skepticism but rather its endorsement of dialectic. Ricoeur's conception of text will be helpful to explain how the nature of text conflicts with the idea of dialectic to a certain extent. Third, I would borrow a few central concepts in the "Tianyun" chapter to conceptualise the experience of reading the *Zhuangzi*. This leads to the recognition of the *Zhuangzi* as a *dao*-performance. Next, I will introduce Dirk Meyer's concept of "text-performance" and explain how the *Zhuangzi* is not a text *talking about* the *dao* but rather a text *acting out* or *performing* the *dao*. Only by taking this idea seriously could we understand how the *Zhuangzi* successfully responded to the threat of self-defeating and fully appreciate its philosophical meaning. Lastly, I would further argue that such an idea could be fully explicated by taking Gadamer's thoughts on reading experience into our account. His ideas on the hermeneutical experience of truth inherited from Heidegger are of immense help to understand what the literary forms in the *Zhuangzi* could really do philosophically.

i. Self-defeating, ethical relativism, and language-skepticism

In the previous chapter, I have very briefly mentioned the threat of self-defeating to the *Zhuangzi*. I will give it a more detailed articulation in this section. The identification of the problem of self-defeating (or self-refuting called in some literature) is not uncommon. It is often identified within the frameworks of ethical relativism and language-skepticism. The different formulations differ in their substantial content and the primary source of the emergence of the problem, but agree in the structure of the problem. I will begin with the common structure and then the particular formulations.

Generally speaking, the problem of self-defeating is a sort of performative contradiction. The first thing to highlight is its nature of contradiction i.e *performative*. The sort of contradiction in question is therefore different from the sort of contradiction I have dealt with in detail in the previous chapter. The later sort of contradiction is *a contradiction between assertions*. For example, the "paradox of self" introduced is the contradiction between opposing groups of assertions towards the concept of "self", namely the "protecting the self" and the "no-self" notion. What is contradictory is the assertion that one should protect oneself on the one hand, and that one should give up oneself on another. Nonetheless, it is not the case with performative contradiction. In performative contradiction, what is at stake is not the tension between different assertions, but rather between the very *act* of assertion and the content of one's assertion. To think of a simple example. When one declares that "I don't know how to speak", one contradicts oneself. Or put it in the present terminology, one is defeated by one's own self. The contradiction is that the descriptive content of the declaration "I don't know how to speak" is falsified by the very *performance* of such a declaration. The performance of a declaration implies that one does know how to speak, and such an implication contradicts the claim that one does not know how to speak. This simple case could indeed be complicated by a more philosophical investigation on the concept of speaking, but the case is only to illustrate the basic structure of self-defeating. Most philosophers find the problem of self-defeating repugnant. Some even take it as the major force of Decartes's famous declaration of "cognito, ergo sum" since I cannot really doubt the existence of myself without committing a sort of performative contradiction. George Henry Lewes said: "doubt as I may, I cannot doubt of my own existence, because my very doubts reveal to me a something which

doubts"[195]. That is to say, the very act of doubt implies that there is "something which doubts", and would falsify any claim that this doubting thing does not exist.

This is the basic form of the problem of self-defeating, understood as a kind of performative contradiction. The next question is to fill in the substantial content derived from the *Zhuangzi*. That is to ask, in what sense is the *Zhuangzi* threatened by the problem of self-defeating? Or, what precisely are the act and the content of assertion that are in tension? This question leads us to the substantial level of the explanation of the threat. Again, I am not meant to give an exhaustive list of the possible formulation of the threat, but there are I believe to be most well-known.

First of all, it is the relativism version of the threat. I have already briefly introduced the relativism interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* in the last chapter. The upshot of the relativism interpretation is that the *Zhuangzi* does not assert any truth and values per se but only truth and values *for someone*. The relativism interpreters may differ in the Zhuangzian justification of such a philosophical position (epistemological for Chad Hansen while ontological for Chris Fraser),[196] or differ in the reference point to which a statement might be true (it's the patient but not the actor who really matters in deciding the truth value of the statement according to Huang Yong's patient relativism).[197] The threat of self-defeating to relativism is evident: if truth and values are merely valid for someone, or any statements are only relatively true with reference to a certain perspective, what about relativism itself? It leads to a dilemma for relativism: either relativism is absolutely true, or it is relatively true. Both horns seem to be very hard to accept. I have already introduced some leading contemporary relativist take the later option. Sharon Street, for example, argues that "No matter what your normative attitudes, that the [relativism] thesis holds." Some relativist interpreters also believe that the *Zhuangzi* takes the first horn as it emphasises the superior status of its *dao* over others. This leads to another puzzling question on the reason why the relativist could privilege his or her own view. Why, among all truths, is the truth of relativism absolute? It is hard not to regard this as an ad hoc stipulation. For the second horn, it has been an age-old problem for relativism since Plato. In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Plato criticised Protagoras's relativism with his "self-refutation" argument. Plato challenged "how Protagoras could ever

[195] Lewes, George Henry (1867). *The History of Philosophy from Thales to Comte: Modern philosophy*. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, p.142
[196] Hansen (1983) and Fraser (2015)
[197] Huang, Yong (2018) "Patient Moral Relativism in the Zhuangzi", *Philosophia* 46 (4):877-894

defend his views from other people's attempts to refute them. For to do so he would have to practise some refutation himself and allege that his opponents were objectively mistaken in imputing weaknesses to his position. If we look at the speeches from Protagoras' perspective, then, it becomes apparent that the sophist would always need to adopt and borrow the voice of a non-relativist such as Socrates if he wished to defend his theory cogently."[198] That is, if it is true as the relativist claims that there is only relative but not absolute truth, then not only the relativist has no reason to argue for the truth of relativism but also he or she has reason *not* to do so. That is to say, the fact that relativism is merely relatively true for the relativists constitutes a strong reason for the relativists not to argue for the truth of relativism with the non-relativists. In other words, "if he wishes to maintain his position he can only pop up, shout "true for you, false for me!', sink down and take to his heels" in the debate on the truth of relativism.[199]

To put it in the language of preformative contradiction, it is the very act of arguing for the truth of relativism defeats the content of relativism, namely that there is no universal truth. In "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter, the *Zhuangzi* itself seems to be aware of the threat of self-defeating. In the chapter, the *Zhuangzi* suggest its own interpretation on the debate between the Ru 儒 and Mo 墨. It is suggested that the Ru and Mo simply "affirm what the others deny and deny what the other affirm" 以是其所非而非其所是. The situation is that none of the opposing camps is convinced by the other nor do they renounce their conviction of what is right and wrong. This leads to a deadlock in which meaningless debate endlessly continues. The *Zhuangzi* hence said "there is endless 'affirmation' and also endless 'denial'" 是亦一無窮, 非亦一無窮也. These passages are widely deemed as containing a very strong relativism element. What interests me here is that the "Qiwulun" chapter is also a chapter in which the *Zhuangzi* shows a very strong sense of self-reflection. There are several occurrences of self-questioning throughout the chapter. It asks itself whether "what it is said here belongs to the same category as 'this' or not" 今且有言於此, 不知其與是類乎？其與是不類乎？. The 'shi' 是 here may serves as a pronoun referring to the Ru and Mo, and it may simply refer to "this", the upshot of such a sentence is that the *Zhuangzi* is asking itself whether its philosophical view is something affirmed from *this* perspective. If the philosophical view—namely the relativism view according to the relativist—it has affirmed in the chapter is simply just another view deemed as true from its own perspective, then there

[198] Long, Alex (2004) "Refutation and Relativism in Theaetetus" *Phronesis*, 2004, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 24-40
[199] Ibid., p.39

is no difference between itself (relativist), and the Ru and Mo (non-relativist). This is exactly the threat of self-defeating: the very act of arguing for the meaninglessness of debates contradicts its own assertion that arguments are meaningless. Why does the *Zhuangzi* brother arguing with all the non-relativists including the Ru and Mo given the relativism truth that relativism is just relatively true for the relativists? In his discussion on skepticism and relativism, David B. Wong formulated the problem as the conflict between the "skepticism" aspect and the "engagement" aspect of the *Zhuangzi*. He said that while there is a "skepticism" aspect as it asserts the "the perceptions of all creatures are shaped and limited by their size and location in relation to what they perceive in their environments", there is on the other hand "something beyond the relativity of perception is suggested by Zhuangzi's poking fun at Huizi". That is, the *Zhuangzi* seems to engage in arguing for the truth of "something beyond the relativity of perception " while being sceptical of the idea of absolute truth. Wong criticised Hansen's relativism interpretation for its incapability of reconciling "skepticism" and "engagement". It is hence not an exaggeration that the problem of self-defeating is unavoidable for the relativists interpreters on the *Zhuangzi*.

Nonetheless, the threat of self-defeating is undoubtedly a special problem for the relativism interpretation. At least, there is another extremely common interpretative direction of the *Zhuangzi* would lead to the similar problem. That is the language-skepticism interpretation. Perhaps the language-skepticism version of the problem of self-defeating is even more evident. I have already discussed the anti-language tendency of the *Zhuangzi* in Chapter 3 so I would not repeat it in detail here. The languege-skepticism is roughly the idea that the *dao* suggested by the *Zhuangzi* is something beyond language.[200] In other words, language is deficient in terms of its incapacity to capture the *dao*. However, this language-skepticism thesis brings about a preformative contradiction. It fills in another kind of content into the form of self-defeating just elaborated. That is, there is a conflict between the very activity of arguing that the *dao* is ineffable, and the thesis that the *dao* is ineffable. It is because the activity of philosophical argument is supposedly a kind of language usage. After all, the

[200] Indeed I am not meant to suggest that this is the only or even the most common way of defining language-skepticism. It is all about contexts. In the philosophical context of early China where the conceptualisation of *dao* is the focus, the function and limitation of language is discussed with regard to the understanding of *dao*. I thus formulated the thesis of language-skepticism in this way. It is certain that there are many other ways in which language-skepticism is understood. For example, it might not be about the relation between language and *dao* but more about language itself. That is, it is not only that language is incapable to capture *dao* but also that it is incapable of having meaning at all. Language-skepticism so understood is sometimes thought to be a thesis endorsed by the *Zhuangzi* too. In such a formulation of language-skepticism, the problem of self-defeating would be given a similar but slightly different flesh.

Zhuangzi itself is a text and it is the very location in which the language-skepticism thesis is argued. Therefore the language-skepticism version of the problem of self-defeating emerged: the *Zhuangzi* contradicts itself by saying that the *dao* is not something that could be said. Again, the similar problem of self-defeating understood as a consequence of language-skepticism is not encountered solely by the *Zhuangzi* since language-skepticism is not an uncommon philosophical position. I have introduced Graham Priest's recent research in the previous chapter. He has identified the exact same self-defeating problem in the *Daodejing* and *Mulamadhyamakakarika*: "According to both of these views, there is something that is ineffable. Both of these views, however, talk about this ineffable thing: indeed, they explain why it is ineffable. That is, of course, a contradiction. Moreover, it is a contradiction which is entirely obvious. What to make of the matter?"[201].

Not only the problem is similar, the solution is similar too. One of the solutions he argued against is the solution that "insert an *ad hoc* escape clause: an ineffable object is one about which one can say nothing, *except* that it is ineffable."[202] This is a solution similar to what I have just suggested as the first horn of the dilemma. Every truth is relative *except* the truth of relativism itself. In the present context, the solution is to stipulate that "one can say nothing, *except* that it is ineffable". It is not hard to see that it is simply "an *ad hoc* escape" and thus not a preferable option. Priest's own solution is to argue that the *Daodejing* and *Mulamadhyamakakarika* are both committed dialetheism. He argues that they in effect believe in something that is both effable and ineffable, and deploys the tool of paraconsistent logic to prove their logical coherence. I shall not repeat the reason for my hesitance to his proposal here.

In short, I understand the threat of self-defeating to the *Zhuangzi* as a problem of performative contradiction. The problem could at least be given two kinds of formulations: relativism and language-skepticism. If the *Zhuangzi* is interpreted as relativism and language-skepticism, the problem of self-defeating seems to be an inevitable and even fatal problem. That is to say, how to deal with the problem of self-defeating is one of the key missions for the reader of the *Zhuangzi*.

[201] Priest (2021), p.1-2
[202] Ibid., p.2

ii. Self-defeating and the Nature of Text

One might wonder whether the problem of self-defeating really plays such a pivotal role in our understanding of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. It is because I have elucidated the problem with reference to relativism and language-skepticism. Haven't I argued against the relativism and language-skepticism interpretation in previous chapters? If the *Zhuangzi* should not be interpreted as a relativist and skeptic due to the arguments I have suggested, why do I still render the problem of self-defeating so much weight? In other words, why aren't the problem of self-defeating dissolved by simply saying that the *Zhuangzi* does not argue for relativism nor skepticism? There would be no preformative contradiction between the very activity of arguing and the content of its argument if what it argues for is not the relativity of truth, and the dissociation of language and the *dao*.

Indeed, I did argue against the relativism and language-skepticism interpretation. But I am not meant to say that only the relativism and skepticism interpretation bring about the threat of self-defeating. The relativism and skepticism interpretation are useful examples to illustrate the force of the problem of self-defeating. In other words, one should not misunderstand the problem of self-defeating as a problem specific to the two interpretations. Rather, I believe that the problem is a general problem to the understanding of the *Zhuangzi* itself. Although the *Zhuangzi* should not be read as relativism nor skepticism, I have argued that the *dao* it suggests is a flexible, creative and context-sensitive way of life, instead of any static, rigid, invariable -ism. Such a reading also creates its own version of the problem of self-defeating. Hence the problem of self-defeating is as forceful to other interpretations as to mine.

The next question is then: how does my reading, which emphasises on the flexibility of the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi*, lead to the same problem of self-defeating? That is to ask, how does the activity of arguing for a flexible way of life performatively contradict itself? At the outset, the tension is already quite evident. When the ideal of living along with the contextual changes comes down to a conclusion of a series of arguments, the ideal seems to be distorted. A conclusion of an argument is often thought of as a proposition while a proposition is often thought of as something inflexible. Despite the contemporary metaphysical debates on the ontology of propositions, it is at least that the meaning of a proposition seems to be fixed and invariable in relation to any particular context. That is to say, by the very activity of arguing

for the ideal of flexibility, the ideal is now reduced to something inflexible—the very activity of arguing *rigidifies* the ideal of flexibility. So the *Zhuangzi* seems to contradict itself again in the sense that insofar as its ever-changing *dao* is proposed and argued the *dao* is pinned down as a fixed *dao*, against which it argued initially. When it comes to the side of readers, the problem could be seen as a failure of the *Zhuangzi*. The failure is that the *Zhuangzi* has made a suggestion to its readers that one should live without any unchanging *dao*, but such a suggestion itself is now an unchanging *dao* to its readers. That is, the readers make the supposedly ever-changing *Zhuangzi*'s *dao* their own unchanging way of living. Not only are the readers not led to the ideal way of living but also are they led to the harmful way of living *precisely due to* the argument of the *Zhuangzi*. This could have been the deepest ironic failure of the *Zhuangzi*.

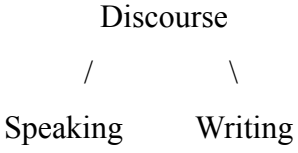
It is just a prima facie explanation of the threat of self-defeating formulated within my framework of interpretation. There is a deeper philosophical reason why the *Zhuangzi* seems to fail in arguing for its flexible *dao*. This deeper philosophical reason is related to the nature of written texts. In the history of philosophical hermeneutics, Paul Ricoeur, from whom I draw great insight for my methodology, examines the distinctive features of writing in great depth. The question of what is a text is the starting point of his own reflection upon the development of hermeneutics all the way from Schleiermacher to Gadamer. One of his criticism of Gadamer is that Gadamer's understanding of understanding, which could be concluded as "fusion of horizon", fails to make room for genuine distanciation since Gadamerian understanding is always partly a result of the projection of one's pre-judgment. Consequently, critique is also made impossible because the self-projection aspect of understanding seems inevitable. In this regard, Ricoeur argues that what makes understanding with distanciation possible is "the matter of the text". In the end of an essay in which Ricoeur brilliantly reconstructs the history of hermeneutics, he writes: "what enables us to communicate at a distance is thus *the matter of the text*, which belongs neither to its author nor to its reader. This last expression, *the matter of the text*, leads me to the threshold of my own reflection"[203] "The matter of text" is therefore what Ricoeur himself believes to be the beginning of his own philosophical development built on the ground of Gadamer's hermeneutics. In the light of Ricoeur's conception of text, the self-defeating problem of the *Zhuangzi* could be articulated into great detail.

[203] Ricoeur (1981), p. 22

The upshot of his philosophical reflection on "the matter of the text" is that text and writing is not merely an inscription of speaking, and there are some characteristics of great importance which emerge in text. Ricoeur is meant to say that instead of thinking of speaking as prior to writing, we should think of writing as on the same par to speaking in relation to discourse. Writing and speaking are two different modes of fixation of discourse while discourse is considered as "language-event or linguistic-usage".[204] Any discourse i.e linguistic-usage is either written or spoken. Such a conception of writing is evidently against a popular thought that writing is just a further fixation of speaking. According to this ordinary picture, it is speaking that is responsible for the fixation of discourse while writing that is responsible for the fixation of speaking. It is:

Discourse—Speaking (Speech)—Writing (Text)

Instead of:



Although the former picture is of great intuitive appeal, Ricoeur argues for the later picture. He writes: "we are tempted to say that all writing is added to some anterior speech (..) The psychological and sociological priority of speech over writing is not in question. It may be asked, however, whether the late appearance of writing has not provoked a radical change in our relation to the very statements of our discourse".[205] What is insightful about Ricoeur's argument here is that one should not mix up "psychological and sociological priority", and philosophical and metaphysical priority. Speaking might in effect takes priority over writing in terms of psychology (an individual often learns writing only after one knows how to speak) and sociology (as a matter of historical fact human society develops speaking before writing), but philosophically speaking there might be the emergence of significance features unique to text. With regard to these features, speaking loses its priority over writing since there are things that could be done by writing but not speaking. Furthermore, Ricoeur argues

[204] Ibid., p.160
[205] Ibid., pp.107-108

that "a text is really a text only when it is not restricted to transcribing anterior speech, when instead it inscribes directly in written letters what the discourse means."[206] That is to say, a *real* text transcends its initial function as mere record of speech, and embraces its distinctive function. Accordingly, there might be writing as the inscription of speech but it is disregarded as *real* text. The relation between speaking and writing, as Ricoeur put it, is that "this emancipation of writing, which places the latter at the site of speech, is the birth of the text".[207]

The next question is: when writing is emancipated from speech and enables real text, what are the important features brought about to text? Ricoeur famously argues for four significant features for real text. These four features are all explained by comparison to speech. When writing is emancipated from speech, writing is also liberated from four related dimensions of the nature of speech. Therefore Ricoeur sometimes refers to these features as "eclipse" in the sense that they are constitutive in speech but now lost in text.[208] I would only explain them briefly here so as to illustrate how the *dao* of the *Zhuagzi* might not be possible to be written as a text without being contradictory.

First, Ricoeur argues that text emancipates from the *temporality* character of speech. That is, speech is always an event which consists of a beginning and ending in time. We cannot conceive of any speech without an event in real time. "In living speech, the instance of discourse has the character of a fleeting event" as he writes.[209] The temporality of speech is precisely the reason why writing is often thought of as an inscription of speaking since speaking is an event that appears and disappears. Writing is thus invented as a means to fix and inscribe the "fleeting" event of speaking. However, when writing inscribes speaking, what happens is that the character of being an event is not brought along. The temporality is "lost" in what writing produces i.e text. Ricoeur put it clearly: "what we write, what we inscribe, is the noema of the speaking. It is the meaning of the speech event, not the event as event"[210]. That is to say, whereas speaking is bounded with temporality, text is a atemporal entity constituted by meaning.

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[206] Ibid., p. 108
[207] Ibid., p. 109
[208] He has argued for this conception of text in several places. See Ricoeur, Paul (1981) "What is a text? Explanation and understanding" and "The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text" *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. trans. John B. Thompson, Cambridge University Press
[209] Ibid., p. 160
[210] Ibid., p. 161

Second, writing also suspends the worldliness of speaking. Speaking is wordly in the sense that speaking always happens within a *situation*. One does not speak in void but rather in a concrete place, surrounded by different things. The importance of a situation in speaking is that it provides the reference point for speaking. The interlocutors could fix their reference by the common situation. In this regard, Ricoeur writes: "in spoken discourse this means that what the dialogue ultimately refers to is the situation common to the interlocutors. This situation in a way surrounds the dialogue, and its landmarks can all be shown by a gesture, or by pointing a finger, or designated in an ostensive manner by the discourse itself".[211] When it comes to writing, text "frees its reference from the limits of ostensive reference." That is to say, when a text was produced, the text is no longer bound with the situation in which it was produced. More importantly, it is not meant that text is without a world, but rather that text creates its own world with no regard to the limitation of the actual situation in which it is produced. In other words, instead of being something situated and limited by the world before us, text is itself a projection of a new world. This character is also the force of text: "only writing, in freeing itself (...) from the narrowness of the dialogical situation, reveals this destination of discourse as projecting a world".[212]

Third, writing is liberated from the author. Indeed, writing has its author as speaking has its speaker. The crucial question however is whether the author has full control of the meaning of writing as the speaker determines the meaning of the speech. The answer is no according to Ricoeur. In speech, "it is the same thing to understand what the speaker means and what his discourse means". Nevertheless, in writing "the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide". That is to say, text is born free from its author and its meaning is determined by its own. The meaning of the text is no longer imprisoned by "the finite horizon lived by its author".[213]

Fourth, writing does not have any reader that serves as the counterpart of an interlocutor in speaking. That the interlocutor does not appear as the reader in writing is not because writing cannot be read but rather because it can be read by an infinite amount of people. In real-life dialogue, speech always addresses someone and hence the addressee of speaking is finite and

[211] Ibid., p.163
[212] Ibid., p.164
[213] Ibid., p.163

fixed. In writing, by contrast, we cannot restrict the addressee of the text to any specific person even in the case where there is someone for whom the author writes. "The vis-à-vis of the written is just whoever knows how to read". For example, any English reader is a potential reader of this thesis even if I might write this for certain people. Ricoeur therefore writes: "it [text] no longer has a visible auditor. An unknown, invisible reader has become the unprivileged addressee of the discourse." When the feature at hand is considered together with the third feature, an interesting situation is found: "the reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading".[214] Ricoeur called it "a double eclipse" to describe how the writer and reader are both absent in the text. Consequently, such important changes make writing radically different from speaking in the sense that the writer-reader relation is a sui generis relation, and should not be thought of as a mere duplication of the speaker-interlocutor relation.

To sum up, Ricoeur argues for an independent ontological status of writing. Writing is not just the inscription of speaking. Rather, discourse in writing greatly transforms from discourse in speaking. Text is something that emancipates from temporality, situation, author, and reader. Ricoeur's conception of text significantly put forward the development of philosophical hermeneutics, and there has been a great amount of literature in response to his arguments. It is not my concern to discuss the validity and aftermyth of his philosophy. I introduce his conception of text only in order to highlight how text is "decontextualised" and constitute its own context. According to him, text transcends the contexts in which it is produced in four important ways, then solidates itself, and becomes a meaningful whole of its own. It is evident that such an entity is to some extent in tension with the *dao* suggested by the *Zhuangzi*. On the one hand, the *Zhuangzi*'s *dao* is context-sensitive, ever-changing and dialectic; on other hand, however, the *Zhuangzi* as a text is precisely something "decontextualised", static and consolidated. It is a performative contradiction to argue for a dialectic *dao* by a static means. As long as such a *dao* as a text, it cannot possibly be dialectic.

Again, similar to the problem of self-defeating formulated in terms of relativism and skepticism, the incompatibility between text and dialectic is not a unique problem only posed to the *Zhuangzi*. In her study of the philosophy of Socrates, Martha Nussbaum takes the

[214] Ibid., p.108

incompatibility to explain the reason why Socrates has not written anything in his lifetime. In this regard, there is a striking similarity between Socrates and the *Zhuangzi*. Nussbaum writes: "Socrates himself wrote nothing at all. If we are to believe the account of his reasons given in Plato's Phaedrus, it was because he believed that books could short-circuit the work of active critical understanding, producing a pupil who has a "false conceit of wisdom." Books are not "alive." At best, they are reminders of what excellent thinking is like, but they certainly cannot think (...) Books, furthermore, lack the attentiveness and responsiveness of real philosophical activity (which, as we recall, respects the pupil's particular circumstances and context). They "roll around" all over the place with a kind of inflexible sameness, addressing very different people, always in the same way."[215] Due to his emphasis on critical thinking and ceaseless self-examination, Socrates resists to pin down his way of life into "inflexible" writing. He rather insists on demonstrating his "*dao*" by means of "alive" dialogue which could really be "addressing very different people" in very different contexts. The Socrates' question to the *Zhuangzi* is then: isn't the dialectic and flexible *dao* killed by writing which "lack[s] the attentiveness and responsiveness"?

Fortunately, the problem of self-defeating and the incompatibility is not unsolvable. Similar to Plato who "overcomes the danger of passivity inherent in the written word", the *Zhuangzi* also deploys the literary forms I have analysed i.e narrative, irony, and paradox to overcome the inflexibility of text.[216] While Plato successfully turns someone toward philosophy instead of killing the dialectic philosophical activity by his words, the *Zhuangzi* makes its readers experience its *dao* through the text.[217] The key to the overcoming of the inflexibility of writing to both Plato and the *Zhuangzi* is nothing but forms. I thus contend that only in the light of the problem of self-defeating, could we fully appreciate the philosophical significance of its literary forms. After clarifying the problem, we shall take the next step: how the problem of self-defeating is overcome by the literary forms in the *Zhuangzi*.

iii. The *Zhuangzi* as the Xianchi 咸池 music

> 北門成問於黃帝曰:「帝張咸池之樂於洞庭之野, 吾始聞之懼, 復聞之怠, 卒聞之而惑, 蕩蕩默默, 乃不自得。」

[215] Nussbaum, Martha (1998) "Socratic Self-Examination" In *Cultivating Humanity*, Cambridge:Harvard University Press, p.34
[216] Ibid., p.36
[217] Gordon (1999)

帝曰:「[.....] 樂也者, 始於懼, 故祟;吾又次之以怠, 怠故遁;卒之於惑, 惑故愚;愚故道, 道可載而與之俱也。」

Cheng of North Gate asked Emperor Wang: "You the Emperor set up the performance of the Xianchi music in the wild of Dong-Ting. I listened to it and at first I was afraid. After listening more, I felt weary. At the end, I was confused. I was overwhelmed and speechless. I could not get hold of myself."

The Emperor said: " (...) As to music, I start with fear and because of fear there is sublime. I then weary them and because of weariness there is escape. Finally I confuse them, and because of confusion, there is stupidity. Because of stupidity, there is *dao*. *Dao* is something that people could ride on and move along with." (the "Tianyun" 天運 chapter)

In the "Tianyun" chapter, there is a conversation between Cheng of North Gate 北門成 and Emperor Wang 黃帝 concerning the "Xianchi music". Their discussion serves as a very good starting point for me to spell out how the *Zhuangzi* overcome the problem with its literary forms. In their conversation, Cheng of North Gate reported that he had listened to the music the Emperor Wang played in the "wild of Dong-ting". He described his reactions towards the music and categorised them into three kinds: *ju* 懼 (fear), *dai* 怠 (weariness), and *huo* 惑 (confusion). Although being implicit, the reason why Cheng of North Gate told his feelings to the Emperor is that he still does not know if his feelings to the music is valid and why such music is valuable. Or, why had the Emperor played such music?

What concerns me in this conversation is not the Emperor's detailed explanation on the three reactions (this is also the part I have skipped in my quotation), but the similarity between "the Xianchi music" and the *Zhuangzi* itself. By the similarity between the "Xianchi music" and the *Zhuangzi* itself, I mean that Cheng of North Gate's three reactions towards the music is greatly similar to the reader's reaction towards the *Zhuangzi*. And it is shown by the Emperor's reply to Cheng of North Gate that Cheng of North Gate's reactions are by no means undesirable experience but precisely how the music turns someone towards *dao*. Similarly, it can also be said that the *Zhuangzi* turns someone towards *dao* precisely by such

experiences. That is to say, what is explained in the section is not just how the "Xianchi music" works but more importantly how the *Zhuangzi* works.

All the three emotional reactions are conventionally considered as negative: people often avoid being afraid, weary and confused. Nonetheless, the Emperor and the *Zhuangzi* as usual surprise Cheng of North Gate and the reader by holding a rather positive attitude towards them. These emotional reactions are not only valid but even different stages in the process leading to *dao*. Thus, there are related mentions of these emotions in other passages in the *Zhuangzi*. Fear, for instance, is mentioned in the famous passage concerning "the vital man who lives in the mountain of far-off Ku-yi" 藐姑射之山神人 in the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. In the conversation between Jian-Wu 肩吾 and Lian-Shu 連叔, Jian-Wu said that he had heard from Jie-Yu 接輿 talking about the "vital man". His description of the "vital man" was "immense without appropriateness; going on and on with no return" 大而無當，往而不反. His words was "like river Han without boundary, very different from ours and not close to human affairs" 猶河漢而無極也，大有逕庭，不近人情焉。. Such extraordinary words made Jian-Wu panic and surprised. He said: "I was stunned and afraid of his words" 吾驚怖其言. In his reply to Cheng of North Gate, Emperor Wang explains the fear by saying that "the constant of his music is infinite, and it counts on no one thing". 所常無窮，而一不可待. The similarity is evident that what fear Jian-Wu and Cheng of North Gate is the boundlessness (*wuji* 無極 and wuqiong 無窮) of the words and music.

Fear in the *Zhuangzi* seems to indicate the limitation of the ordinary and the boundlessness of its *dao*. The *Zhuangzi*, the words of Jie-Yu, and the "Xianchi music" are all the same in the sense that they all go far beyond our ordinary thoughts. They are by no means bound with the framework we get used to. Just take an example from the "Xiaoyaoyou" chapter. In Jie-Yu description of the "vital man", Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 who are supposedly the uncontested sage in the early China (at least for the Ru 儒 and Mo 墨) become the products made out of the dust and leaving of him 是其塵垢粃糠，將猶陶鑄堯、舜者也. It is without doubts that such words radically subvert the image of Yao and Shun. As for the *Zhuangzi*, its very beginning is an extraordinary story. It is the story concerning Kun-Peng 鯤鵬. A story of a huge non-human animal itself is literally "immense" and "not close to human affairs". Not to mention such a creature is able to transform from being a fish who lives in the sea to a bird who rises up to the sky. It is not an exaggeration to say that by the story of Kun-Peng the *Zhuangzi* scares its reader right at the beginning as the "Xianchi music" did to Cheng of

North Gate. It is the form of narrative which poses perspectives alien to ours that makes us feel shocked. Moreover, what is important is that fear is not a negative emotion but the starting point of our anticipation of *dao*. As Emperor said, "because of fear there is sublime" 懼故崇. The alien perspectives bring us fear, and fear brings us a sense of sublime. The sense of sublime is the understanding of one's limitation and the urge of going beyond. It opens up the possibility of change. That's why it serves as the beginning of the journey with *dao*.

The next emotional reaction is weariness. Again, the conventional evaluation of weariness is subverted in the Emperor's explanation. The Emperor said: "[my music] appears as full but on the inside it is empty, moving like an empty snake. You also become a winding snake and this is why you feel weary." 形充空虛，乃至委蛇。汝委蛇，故怠。. The idea of "emptiness" and the "winding snake" is not rare in the *Zhuangzi*. We can find the exact same metaphor of "winding snake" in the "Yingdiwang" chapter. On the one hand, the concept of "emptiness" suggests that one should not project your own belief onto the object. One should rather remain "empty" and let the others appear as themselves.[218] On the other, the metaphor of "winding snake" suggests that one should not directly confront what is standing before you. One should rather act like a snake, have a "winding" gesture, and move alongside the object. In addition to the first stage, the audience/reader no longer simply has a pure fear and shock caused by alien and immense perspectives: one wanders around these perspectives without sticking with any of them. Due to such a dynamic way of life, one feels "weary". The weariness in question is not the same as the ordinary weariness but a weariness caused by living like a "winding snake", that is, practising *dao*.

Moreover, the Emperor's reply also introduces the concept of *dun* 遁 "escape". He said: "because of weariness there is escape" 怠故遁. The causal link between weariness and escape is that while one empties oneself and acts like a "winding snake", one escapes from argumentations in ordinary life. What one avoids is the battlefield of conflicting perspectives. On the ground that one does not uphold a rigid point of view, one does not act like the Ru and Mo who actively engage in argumentation and effortly work to win over the debate. The idea of "escape" is echoed with the idea of distanciation from civilisation in the *Zhuangzi*. The rural area and wilderness is a common scene in the *Zhuangzi*, even the very place in which Emperor Wang played his music is in the wild of Dong-Ting. For example, in the

[218] The idea is similar to what I have argued in Chapter 2 concerning Adorno's opposition to "identity thinking".

“Xiaoyaoyou” chapter, Zhuangzi suggests to Hui Shi 惠子 concerning his Shu 樗 that “why don’t you just place it in the Countryside of Nothingness, the Field of Broad and Boundless? And loaf by its sides doing nothing and sleep carefreely beneath it? 何不樹之於無何有之鄉, 廣莫之野, 彷徨乎無為其側, 逍遙乎寢臥其下？. What Hui Shi should “escape” from is the rigidity of his mind and the ordinary full of conflicts and debates; what he should “escape” to is the “the Countryside of Nothingness, the Field of Broad and Boundless”, that is, “emptiness” and the state of mind of the “winding snake”.

At the end, Cheng of North Gate is confused as we are all confused by the *Zhuangzi*. The Emperor explains Cheng of North Gate’s confusion by saying that “you wanted to hear yet nothing was received. You are thus confused” 汝欲聽之而無接焉, 而故惑也 Why can’t Cheng of North Gate and the readers receive anything and thus confused? If I have explained my analysis clearly enough, I think the answer is already clear. The quick reason is the *Zhuangzi*’s resistance to be reduced into a simple moral, a static judgement or a philosophical system. When what the *Zhuangzi* says is not at all *a* thing, how could one ever receive anything? Take narrative as an example. If the meaning of those narratives in the *Zhuangzi* amounts to what one of its characters says, our interpretative situation would be much more comfortable. We could have easily spelled out the moral of the story and taken the lesson home. No way one would receive nothing. The reason why the situation is not that easy and “nothing was received” is because the meaning of the narratives do not work like that. As I have argued in Chapter 2, the “finding the *Zhuangzi*’s spokesman” strategy is an untenable reading strategy. Not only does it fail to appreciate the value of narrative but it undermines it. The narratives in the text are all about introducing the “constellation of perspectives”. There is no single perspective the *Zhuangzi* asks its readers to incorporate. There is no single way of life the readers should follow. In this sense, one is confused about what to take from the text and what to do in one’s life.

However, such an experience of confusion is not undesirable but what brings us towards the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi*. The Emperor Wang said that :“because of confusion, there is stupidity; because of stupidity, there is *dao*” 惑故愚;愚故道. Confusion leads to stupidity in the sense that one is no longer certain of anything. If stupidity means ignorance and knowing nothing, it is not difficult to understand why confusion would bring about stupidity. According to my analysis, the confusion caused by the *Zhuangzi* is not only about the meaning of the text but also about how one should live when confronted with the “constellation of perspectives”.

One is ignorant of both the text and oneself, and thus become a fool. Furthermore, stupidity leads to the *dao* in the sense that one gives up arrogant and the illusion of certainty. What stupidity brings about is not simply ignorance but an infinite possibility. Giving up certainty and embracing possibility are just two sides of the same coin. Meanwhile, conceptualising the *dao* in terms of stupidity and ignorance is common in the *Zhuangzi*. The most famous mention of not-knowing is the story between Wang Ni 王倪 and Nie Que 齧缺 I have analysed in Chapter 3. Relating stupidity to the *dao* in the passage once again reminds one of the ignorance of Socrates and his philosophy. What they both recommend is the infinite pursuit of truth.

iv. The *Zhuangzi* as a *dao*-performance

Thus far I have borrowed the vocabulary from Cheng of North Gate's report to conceptualise the experiences that the *Zhuangzi* brings to its reader. I do so because it is good to make use of the *Zhuangzi*'s own terms to build up our conceptualisation. It is certain that there are different plausible categorisations of our experience in reading the *Zhuangzi*.[219] Another important motivation for my reference to the story on the "Xianchi music" is that it highlights the *performative* nature of the *Zhuangzi*. Just as the "Xianchi music" played by Emperor Wang is not a static doctrine, we should not think of the *Zhuangzi* as a atemporal text but a *performance*. While it is ridiculous for any critic not to take the forms and audiences' experience into his account of the "Xianchi music", it is similarly ridiculous to disregard the forms of the *Zhuangzi* and the experience it brings its readers. I thus contend that to consider the *Zhuangzi* as performance is to acknowledge its *irreducible triangularity of content, form and readers' experience*.

The concept of "performance text" in the study of Chinese philosophy was first introduced by Dirk Meyer, and I share a lot with his insight. He has taken up the concept in his analysis of philosophical texts in early China, beginning with his analysis of the philosophical texts from Guodian, but also the "Qiushui" chapter in the *Zhuangzi* and more recently the "Mingxun" manuscript from the Tsinghua collection of Chu Warring States texts. "Mingxun" is a text concerning how one should rule, or how a ruling system works. Similar to the *Zhuangzi*,

[219] For example, one may conceptualise our experience in terms of humour. See Yuen (2021)

Meyer argues that "Mingxun" perfectly unifies its form and content.[220] That is to say, "Mingxun" is a text composed in a way that is in accordance with the ruling system it is proposing. On the one hand, the ruling system in "Mingxun" is a system constituted by various constituents with "non-isolated nature".[221] It is an "organic, circular, entity where the various elements vitally relate to one another in a crucially dialectical manner."[222] For example, the *da ming* 大命 ("Great command") and the *xiao ming* 小命 ("small command") is in a mutual-reinforcement relation. On the other hand, the text of "Mingxun" itself is structured in a dialectic way that mirrors such a ruling system. Meyer argues that "the method of *Mìng xùn is fundamentally dialectical—on its own terms".[223] For example, unit 7 and unit 8 of the text are connected as a chain to indicate the interdependent nature of various concepts. Hence the textual composition of "Mingxun" itself "produces extra-semantic meaning in nonverbal form".[224]

What makes "Mingxun" a "performance text" is not only how its form speaks together with its content, but also the reading experience it produced to its readers. In this regard, Meyer writes: "Philosophically, this makes *Mìng xùn intrinsically a performance text – a performance which perpetuates itself, on two levels. On the one level is the dialectical relation between the text and the world where the one is constituent of the other. But on another, more basic level, this has implications for the user too because the relation between text and recipient is not isolated either but must, by extension, mirror the just outlined dialectical relationship between the text and the world. *Mìng xùn is thus developing a philosophical point in line with the performance innate to the textual composition that has immediate consequences for the text recipient".[225] The first level is what I have just explained. "The text and the world" is holding a "dialectical relation in the sense that the more I understand the structure and composition of "Mingxun" the more I understand the ruling system in the world and meanwhile the more I know about how the ruling system operate in the world the more I would appreciate how the text constructs its arguments. The "more basic level" is the additional layer that highlights how the text i.e an organic entity unifying its form and content, produces a reading experience of structural similarity to its

[220] Meyer, Dirk (2023) "The Dialectics of Rule in in the Political Philosophy of *Mìng xùn" In *Warp, Woof, Wen / Phoneme, Pattern, Pun*, Lisa Indraccolo and Wolfgang Behr eds, Leiden: Brill
[221] Ibid., p.38
[222] Ibid., p.38
[223] Ibid., p.9
[224] Ibid., p.38
[225] Ibid., p.40

readers. The "immediate consequences for the text recipient" is that the recipient experiences a process of dialectic through reading the "Mingxun". We are then led to say that there are three things sharing the same structure, namely the dialectic structure: one is the ruling system in the world (the content of "Mingxun"); one is the textual composition of "Mingxun" (the form of "Mingxun"); and one is the experience introduced to readers during their reading activity (the effect of "Mingxun").

This is not hard to see how this tripartite relation constitutes a performance. Just think of an artistic performance as the "Xianchi music" and assume that the target of an artistic performance is beauty. For an artistic performance being a performance at all is to express its understanding of beauty (the content) with a corresponding performative arrangement (the form) and produce an experience of that very beauty to the audience (the effect). A performance ceases to be a performance if any one of the tripartite is taken out. For example, it is definitely a failure for the audience not experiencing the beauty suggested by the performance, or for the form not arranged in a way that fits with the understanding of beauty at hand.[226]

Let's get back to the *Zhuangzi*. In the light of such a conception of performance, I argue that the *Zhuangzi* is a *dao*-performance since it is so constructed to build up the *irreducible triangularity*. I conceptualise the experience of readers of the *Zhuangzi* as fear and sublime, weariness and escape, and confusion and stupidity by referring to Emperor Wang. For one thing, such an experience is created by the *Zhuangzi* (together with its forms and content). Reconsider the forms I have analysed in this thesis. The form of narrative, irony and paradox all together contribute to creating such an experience. First, narrative puts forward a "constellation of perspective" to its readers and scare them with extraordinary perspectives like Kun-Peng's. The constellation also provides a textual space where they could wander around and make them weary. Second, the ironic twist wipes off the illusion of finding an anchor in such a constellation. It makes the "finding the *Zhuangzi*'s spokesman" strategy untenable. In other words, one could only keep wandering in the constellation instead of

[226] Some may wonder if this is simply a failed performance instead of non-performance. Or put it in another way, the tripartite relation does not constitute the essence of performance but simply the ideal of performance. It sets the threshold for good performance instead of performance per se. This is a tricky question since the concept of "performance" along with "art" "law" "human being" is argued by many as evaluative as opposed to *descriptive* concept. Consequently, there is not much difference between the claim that this is a failed performance and that this is not a performance at all. I assumed such a position in this regard. See Thompson, Judith (2008) *Normativity*, La Salle IL:Open Court

firmly holding one of the perspective to lead one's life. One is afraid of such uncertainty, tired of keeping the dynamic, and confused of the direction of both the text and oneself. The form of irony not only twists the text but also the experience of its readers. Third, the paradoxes further reinforce the process of confusion. Not only do paradoxical expressions challenge one of the deepest assumptions in ordinary thinking as I have argued in Chapter 4, but it also calls into question the confidence that we really understand the *Zhuangzi* at all. The structure of "paradox over paradox" confuses its readers to the greatest extent since the text creates an endless process of doubting of its own. What to doubt is not just our conventional knowledge i.e "usefulness is usefulness", and the paradoxical wisdom suggested by the *Zhuangzi* i.e "uselessness is usefulness", but also the certainty itself. Whatever is considered as the undoubtable is the target of the *Zhuangzi*'s doubt. The passage in the "Shanmu" chapter analysed in Chapter 4 is a great example illustrating how the *Zhuangzi* sets up and fools its readers.

More importantly, these experiences are the *dao* themselves. The *dao* suggested by the *Zhuangzi*, that is, the way of life the text is offering to its readers, is precisely such a process of fear and sublime, weariness and escape, and confusion and stupidity. In other words, to lead one's life with the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi* is nothing mysterious but just following the route paved in the text. Just like what I have argued in Chapter 1 that "xiaoyao" is not exemplified in any one of the characters but in the experience of wandering around the twisted and contradictory constellation of perspectives. The last words of the Emperor also point to this experiential nature of *dao*. He said: "*dao* is something that people could ride on and move along with" 道可載而與之俱也. The crucial implication of his saying is how he conceptualised the relation between *dao* and Cheng of North Gate's experience. The point is that *dao* is not over and above the audience. Nor is it something external to the audience waiting for them to get to know. It is rather something embedded in Cheng of North Gate's experience. Through his experience listening to the performance of the "Xianchi music", Cheng of North Gate "ride on and move along with" *dao*. The *dao* accompanied Cheng of North Gate right during his listening to the performance. Similarly, one is accompanied with *dao* right during one's reading to the *Zhuangzi* composed of narrative, irony, and paradox.

Consequently, we should re-conceptualise the relation between the *Zhuangzi* and *dao*. Only by liberating from the dominant picture of contemporary philosophical context, could one truly appreciate how the *Zhuangzi* works philosophically. The dominant picture assumed by

the content-approach against which I have argued in Chapter 1 is that: the *dao* as an abstract proposition concerning cosmology, morality and human's life is argued by the *Zhuangzi* by whatever forms, and transmitted to its readers' mind (see diagram A). What *dao* means in such a picture is merely the content of the *Zhuangzi*. *Dao* is just what the *Zhuangzi* talks about, and gets its readers to know about. There is not at all any internal relation connecting the *dao* with the text and its readers. By contrast, what I am arguing is the *irreducible triangularity of content, form and readers' experience* (see diagram B). In my diagram, *dao* is *performed* in the *Zhuangzi*. That is to say, *dao* is not external to the *Zhuangzi* but lies at the heart of the text. The text is not only concerned about *dao* but its forms and experience created for its reader are so arranged in harmony with the *dao*. As opposed to taking the *Zhuangzi* as the intermediary between *dao* and its reader, the *Zhuangzi* should rather be considered as the entire triangle stated in diagram B.

[Diagram A]

Dao (the content of the *Zhuangzi)*

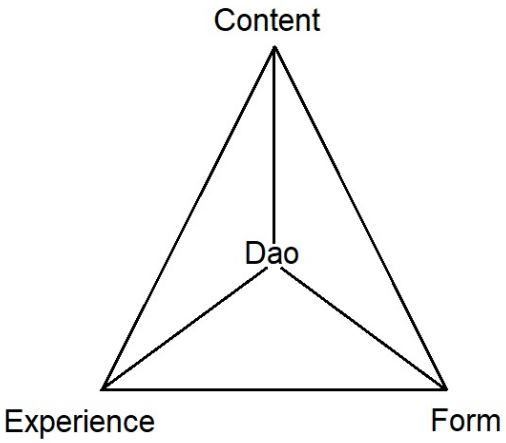
|

The *Zhuangzi* (composed of whatever forms)

|

Readers (receiving an abstract thesis)

[Diagram B]



In addition to the re-conceptualisation of the relation between the *Zhuangzi* and *dao*, there is also a need for a re-conceptualisation of the relation between the scholarly works on the *Zhuangzi* and the *Zhuangzi* itself. In the abandoned picture, the scholarly work is considered as something that attempts to *paraphrase* the *dao* talked by the *Zhuangzi*. Now, however, the irreducibility of the triangularity makes this mechanism impossible. The question is then: what role does the scholarly work, including the very thesis you are reading, play? I would leave this question to the conclusion as a self-reflection concerning the relation between my thesis and the *Zhuangzi*.

To sum up, the performative nature of the *Zhuangzi* is essential to its understanding. To think of the *Zhuangzi* as a *dao*-performance is to think of it as an irreducible triangularity. In the context of the problem of self-defeating, the way in which the *Zhuangzi* overcomes the problem is evident: although the *Zhuangzi* as a text liberates itself from the actual context in different aspects, it successfully makes itself a textual performance with its unique textual composition. Instead of being confined in the inflexibility of writing, the *Zhuangzi* breakthroughs the predicament of text by deploying the literary forms I have analysed. The apparent contradiction between the dynamic nature of the *dao* and the *Zhuangzi*'s being a text is dissolved: the *dao* is dynamic, so is the *Zhuangzi*.

v. The hermeneutical experience of truth

So far I have argued how the *Zhuangzi* overcame the problem of self-defeating by deploying a series of writing strategies. According to my argument, some might think that the *Zhuangzi* was a text of performative nature which serves as a counterexample to Ricoeur's conception of text, or to philosophical hermeneutics in general. Quite the contrary, my argument is in effect very much in line with philosophical hermeneutics. To put in a wider context, I will illustrate my argument with reference to the philosophical ideas of hermeneutics at the end of this chapter.

As I have explained in section III, Ricoeur conceptualised the nature of text in contrast to speaking. He emphasised how text differs from a mere inscription of speaking, liberating from the original context of dialogue. In writing, "the conditions of direct interpretation through the interplay of question and answer, hence through dialogue, are no longer fulfilled." as he claimed. He, however, does not thus believe that text is bound to be a non-dialectic entity. He believes that "specific techniques are therefore required in order to raise the chain of written signs to discourse and to discern the message through the superimposed codifications peculiar to the realisation of discourse as a text".[227] It is hence obvious that the strategy of meaning-construction specific to writing is not overlooked in his account.

More importantly, he further believes in the creative nature of text. He writes that "the eclipse of the circumstantial world by the quasi-world of texts can be so complete that, in a civilisation of writing, the world itself is no longer what can be shown in speaking but is reduced to a kind of 'aura' which written works unfold. Thus we speak of the Greek world or the Byzantine world".[228] Therefore, to completely understand his conception of text, the autonomous nature of the text in relation to the "circumstantial world" is only one side of the coin; there is also the creative nature of the text on the other side. That is, while text emancipates from the ordinary world in which we all live, it constructs its own textual world thanks to those "specific techniques".

[227] Ricoeur (1981), p.5
[228] Ibid., p.111

With respect to such a creativity of text, he refers to this nature as the "act of the text".[229] The concept calls for our attention not on the action of inscription and writing, but on the internal process of meaning-construction. What "the act of the text" creates is "the quasi-world of texts" or "path of thought" in which one could place oneself and follow.[230] On these grounds, the idea that the *Zhuangzi* is a trangularity of content, form and experience is by no means in contradiction with Ricoeur's conception of text. To formulate my argument in his terminology, the act of the *Zhuangzi* is that it constructs a "winding" "path of thought" or a textual world where the *dao* is exemplified, and every traveller is so confused.

Ricoeur's ideas on the autonomous and creative nature of text does not come from nowhere. He is clearly influenced by Gadamer. For example, Gadamer writes that "the text must be detached from all contingent factors and grasped in its full ideality, in which alone it has validity";[231] and also that "a literary text does not refer back to an already spoken word at all … Instead, the literary text is text in a most special sense, text in the highest degree, precisely because it does not point back to the repetition of some primordial act of oral utterance".[232] The distanciation from "contingent factor" and "the already spoken word" to the text's own "ideality" and "validity" is transformed into Ricoeur's "the circumstantial world" and "the quasi-world of texts".

The important implication of recognising the "ideality" and the world-creation nature of text is that the meaning of understanding could also be changed. In his hermeneutics, Gadamer proposed the concept of "horizon" which means "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point".[233] On the one hand "horizon" makes possible what is seen to be seen in the sense that it serves as the background by which we understand; on the other hand it also limits and sets the boundary of what can be seen. In this regard, the meaning of understanding, famously argued by him, is that "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves".[234] Whereas some may think of understanding as a process of cumulative acquisition of knowledge Gadamer argues that understanding is a process of letting one's horizon fused with the horizon of the

[229] Ibid., p.123
[230] Ibid., p.110
[231] Gadamer (2004), p.396
[232] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2007) *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, Richard E. Palmer, trans. and ed., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. p.181
[233] Ibid p.301
[234] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2004) p.305

others (including those of the written texts). For him, text provides "a genuine opportunity to change and widen [their] horizon, and thus enrich [their] world by a whole new and deeper dimension".[235] The idea of "fusion of horizon" amounts to asserting the experiential nature of understanding since it no longer takes understanding as a pure intellectual grasp of detached truth. Rather, understanding is always about how one sheds light on things in a different perspective which was omitted in the horizon before. Accordingly, "one who "understands" something is not so much someone endowed with a specific knowledge, but someone who can exercise a practical skill".[236] In other words, to understand is to confront the text, let the text change one's horizon, and review things from a new point of view.[237]

The reconceptualisation of the relation between the *dao* and the *Zhuangzi* I have argued for is echoed in this model of understanding. In the content-approach, the *dao* is thought as an external thing to the *Zhuangzi*. According to this picture, understanding the *dao* means grasping a piece of abstract knowledge transmitted via the *Zhuangzi*. This picture concerning the meaning of reading the text and how one accesses the *dao* is in exact opposition to Gadamer's ideas on understanding. It is because this picture pressumes an epistemological and cognitive notion of understanding which Gadamer tries to shake up by his practical notion.[238] By contrast, my picture respects the experiential and practical nature of understanding. In reading the *Zhuangzi* one is related to the *dao* not by a purely epistemic grasp but by experiencing the performance (or the "act" in Ricoeur's terminology) of the text. Instead of acquiring a piece of new information, one experiences a new way of living. Consequently, the understanding of the *dao* should not be understood as a two-steps model: one first grasp the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi*, and then applies in one's life; rather it should be thought as an experience: one experiences the *dao* in the *dao*-performance of the *Zhuangzi*, and this very experience itself is already an exemplification of the *dao*. In other words, the application and experience do not come after the understanding of the *dao*; it instead happens at the same time during reading the text.

Furthermore, the way Gadamer understands such an hermeneutical experience also fits well with my account. When spelling out the nature of the hermeneutical experience he highlights

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[235] Gadamer (2004) p.391
[236] Grondin, Jean (2002) 'Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding' In *Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* Cambridge University Press, p.37
[237] Gadamer (2007) p.180
[238] Ibid p.38

the dialectic of negativity and positive openness in it. In this regard, Lawrence K. Schmidt explained clearly:

> "The point is 'the birth of experience [occurs] as an event over which no one has control and which is not even determined by the particular weight of this or that observation' (TM: 352). Hegel is important because he demonstrates that the primary sense of experience is negative; having an experience, in this sense, means to discover what one thought was the case is not, in fact, the case. Therefore, 'strictly speaking, we cannot have the same experience twice' (TM: 353). Hegel's mistake is to think that this negative experience leads to a dialectical synthesis and finally to absolute knowledge. Rather, Gadamer argues, the negativity of experience leads to an openness for future experience. Aeschylus' formula, 'learning through suffering' (quoted in TM: 356) attests to this openness for future experience since it not only refers to the negative experience of learning that one did not know, but also to the finitude of human knowledge in general. Therefore, 'the truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience' (TM: 355). Hence the reflectivity of consciousness does not lead to absolute knowledge, but rather to the truth of experience itself."[239]

Gadamer considers the hermeneutical experience as a dialectic process towards "openness for future experience". First, such an experience is primarily negative in the sense that it "discover what one thought was the case is not, in fact, the case". It is always about how one negates the belief one held before confronting another horizon. One's beliefs are called into question before the text. For example, the conviction that "usefulness is usefulness" is confronted by the story of Shu in the *Zhuangzi*. Second, more importantly, the negativity of the experience does not assume a destination and turn one towards an absolute endpoint. The negativity of the experience instead "implies an orientation toward new experience". By negating one's conviction, one is turned towards openness and possibility. Gadamer is different from Hegel in the sense that truth does not lie at the endpoint of absolute knowledge but in such a dialectic experience itself.

[239] Schmidt (2006), p.110

The *Zhuangzi* is evidently in line with this conception of truth. The *dao* is not an end product brought by the "Xianchi music" but the experience consisted of fear, weariness and confusion created during the anticipation of the performance. The *Zhuangzi* endlessly negates its readers' conviction and thereby turns them towards the infinite "openness for future experience". That is to say, the truth of the *dao* lies in the reading experience itself .

To conclude, far from contradicting itself, the *Zhuangzi* is in full harmony and unity. It is a fascinating text that constructs its own *dao*-world with its *dao*-forms i.e narrative, irony and paradox which creates the *dao*-experience for its readers. The presumption that the *dao* is merely the thing that is discussed and contained in the *Zhuangzi* should be abandoned. We should not think of the *dao* as the subject matter of the text. The content, the form, and the experience are all the aspects where the *dao* lies. That is to say, the *Zhuangzi* is a *dao*-performance while the *dao* is what is performed in the *Zhuangzi*.

Conclusion

This DPhil thesis is an attempt to deploy the literary form approach into the analysis of the *Zhuangzi*. My study not only enriches the understanding of different forms of the *Zhuangzi* i.e narrative, irony and paradox, but also leads to a fundamental re-conceptualisation of the nature of the text and its relation to the *dao*. I believe that my later contribution is of great significance to both the study of Chinese philosophy in particular and ancient philosophy in general. Although examinations in greater detail are required, I am convinced that the concept of "performance text" is a valid conceptualisation of the ancient philosophical texts in general. I am wondering if we were blinded by the conventional style in contemporary philosophical practice and thus fail to see the performative nature of them. As Nussbaum argues, the "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid" style is just too dominant, at least in Anglo-American philosophical prose.[240] We might falsely assume that the ancient philosophical text is as "scientific" as the contemporary text. In the case of the *Zhuangzi*, some wrongly presume that the *dao* of the *Zhuangzi* is a detached statement, a thesis, or a philosophical position i.e a -ism "scientifically" argued by the text.[241] Such a presumption created by the convention of contemporary philosophical academia leads one to disregard the practical purpose of the ancient texts. The practical goal of turning one towards philosophy or the *dao* is reduced into the purely cognitive pursuit of the truth. At this point, I do not have sufficient evidence in support of such a bold claim but it seems to me that the practical and performative nature of ancient philosophy in different languages and traditions are evident. I therefore believe that it might be helpful to extend the concept of "performance text" into our study of ancient philosophy in the future.

Before ending, I would like to introduce one last thought worth exploring. There is a question concerning the nature of this thesis itself. In contrast with "the threat of self-defeating of the *Zhuangzi*" dealt in the last chapter, I refer to this question as "the threat of self-defeating of this thesis". This thesis is prone to the threat of self-defeating because the form of it seems to contradict the content of it. That is to say, the way in which this thesis lays out its argument is in conflict with what it argues for. The entire thesis is grounded on the literary form approach that emphasises the unity of form and content of the *Zhuangzi*. I have argued the

[240] Nussbaum (1992), pp.14-15

[241] I am by no means assuming the opposition of the "scientific" and the "mythical". To say that the *Zhuangzi* is not as scientific as the contemporary text is not to say that it is mythical, but that its *dao* is not merely cognitive and epistemological. It is strongly experiential and practical.

philosophical significance of narrative, irony and paradox. The very thesis itself, however, is not written in a form similar to any of these forms at all. It is written in the "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid" style as any other theses. Consequently, isn't the very activity of arguing the harmony of form and content in the *Zhuangzi* in a style common to the contemporary convention a performative contradiction? If I am correct in arguing for the importance of forms in the *Zhuangzi*, this thesis is by no means able to explain the text since the form of the thesis is not in line with those forms of the text. The question is: given the necessity of forms in the triangularity, how could this thesis hold any explanatory relation to the *Zhuangzi*?

This is not a simple recurrence of the famous paradox of analysis raised by G.E Moore.[242] The paradox of analysis is concerned with the idea of analysis in general: how could an analysis be both correct and informative. The question at hand is much more specific to the literary form approach. That is, the threat of self-defeating is not as severe to the literary form approach as to the traditional content approach. For the content approach, the forms and textual structure of the *Zhuangzi* is simply disregarded and thought of as an empty medium in which its *dao* is placed. The focus lies on the content i.e the *dao* but not the form. Therefore, it does not matter whether the form of their analysis matches with the form of the *Zhuangzi* since in principle its *dao* e.g relativism could have been argued in entirely different ways. According to the content approach, what the interpreters or the scholars are doing is to *paraphrase* its philosophical ideas. For instance, while the *Zhuangzi* argued for the truth of relativism in the form of narrative, the contemporary paraphrase the main thesis and arguments of relativism in the "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid" style. Since the content is free from its form, the content is paraphrasable; since it is paraphrasable, there is nothing self-defeating for one to analyse i.e paraphrase the text. If its *dao* is simply a certain kind of relativism, it is not problematic to restate its *dao* i.e relativism in other forms. The relation of the *dao*, the *Zhuangzi* and the interpretation is that:

[242] G. E. Moore (2004), *Principia Ethica*, New York:Dover Publication

Dao

(a statement, a philosophical position or a -ism)

／ ＼

the *Zhuangzi* interpretation

(written in narrative form) (written in "scientific" form)

Nonetheless, such a picture no longer holds when the text is considered as a performance text whose content is bounded with its forms and recipient's experience. To assert that the forms of the *Zhuangzi* are a constituent of its *dao* is to assert the non-paraphrasable nature of its content. The non-paraphrasable nature of the *dao* leads to a dilemma for the literary form approach: either the literary form approach self-defeats itself in the sense that it attempts to paraphrase the non-paraphrasable *dao* in "scientific" form or the literary form analysis has no role in our understanding of the text at all. In this respect, I opt for the second horn of the dilemma. That is, we should reconsider how the literary form analysis like this very thesis is related to the performance text.

My initial thought is that one should not aim at paraphrasing the content of the text but explaining how the performance text works. This makes the philosophical study of performance texts much more akin to the work of art critics. That is to say, we could think of the relation between the interpreters and the performance text as the relation between the art critics and the artworks: on the one hand, the non-paraphrasable nature of forms and unification of forms and content is one of the defining features of art works: a piece of artwork is not defined in terms of what is expressed, but more importantly how it expresses the content. In this regard, the performance text is both philosophical and artistic. On the other hand, although the unification of forms and content in artworks make any attempt of paraphrase impossible, there is still a meaningful role for the art critics in the art world. As Danto argues, the chief mission of the art critics is to explain how the artwork in question works, that is, how the forms, the content, and the recipient's experience are perfectly unified in the work.[243] The turn from the mission of paraphrase to the mission of explanation means that the focus of the interpreters is no longer restricted in the content of the text. In the explanation of how the text works, the forms and the recipients' experience must also be

[243] Danto, Arthur (2005) "The Fly in the Fly Bottle: The Evaluation and Critical Judgement of Works of Art" in *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap between Art and Life*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, pp. 355–68

included. I therefore believe that the way out of the threat of self-defeating to the literary form approach is to reconceptualise one's mission. We should abandon the mission of paraphrase and adopt the mission of explanation.

In short, neither the *Zhuangzi* nor this thesis self-defeats itself. The real lesson taken from the threat of self-defeating is that: our understanding concerning the nature of the text and also the nature of the analysis on the text should be reformed.

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