

Three Tropes in the *Zhuangzi*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Abstract

The art of writing in the *Zhuangzi* has become a subject of considerable interest in recent years, but many perspectives have yet to be explored. The *Zhuangzi* is known for its delicate and protean art of writing. Its aesthetic value outweighs its other aspects. I was inspired by Wang Zhongling's study to examine the specific tropes of the *Zhuangzi*. In the Chinese context, the current studies about tropes in the *Zhuangzi* mostly focus on metaphor or allegory studies. In the western context, however, due to the different definitions and understandings, tropes in the *Zhuangzi* rarely come into question. In this regard, the first fundamental purpose of this thesis is to sort out, clarify, and re-define three particular tropes in the *Zhuangzi*: analogy, litotes and allegory.

As a skeptic of language, Zhuangzi refuses to conceptualize the objective world with the traditional language system, but concentrates instead on conveying his poetic wisdom in special language forms and a unique writing style. Many critics believe that the language view in the *Zhuangzi* is contradictory to the Daoist language view. However, the clarification of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* unveils the protean writing style of the text. Based on the analysis of the specific use of tropes, this thesis then analyses the three tropes as rhetorical device, and proves that they are all presented as solutions for dealing with major concerns about language showed in the *Zhuangzi*.

Tropes in the *Zhuangzi* have to overcome the restrictions and defects of traditional language. For example, analogy in the text mainly plays a central role in defining realities. The use of litotes functions to deconstruct the dualistic relations in the text. As for the allegory, it is used to conceptualize human experience. In spite of their special expressions, all three tropes lead to the same the ultimate goal—to restore a dynamic balance of the objective world in a renewed language expression.

Exploring the function of tropes not only helps us better understand the distinctive writing style of the *Zhuangzi*, it helps create a new understanding of his view of holistic language. Influenced by the theory that “Words exist because of meaning; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words,” the general view of language manifested in the *Zhuangzi* reflects an instrumentalist characteristic; the connections between language forms and meaning seem to be temporary or even contradictory. However, the further understanding of tropes deepens this point of view. One of the major functions that language undertakes is to reconcile the contradiction between language and meaning, or even to redefine the relationship between the two. With the involvement of tropes, language forms and meaning manifest an internal consistency. The relationship between them becomes progressive from one to another, like layer upon layer. Language and meaning, therefore, both become ladders to reach Dao; in this case, the path that “language-meaning-Dao”, has been accomplished.

In conclusion, the exploration into the tropes in the *Zhuangzi* is of great significance from different perspectives. It not only helps us reexamine the relationship between language and the Dao, it reinforces the view that language is not a barrier but a fundamental and necessary link to achieve Dao. On the other hand, the study of tropes also creates new possibilities and provides new angles to connect the language theory of the *Zhuangzi*, with western language philosophy. The study of the tropes in the *Zhuangzi* awaits further study.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

1.1 An Introduction

Discussion about language philosophy has held an essential position in the study of Daoism. Whether in the *Daodejing* or *the Zhuangzi*, the ideas and discussion about language view can be found everywhere. For example, one of the greatest classic points of view in the *Daodejing* is that “As to a Dao—if it can be specified as a Dao, it is not a permanent Dao. As to a name—if it can be specified as a name, it is not a permanent name” (3). It is obvious that the author has denied the one-to-one corresponding relation between names and connotation. As one of the most significant works of philosophical Daoism, the *Daodejing* has laid a foundation for the language view—the whole semiotic system as an invalid, unreliable and helpless way to satisfy the need for communication and expression.

The *Zhuangzi*, as a representative philosophy work of Daoism, generally holds the same position as indicated in the *Daodejing*. Not only that, the *Zhuangzi* provides a more specific description of the limitation of language and illustrates the contradiction between language and the Dao in the *Zhuangzi*. For example, the discussion on the relationship between Dao and the name of it also appear in the *Zhuangzi* as well. In “Discussion on Making All Things Equal,” the author once proposed that “the Great Way¹ is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken; Great Benevolence is not benevolent; Great Modesty is not humble; Great Daring does not attack” (44). A similar point of view is found in “Knowledge Wandered North”: “The Way cannot be heard; heard, it is not the Way. The Way cannot be seen; seen, it is not the Way. The

¹ As a unique concept in the classic Chinese philosophical system, Dao has very rich connotations. The Chinese character Dao (道) contains a meaning of “the way.” So that in *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* translated by Burton Watson, Dao is directly translated as “The Way.” In this thesis, “the Way” which appears in many of the quotations, is equivalent to the Dao.

Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way” (243). The inability of language to name Dao, a limitation pointed out in the book of *Zhuangzi*, is the same inability that limits the viewpoints in the *Daodejing*.

Laozi and Zhuangzi are considered two of the most important representatives of Daoism and their opinions on the language are quite similar. The philosophical standpoint shows in the *Zhuangzi* seems to be an adherent of the philosophical standpoint shows in the *Daodejing*. However, before proceeding further, it is also important to point out that the relationship between these two philosophers and their philosophical propositions are not successive. As clarified by A.C. Graham, as with other schools of thought in the pre-Qin period, Daoism is a retrospective school of thought. While Laozi was highly regarded for centuries for his “art of rulership” (170), Zhuangzi was considered a marginal figure because of his reconciliation with death, which was at the very heart of his philosophy. It was not until the “Bibliographical Chapter of the Han History,” which categorized Zhuangzi as a figure of Daoism, that Zhuangzi was finally considered a Daoist philosopher (171).

Despite the different political views indicated in the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, it is still possible to retrospectively classify philosophical Daoism. As Graham explains, the philosophy of both Laozi and Zhuangzi shares one basic insight—the movement of things should be in harmony with their nature, man is no exception. However, both Laozi and Zhuangzi believe, due to a variety of external factors such as “reflection, alternatives, and principles of action,” that man gradually takes himself away from spontaneity, in other words, from the right track to Dao (188). This same insight not only shows Laozi and Zhuangzi’s defense of Dao, it explains the consistency of their skepticism of language as well.

However, neither Laozi nor Zhuangzi completely repudiate language. In fact, both are masters of language. This is especially true of Zhuangzi, who has long been known for his protean, humorous, and free language style, yet at the same time, is known as a master who always “professes a boundless skepticism about the possibility of ever saying anything (Graham 199).” In spite of their continuous emphasis on the limitation or the danger of language, neither Laozi and Zhuangzi have really isolated or abandoned language. Instead, these Daoist philosophers prefer to use various literary forms, such as story, prose, and aphorism in their own writing. This is also one of the reasons why their work, the Daoism classics, occupy such an important position in the history of Chinese literature (Graham 200).

In fact, the skepticism of language does not indicate a denial of it. Just as Philip. J Ivanhoe once pointed out, a language skeptic is just someone who always believes that language is inadequate to express certain facts; at the same time, he might still be able to take advantage of language to express himself (640-641). In other words, there never exists any irreconcilable contradiction between the standpoint of the *Zhuangzi* and the language. The true purpose for the *Zhuangzi* pointing out the flaws and defects of language is to overcome them eventually. What the *Zhuangzi* is really against are language forms or expressions that might be problematic, not the language system itself.

For example, one of the most typical problematic forms of language has already been mentioned above—names. In the *Zhuangzi*, language and “names” all contain a meaning of “words,” and also refer to concepts. In other words, “the debate over the relationship between name and reality” (Yang and Mo 2) refers to the discussion about the relationship between the abstract and conceptual world and the realistic one. According to a view in the *Zhuangzi* that “The ten thousand things differ in principle, but the Way shows no partiality among them, and

therefore they may achieve namelessness” (290), it is clear that in being part of the language, names cannot capture and express the unified form of being. Apparently, they are unable to overcome their own limitations and, as a result, names will always fail to adequately convey the Dao, and become one of the reasons that might lead beings to man’s misunderstanding on the objective world.

In addition to the problems caused by names, another controversy worth mentioning in the *Zhuangzi* is “discussion of the connection between words and meanings or ideas” (Yang and Mo 8), which refers to the relationship between language forms and their connotations. Since the corresponding one-to-one relations between names and realities have been deconstructed in the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, whether language as a whole could manage to undertake the function of expressing the meaning of existence also becomes questionable. Nevertheless, regardless of “the debate over the relationship between name and reality” or the “discussion of the connection between words and meanings or ideas,” both controversies illustrate one thing—language has become a factor that accelerates the division of the objective world. One of the reasons is manifested in the “Discussion on Making All Things Equal”:

What does the Way (the Dao) rely upon, that we have right and wrong? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on in the show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Mo-ists. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right (39).

道惡乎隱而有真偽？言惡乎隱而有是非？道惡乎往而不存？言惡乎存而不可？道隱於小成，言隱於榮華。故有儒、墨之是非，以是其所非，而非其所是。

According to the text, it is obvious that language lost its neutral position because it was utilized by Confucianism and Mohism as a device to support their thought. Instead of being a transparent medium, language starts to show a partial characteristic with the utilization from different schools of thoughts. In other words, with the development of language, the ideal world, in which “the ten thousand things are unified and equal” (182), will no longer exist. This may lead to another question: the writing style of the *Zhuangzi* seems to be less compatible with the fundamental language view of Daoism, the abundant use of various tropes in the book has been used to clearly distinguish the *Zhuangzi* from the *Daodejing*. Compared to the very minimalist writing style of the *Daodejing*, the writing strategy in the *Zhuangzi* does not conform to the fundamental Daoist standpoint towards language. Generally speaking, due to the lack of inner connections among vast quantities of rhetorical devices, the integral context of the *Zhuangzi* becomes incoherent and, thus, causes chaos from the perspective of time and space. Even “Zhuangzi” himself claims that:

He expounded then in odd and outlandish terms, in brash and bombastic language, in unbound and unbordered phrases, abandoning himself to the times without partisanship, not looking at things from one angle only. He believed that the world was drowned in turbidness and that it was impossible to address it in sober language.

(373)

以謬悠之說，荒唐之言，無端崖之辭，時恣縱而不儻，不以綺見之也。以天下為沈濁，不可與莊語。

This distinct writing style is a double-edged sword. It seems to make *Zhuangzi* a betrayer of his Daoist position due to the rhetorical content of text which has opposed the statement that “the Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way” (243). On the other hand, the

abundant tropes, imaginative metaphors, and unique text structures not only conferred a tremendous aesthetic value on the text but also made *Zhuangzi* a true master of language use. Based on the contradiction between the Daoist standpoint and the unique writing style of the *Zhuangzi*, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the real aim of writing of the book and to elaborate on the specific functions of various tropes in the text. Although the art of writing of the *Zhuangzi* seems superficially contrary to the basic view of the language of Daoism, in fact, the use of tropes not only present the aesthetic value of the writing of the *Zhuangzi*, but also represent linguistic strategies showed in the *Zhuangzi* to stop language from accelerating the division of the world.

This thesis focuses on three typical tropes—analogy, litotes and allegory—which were very widely used in the writing of the *Zhuangzi*. It is the aim of this thesis to offer an alternative perspective of the understanding of tropes in *Zhuangzi* and illuminate step by step how the *Zhuangzi* completed the salvation of language through the innovation of language forms. However, it is important to note that although the three tropes frequently appear in the *Zhuangzi*, the author of this book never clearly defined them. In this thesis, the terminologies “analogy,” “litotes” and “allegory” are only concepts borrowed to represent the typical tropes used in the *Zhuangzi*.

The first trope, analogy, as a rhetorical device it presents some similarities to “parallel construction.” It usually refers to a horizontal comparison among the various objects. However, in addition to the external manifestation of single sentences, analogy in the *Zhuangzi* is used to organize the text structure. Furthermore, analogies are commonly used as a more proper way to give definitions in the *Zhuangzi* instead of the system of “names and words.” The second trope which will be discussed in this thesis is litotes, which is a rhetorical device to cure the division

caused by debate. In much the same way that analogy is used in the *Zhuangzi*, litotes is also a derivative concept used to represent another typical trope—to convey an affirmative meaning in the form of a negative. It not only helps the readers to get rid of the ossified language system, it becomes an efficient methodology to settle the disputes caused by “right and wrongs.” The last trope which will be thoroughly analyzed is allegory. In the *Zhuangzi*, allegory generally refers to a short story with fictional plots and imaginary humans, animals or historical figures as the subjects. To some extent, allegories also undertake the task of restoring the missing context caused by the excessive use of language. Not only that, the creative ways of addressing allegory, to some extent, deconstruct the authority and ideology represented by language.

All three of these tropes are fully embodied in the writing of the *Zhuangzi*. They are not only manifested as an individual sentence patterns, they indirectly reflect the philosophical thinking pattern in the *Zhuangzi*. All the tropes in the *Zhuangzi* could be considered as language strategies with specific purposes. Unlike the willingness showed in the *Daodejing* to get rid of language after realizing the truth and danger of language, the *Zhuangzi* tries to rescue language by using it creatively rather than abandoning it.

1.2 Literature Review

In both Chinese and Western context, the language view expressed in the *Zhuangzi* is an indispensable part of understanding of the *Zhuangzi*. Due to the distinct art of writing, the *Zhuangzi* was long regarded as a sophist. On one hand, it is because he always tries to subvert the known opinions and repudiate rationality (Graham 178). On the other hand, due to the tremendous amount of acrobatics of writing, the text of the *Zhuangzi* becomes more obscure to

understand, as far as Xiaogan Liu is concerned, the arguments in the *Zhuangzi* are too vague to support his ideas (188).

The protean writing style of the *Zhuangzi* and the Daoist standpoint seems to make the language view of the *Zhuangzi* quite paradoxical. However, as opposed to scholars who identified Zhuangzi as a sophist, Wayne E. Alt observes the rationality and logic behind the writing of the *Zhuangzi* and draws a conclusion—even if Zhuangzi believes that language has subtle ways of ensnaring the thinking ability of man, he never rejects language or denies the logic behind it (61). Many scholars have reached a consensus of this point of view. For instance, as far as A.C. Graham is concerned, based on the paradox that the Dao is inexpressive in language, Zhuangzi is always skeptical about the possibility of whether language could convey the meaning accurately. Although he always tries to remind us of the limitation of the language system, the concerning and his productive use of language are not contradictive at all. On the contrary, to make clear the limitation of language, Zhuangzi firmly believes that man has no choice but to resort to language (199). Youru Wang has expressed the same opinion in terms of the acrobatics of language of the *Zhuangzi*. Even if Zhuangzi has professed a boundless skepticism towards language, he is undoubtedly a master of language use. The substantial use of tropes or rhetorical devices, such as sophisticated argument, aphorism, anecdote, lyrical prose, and gnomic verse, do not represent Zhuangzi's rejection of language but only refer to his negation of a particular function of language. What Zhuangzi tries to accomplish through the language, is to overturn the conventional way of using it (95).

The concerning over the conventional way of using language somehow leads us to the discussion of “names and words”, which is one of the most important backgrounds for understanding language view of the *Zhuangzi*. According to Guorong Yang, The *Zhuangzi* is a

classic work in the examination of names and words, which is related to the debate over "name and reality", or "the form and content of the expression". It is also an important channel for us to understand various categories of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*, such as the skepticism, relativism, and poetic philosophy (2). Not only that, both Guorong Yang and Zhongling Wang has expressed the same opinion. Taking "the debate over name and reality" as the background, the *Zhuangzi* explores the relationship between language form and the content behind it. As far as Wang is concerned, language view of the *Zhuangzi* is examining the relationship between signifier and signifying, which is a major concern in the context of western aesthetic as well (4).

Moreover, the debate over names and reality also separate the *Zhuangzi's* philosophy from other schools in his time. As Youru Wang has noticed, different from the *Zhuangzi*, the descriptive, cognitive, or reifying function of language was specified by other schools of thought such as Confucianism or Mohism (99). However, just as Philip J. Ivanhoe pointed out, all the other social, political and ethical thinkers of Zhuangzi's day were misguided—"the very source of their competing claims, the human heart and mind, could never provide them with the truth" (654). In the *Zhuangzi*, language is more than a thing with a useful signifying function, but at least, "a phenomenon that eludes all objectification". In other words, once the language is objectified, it will be regarded as a tool of regulation. Eske Møllgaard considers Zhuangzi's concern about the objectification language as the decisive difference between Zhuangzi and other schools of thought. According to Confucianism or Mohism, once the necessary relations between names and objects are determined, the regulatory function of language will be utilized to construct the socio-ethical sphere or the new social order. As a result, the language will be fixed into names, and no longer itself (68). A.C. Graham also compares the language view of Xunzi and Zhuangzi. Compare to a theory in the *Xunzi* that names and reality are corresponding to each

other, Zhuangzi apparently denies the conventional correspondence between names and reality, instead, he considers that the relations between names and objects are random (177).

Moreover, Zhuangzi's attempt to break through the limitation of the system of names and words does not stop at the theoretical level. What Zhuangzi wants to do, is to free language from its regulatory function. Zhongling Wang sorted out some typical tropes that constantly used in the *Zhuangzi* and analyzes the function of them. Even if some scholars claimed that massive use of rhetorical devices has caused the ambiguity, misunderstanding, and contradictions of the text, in fact, the use of tropes should help us grasp the thread of Zhuangzi's philosophy (4). For example, Wang connects Zhuangzi's view on "names and words" with a typical trope—analogy, which is massively and flexibly used in the text. According to Wang's observation, Zhuangzi uses the analogy to replace the conventional way of making definitions. Through the language structure of analogy, the one-to-one correspondence of reality and names, or signifier and signifying are no longer stable (13). However, using the analogy to construct concepts and definitions did not arouse enough attention. Not just analogy, it is also one of major aspects awaiting to be explored that using tropes as a specific methodology to break through the limitation of conventional language.

Another background for understanding the language philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is the discussion over disputation. As far as Eske Møllgaard is concerned, Zhuangzi realized the limitation of language caused by disputation, which originates from the "fixed mind" of man. Manipulated by the fixed mind, man only "right their right and wrong other's wrong". As a result, people's mind will be ensnared by the binary term "right and wrong", there is no chance for any mutual agreements (70). Youru Wang further explains that disputation will cause discrimination or division of the world. There is no way to avoid the partiality caused by

disputation. Being a derivation of disputation, no matter doctrine, hierarchy, right and wrong, or any other fixed binary positions, they always conceal something from a holistic view (98).

However, it is also worth mentioning that there is an obvious distinction between disputation and other use of language. As A.C. Graham pointed out, Zhuangzi's objection of disputation refers to the alternatives posed by disputation (189). For Zhuangzi, everything in the world is in flux, the two sides of contradiction are sometimes coexisting and interchangeable so that it is in vain to draw distinctions among objects. On the contrary, the right way to reach the status of dao, is "to be on the formidable path, and to merge into the unnamable whole" (188). Youru Wang has made a further explanation of the relationship between disputation and the dao. Being a notion that reveals the relativity of everything in the world, the dao represents a holistic dimension. However, the language, in the conventional way of using it, is inadequate to convey the dao because of its discriminative characteristics (101).

Just like the discussion regarding names and words, Zhuangzi did stop at pointing out the problems caused by disputation but tries to provide a solution. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Youru Wang finds the specific solution that Zhuangzi utilized to save the language from trapping into the division or discrimination caused by language. According to Wang, Zhuangzi seeks help from a kind of paradoxical language, which manifests in the form of "the speaking of no speaking" (106). Wang considers it as a typical language pattern which Zhuangzi utilized as a new linguistic strategy to overturn the conventional and logocentric hierarchy, or even to evade all the binary positions (107).

Being a typical linguistic form, the pattern of "the speaking of no speaking"—to convey an affirmative meaning in the form of a negative sentence, has been appreciated in *Daodejing* and aroused Chinese scholars' attention for a very long time. It not only represents the

characteristic of Daoist logical thought, but also a unique expression of both Laozi and Zhuangzi's philosophical writing (Sun 4). Moreover, the language form also has its strategic significance as well. As far as Shen Gao is concerned, to express an affirmative in a negative sentence has made language itself a combination or a unity of contradiction (4). Ming He also makes it clear that this language form represents the dialectic logic inference in classical Chinese aesthetics. The purpose of using this pattern is to prove that the oppositional relationship of any contradictions is interdependent and interconvertible (86). Considering the massive use of this form in the *Zhuangzi*, it is fair to say that the author relaunches the use of language and tries to save the language from trapping into disputation. However, even if scholars have realized that the problems caused by dichotomy might be solved via specific language form appeared in the *Zhuangzi*, not many studies further explore this pragmatic strategy. The language form that "conveying the affirmative through the negative sentence" still awaits further exploration.

As it stated above, no matter from the discussion on names and words, or the discussion on disputation caused by dichotomy, it can be found that Zhuangzi's countermeasures for fixing the problematic parts of language finally point to the using of language. In this regard, the value and significance of all kinds of rhetorical devices or tropes, or any other typical language form might deserve a re-examination.

In addition to those particular linguistic patterns, it is worth noting that the *Zhuangzi* is a book filled with all kinds of stories or narratives. The studies regarding the allegorical stories and narratives are too numerous to mention. Many scholars tend to regard the stories and narratives as a key perspective for understanding the essential thoughts of the *Zhuangzi*. For example, the "butterfly dream story" is the most known in the *Zhuangzi*, Kai-Yuan Cheng analyzes this story with the conceptual linguistics theory to explore the nature of "self" in the spiritual world of

Zhuangzi (563). In the understanding of A.C. Graham, “the death of Zhuangzi’s wife” reveals Zhuangzi’s optimistic attitudes towards life (175). Through the narratives of “the wheelwright P’ien [pian] chiseling a wheel” and “Dismemberment of ox by Cook Ding”, Wayne E. Alt observes the logic and rationality hidden beyond the story as a shred of evidence to deny Zhuangzi’s identity as a sophist that affirmed by A.C. Gram (61).

According to Na Fang’s explanation, the foundation to understand all kinds of stories or narratives is the metaphorical connotation beyond words. In the *Zhuangzi*, metaphor is a large conception which may be manifested in various language forms, such as phrases, sentences, idioms, proverbs or narratives. Almost all kinds of linguistic forms could be considered as extended metaphors, including some of the allegories or stories (17). Kim-chong Chong summarizes the major feature of metaphor— it cannot be completely paraphrased, there is always a remainder left behind (371). Chong’s understanding of metaphors coincides with one of Zhuangzi’s basic language views that language is always inadequate to convey meanings. To put it simply, metaphors enriches the ways for a man to recognize the world and free man from the boundedness through the use of it (371).

As it is stated above, Na Fang and Kim-chong Chong’s study emphasis the metaphorical significance in the *Zhuangzi*, and provide us a new perspective to re-examine and interpret the narratives in the *Zhuangzi*. Based on the metaphorical meaning of narratives, Na Fang makes distinctions among different kinds of narratives in the *Zhuangzi*. Fang defines the narratives with typical imaginative and metaphorical connotations as “allegory”. In addition to the literal meaning, there is always potential allegorical meaning that the author wanted to convey through the story, which cannot be paraphrased straightforwardly. Also, in *Zhuangzi*, the plots of an

allegory should not only be brief and straightforward but also imagined. The last point is, the characters appeared in the allegories, are imaginary humans, animals or historical figures (20).

Na Fang's new definition of allegory not only stresses the allegorical meaning but also highlights the imaginative characteristics of the writing of the *Zhuangzi*. As far as Yuet Keung Lo is concerned, the massive use of imaginative in the *Zhuangzi* is purposeful. The language takes the role of a carrier, the physical material world was transformed, boundaries were rendered completely irrelevant and meaningless. Authors of the *Zhuangzi* finds a way to help the readers the impossible through language and finally reaches the status of free and easy wandering in his spiritual world (90). Lo's interpretation of the function of allegory has made it the same as other language forms mentioned in the earlier text. Allegory has also become a specific linguistic strategy assisted *Zhuangzi* to overcome the limitation of conventional language. However, due to the different contexts, allegory in the *Zhuangzi* has long lacked a clear definition, the strategic significance of it also neglected and undervalued.

In conclusion, it is observed that, even if the various language forms in the *Zhuangzi* has aroused extensive attention of scholars, however, there is much less appreciation on the specific role that it plays in the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. Also in different contexts, the understanding and definition of various language forms such as tropes or rhetorical devices are distinct as well. This thesis, therefore, will focus on three typical language phenomenon which has already briefly mention in the text above—analogy, the pattern of special negative sentences and allegory. In the following chapters, a more specific definition as a trope will be given to each language phenomenon, and the roles that they played in the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* will also be further investigated.

1.3 Main Argument

Before elaborating on various tropes in the *Zhuangzi*, there is one more thing worth noting: the “authenticity of authorship” of the *Zhuangzi* is still controversial. According to A.C. Graham, the *Zhuangzi* is a collective work completed by various authors. Zhuangzi himself is just the most prominent one. The *Zhuangzi* consists of three sections, “Inner chapters,” “Outer chapters,” and “Miscellaneous chapters.” The chapters are collated and annotated by Guo Xiang, a commentator during West Jin period. So far, only the seven articles of “inner chapters” could be identified as Zhuangzi’s own work (Graham 173). Although scholars have long known that the *Zhuangzi* was not the work of a single author, the current thesis does not pretend to be a work of textual criticism, and will instead treat the text of the *Zhuangzi* conventionally, as if it were all written by Zhuang Zhou personally. This is justifiable on the basis that the text’s statements on language are remarkably consistent throughout, and may have been one of the defining factors in the development of this corpus. In this, I am following Zhang Longxi, who explains the issue as follows in *The Tao and The Logos*:

I do not distinguish what are generally accepted as the authentic chapters from the spurious ones, since it is not the authenticity of authorship but the ideas in the book and the actual influence they have exerted in the Chinese tradition that are of concern and relevance here. As the philosopher Zhuangzi himself might argue, the name Zhuangzi is just a convenient denominator that has its meaning or meanings only within certain historically and arbitrarily defined limits. (14)

Even though Graham recognizes that the *Zhuangzi* is not single-authored book, he too uses Zhuangzi as the denominator in the writing to discuss relevant issues. The language view is consistent throughout the text of the *Zhuangzi*. Consequently, as I have done for the past 11

pages, I will use the name Zhuangzi when I refer the text of the same name. First of all, it is necessary to recognize the irreconcilable contradiction between the Daoist view on language and other schools of thoughts such as Confucianism, Mohism, and Logicians. One of the most important views on the language of Confucianism represented by Confucius, Mencius, and Mozi is that of “Correcting Use of Names.” In Confucius’ opinion, words, names, debates, and other forms of language should all obey the ritual system and protect names. To this end, the Confucian language was endowed with political significance, and even became a sort of force which symbolized privilege. For example, in *The Analects· Book XIII*, Confucius claimed that one phrase could not only have “sufficed to save a country” but could “ruin the country” (145). A similar viewpoint is found in the theory of the *Xunzi*. Confucianism displays a respectful attitude towards language, similar to that in Confucianism. He uses the words of ancient sages as a standard to judge the good and evil in “Contra Physiognomy” in the *Xunzi*:

Every doctrine that is neither consistent with Ancient Kings nor in accord with the requirements of ritual and moral principle is properly described as a ‘treacherous doctrine.’ Although they may be the product of discrimination, the gentlemen will not heed it. (208)

凡言不合先王，不順禮義，謂之姦言；雖辯，君子不聽。

In conclusion, the Confucian views on language are stated based on the theory of the “correcting use of names.” Confucians strived to regulate social order and political ethics through language. Unlike Confucius, who used the existing “names” to regulate reality, Mozi advocated the view in “On the Value of Righteousness” that a name should be given based on the reality to which it is related: “So when we say that the blind people cannot distinguish between black they cannot tell the difference between the two and cannot make selections”

(435). To some degree, this point of view has subverted the positions of language and reality in the context of Confucianism. Nevertheless, Confucians or Mohists all attempt to build a solid relationship between language and reality, so that to some degree the objective world has been blocked within a frame consisting of names and words, and even fragmented by this language system.

Furthermore, in the *Zhuangzi*, the view of language of Confucianism and Mohism might cause another controversy over “rights and wrongs”, which as a result, might accelerate the division of the world as well: “Hui Tzu [Hui Zi] said, ‘The followers of Confucians, Mo, Yang, and Ping often engage with me in debate, each of us trying to overwhelm the others with phrases and to silence them with shouts—but so far they have never proved me wrong’” (268). Not only Confucianism and Mohism, the schools of Names (or the Logicians), which derived from Mohism during the Warring States period has also become one of the objects that the author of the *Zhuangzi* tries to “deconstruct”. For instance, the most important articles of in the *Zhuangzi*— “Discussion on Making All Things Equal” is written to refute the sophistry paradox of “A White Horse is not a Horse” raised by Gongsun Long, a representative of the school of Names. As depicted in the *Zhuangzi*, Logicians only focused on the differences between objects but ignored the inner connections and the possibility of transmissions among objects. Furthermore, just like Confucians and Mohists, Logicians also used to conceal the truth and essence through the debates. This point of view is made clearly in “The World”: “Huan Tuan and Kung-sun Lung [Gong Sun Long] were among such rhetoricians. Dazzling men's minds, unsettling their views, they could outdo others in talking, but could not make them submit in their minds—such were the limitations of the rhetoricians” (376).

The Daoist view on language contrasts with those of Confucianism, Mohism, and Logicians: to understand the perspective on language of the *Zhuangzi*, is necessary to be aware of the author's willingness to disregard the dominance of the aforementioned three schools of thought. It is worth mentioning that the final purpose of the book is not only to save the objective world divided by language but to rescue language itself from being trapped into division. Within these parameters, the writing strategies used in the *Zhuangzi* could be considered an active practice of his view on language. The objective of this thesis is to prove that the authors of the *Zhuangzi* were not trying to develop or modify language in the context of Confucianism and Mohism, but to build a new system based on the traditional semiotic system of language that is both consistent with and could help him to achieve the ideal outlook of "the ten thousand things are unified and equal" (182).

A metaphor from "External Things" is an appropriate example to describe the basic attitude towards language of the *Zhuangzi*:

The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit, once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him? (302)

荃者所以在魚，得魚而忘荃；蹄者所以在兔，得兔而忘蹄；言者所以在意，得意而忘言。吾安得忘言之人而與之言哉？

Based on the above quotation, it is easier to understand that language is a disposable tool that one is free to discard after the meaning has been communicated. It seems to match the general Daoist view on language (Zhao 133). However, this view is not entirely true.

Abandoning language is not the final purpose of the *Zhuangzi*. As Burik indicates, even if man has obtained the meaning of life, that does not mean that language is no longer needed, it is always necessary to return back to language (510). On the contrary, the debased and alienated attitude of language might just be a cover for the *Zhuangzi*, as author's realization of the true essence of language made them develop a particular fear towards it. As it puts in "Discussion on Making Things Equal":

Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me. We have already become one, so how can I say anything? But I have just said that we are one, so how can I not be saying something? The one and what I said about it make two, and two and the original one make three. If we go on this way, then even the cleverest mathematician can't tell where we'll end, much less an ordinary man. (43)

天地與我並生，而萬物與我為一。既已為一矣，且得有言乎？既已謂之一矣，且得無言乎？一與言為二，二與一為三。自此以往，巧曆不能得，而況其凡乎！

In light of the text above, it is clear to see that one typical characteristics of language is that it overlaps itself. Words are added layer upon layer, so that the language system has been expanded. The expansion of language system not only conceals the original meaning conveyed by language, but also accelerates the division of the objective world. Obviously, *Zhuangzi* has been aware of this potential risk, because in "The Way of Heaven," he claimed that:

Therefore the kings of the world in ancient time, though their knowledge encompassed all heaven and earth, did not of themselves lay plans; though their power of discrimination embraced the ten thousand things, they did not of

themselves expound any theories; though their abilities outshone all within the four seas, they did not of themselves act. (144-145)

故古之王天下者，知雖落天地，不自慮也；辯雖雕萬物，不自說也；能雖窮海內，不自為也。天不產而萬物化，地不長而萬物育，帝王無為而天下功。

In the narration above, the *Zhuangzi* exposed the vitality of language and made it clear that language will no longer be a simple tool that can be acquired by imitation but will exhibit its ambition. Perhaps there is an obvious “being” that existed within language (B. Wang 7). However, although the *Zhuangzi* is filled with criticisms of the limitations of language, the author did not abandon language. Instead, he tried to maintain his ideal that “the ten thousand things are unified and equal” (182). In short, Zhuangzi might be the first philosopher who attempted to save language through the use of language itself. Those rich tropes in the *Zhuangzi* which seem to be incompatible with Daoist language philosophy are precisely strategies to rescue language from a division.

1.3.1 The use of analogies

In “Discussion on Making All Things Equal,” the author once addressed a point of view that “The Way has never known boundaries; speech has no constancy” (43). As the one of the most important categories in Daoism, the Dao obviously cannot be regulated by any boundaries. There is a viewpoint stated in “The Great and Venerable Teacher”, “the Way has its reality and its signs but is without action or form.”² This can be interpreted as the author saying that the Dao cannot be confined to a fixed form. In fact, it is not only the transcendental Dao, but the entire

² The original sentence in Chinese is “夫道，有情有信，無為無形，” which is a typical analogy with a parallel structure.

objective world that is always in flux; especially in the ideal world in which “all things are equal,” no “being” —whether human or object—can be confined to a fixed form or a concept:

Once a man receives this fixed bodily form, he holds on to it, waiting for the end. Sometimes clashing with things, sometimes bending before them, he runs his course like a galloping steed, and nothing can stop him. Is he not pathetic? Sweating and laboring to the end of his days and never seeing his accomplishment, utterly exhausting himself and never knowing where to look for rest—can you help pitying him? I’m not dead yet! He says, but what good is that? His body decays, his mind follows it—can you deny that this is a great sorrow? Man’s life has always been a muddle like this. How could I be the only muddled one, and other men not muddled?
(38)

一受其成形，不亡以待盡。與物相刃相靡，其行盡如馳，而莫之能止，不亦悲乎！終身役役而不見其成功，荼然疲役而不知其所歸，可不哀邪！人謂之不死，奚益！其形化，其心與之然，可不謂大哀乎！人之生也，固若是芒乎？其我獨芒，而人亦有不芒者乎？

The *Zhuangzi* explains that once man identifies with the idea that his life relies entirely on the existence of his body, he will agree that the power of the mind will gradually vanish as his body wears out. The relationship between the “mind,” which represents the intrinsic value of man, and the “body,” which represents the external form, is reversed. Because man focus too much on the external form, the intrinsic becomes dependent on the extrinsic and even has to be subject to it. A similar thinking about the relationship between “body and mind” and “forms and connotations” is also reflected in the language view—the relationship between names and meanings. In “Free and Easy Wandering,” the author tries to put the relationship right via the

view that “the name is only the guest of reality” (32). He believes that the connotations should not be blocked in a fixed language form; likewise, human cognition cannot be manipulated and dominated by the language system.

In contrast to the view stated in the *Zhuangzi*, in other contemporary schools of thought, such as Confucianism, there is a completely different attitude towards language or names. In the *Xunzi*, a classical literature work of the Confucian School, the author has once indicated a theory in “On the Correct Use of Names,”:

Names have no intrinsic appropriateness. They are bound to something by agreement to name it. The agreement becomes fixed, the custom is established, and it is called “appropriate.” If a name differs from the agreed name, it is then called “inappropriate.”
(130)

名无固实，约之以命实，约定俗成谓之实名。名有固善，径易而不拂，谓之善名。

It would appear from the above that in the context of Confucianism, names are empirical products of human conventions in a social sense. Confucianism related the appearance of names to human’s daily experience. The development of names represents the establishment of a custom. In this regard, the “agreement” becomes the primary of names: self-consciousness and individual wisdom are no longer crucial. Over time, once the system of names and words (Yang 1) becomes increasingly stable, it will naturally transform into an authority to frame and fix the natural world, which will definitely cause the loss of fluidity of language system. In the ideal worlds which “all things are equal,” Burik argues that “things are processes have no strict boundaries; there is always a necessary vagueness or penumbra that the *Zhuangzi* explores extensively and which precludes the permanence of our artificial naming of things and thus precludes our seeing them as fixed entities” (505). In other words, with the appearance of names,

the world becomes the one “with boundaries.” In this regard, the Dao with no boundaries becomes more ambiguous and untouchable than ever.

It is infeasible and unreasonable to draw lines among things in nature. Everything should be loyal to its existing natural forms, and not to the names, definitions, or connotations that are given subjectively by people. However, the alertness to and rejection of the system of names and words showed in the *Zhuangzi* does not cause man to thoroughly alienate language; instead it motivates man to actively seek a solution within language. The exploration on language enriches the language phenomena in the *Zhuangzi*. In this regard, the appearance of analogy becomes rational and possible, and also becomes an efficient tool to cure the ossification or division caused by the system of names and words. Via analogy, names are no longer introduced separately, but function in parallel. For instance:

The great way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken; Great Benevolence is not benevolent; Great Modesty is not humble; Great Daring does not attack. If the way is made clear, it is not the Way. If discriminations are put into words, they do not suffice. If benevolence has a constant object, it cannot be universal. If modesty is fastidious, it cannot be trusted. If daring attacks, it cannot be complete. (44)

夫大道不稱，大辯不言，大仁不仁，大廉不嗾，大勇不伎。道昭而不道，言辯而不及，仁常而不周，廉清而不信，勇伎而不成。

The above text suggests that the name is not a constant and changeless symbol or concentration of a definition. Rather than introducing or defining a single name, the *Zhuangzi* focuses more on establishing transverse connections among various names. Analogy is used in *Zhuangzi* mainly as a writing structure. It worth noting that the *Zhuangzi* place diverse subjects

together in a similar and disciplinary structure to construct an analogy, for example, “great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy” (37). The *Zhuangzi* never dives deep into a further explanation of analogy but leaves the space for the readers to perceive the connotation by themselves. Even if the *Zhuangzi* actively reform language which made the language is no longer a barricade on the way to Dao. In general, the use of analogy has once again proved that the renovation of language does not contradict the pursuit of Dao.

In addition to the explicit comparison among multiple objects, analogy in the *Zhuangzi* has an implicit pattern of manifestation. As Wang Zhongling points out, “given mind” and “fixed bodily form” are a very typical pair of concepts introduced through analogy (12).³ To illustrate the relationship between mind and form, the *Zhuangzi* first came up with a point of view that “Once a man receives this bodily form, he holds on to it waiting for the end” (38). The introduction of “fixed bodily form” directly leads to another concept of “given mind” in the following text: “If a man follows the mind given him and makes it his teacher, then who can be without a teacher?” (38). One interpretation of this phrase is that the concept of “given mind” is actually the real key point of this passage; however, after a detailed explanation of “fixed bodily form,” the *Zhuangzi* skips the procedure of interpreting or defining “given mind.” The author of the book does so because the relationship between mind and form, as well as that between the spirit and the physical body, is always connected and interactive. The “given mind” is a mental status that is influenced by innate characteristics and acquired recognition (Z. Wang 13). It is

³ Unlike the English translation by Burton Waterson, in Chinese the “fixed bodily form” refers to “成形,” while “given mind” refers to “成心,” which is a typical analogy from the perspective both of word-building and the connotation of words.

definitely an abundant and dynamic status that cannot be concealed within a narrow language sign.

The world is always in flux: objects are fluid and can transmute into each other. Whether in the conceptual or physical world, the *Zhuangzi* states that there are no boundaries among objects. The author of the *Zhuangzi* utilizes the comparability of various objects and maintains their characteristics. He successfully achieves his goal by using language but avoids being restricted by the naming system in the Confucian and Mohist context. To directly replace definitions with analogies conforms to the view that “the way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way” in Daoism. Furthermore, the use of analogy provides more thinking space for the readers so their process of achieving Dao is still a result of the process of personal thinking. Throughout that process, language plays only the role of a necessary and dutiful tool without boundaries.

1.3.2 The use of “litotes”

In addition to the ossification of the world caused by the system of names and words, another concern about language stated in the *Zhuangzi* is the division of the physical world which might be caused by another derivative of language—debates, or disputes. This concern is also one of the *Zhuangzi*'s main targets for deconstructing the debates by reforming the use of language. In the “Discussion on Making All Things Equal”, the author denotes a fact:

When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Mo-ists. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right. But if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity. (39)

道隱於小成，言隱於榮華。故有儒墨之是非，以是其所非而非其所是。欲是其所非而非其所是，則莫若以明。

This quote exposes a pair of important opposites—rights and wrongs, which become the source of debates and divergence. Man fastens himself to one side of “rights” or “wrongs” and becomes involved in an endless debate only for justifying his own position. Under these circumstances, the biased interpretation through language might bewilder people and drive them further away from the essence of Dao. The real Dao could be hidden behind the fantastic and illusory appearances fabricated by language.

It is clear that with the reinforcement of language function and the increasingly sophisticated language-using methods, the understanding and exploration of Dao is weaker than ever. Eventually, language becomes a way to exhibit one’s own opinions, but the real Dao has been wholly concealed behind language. In light of this phenomenon, the *Zhuangzi* further explains why division could be accelerated by imagining a debate between Robber Chih [Zhi] and Confucius:

You make up your stories, invent your phrases, babbling absurd eulogies of kings Wen and Wu. Topped with a cap like a branching tree, wearing a girdle made from the ribs of a dead cow, you pour out your flood of words, your fallacious theories. You eat without ever plowing, clothe yourself without ever weaving. Wagging your lips, clacking your tongue, you invent and kind of “right” or “wrong” that suits you, leading astray the rulers of the world, keeping the scholars of the world from returning to the Source, capriciously setting up ideals of “filial piety” and “brother lines,” all the time hoping to worm your way into favor with the lords of the fiefs or the rich and eminent! (324-325)

爾作言造語，妄稱文、武，冠枝木之冠，帶死牛之脅，多辭繆說，不耕而食，不織而衣，搖唇鼓舌，擅生是非，以迷天下之主，使天下學士不反其本，妄作孝弟，而僥幸於封侯富貴者也。

In the voice of Robber Zhi, the author unveils the hypocrisy of Confucianism, and exposes the fact that language is very easily exploited as an instrument to defend a certain position and mislead others. He also exposes that the debates that emerge based on “rights and wrongs” obviously lead the objective world in a direction that is completely opposite that of the ideal world in which “all things are equal.” However, in the light of the theory that “the sage harmonizes with both right and wrong and rests in Heaven the Equalizer” (41), the author does not tolerate the development of debates, but attempts to find a way out via language. The basic standpoint on “right and wrong” of Confucianism and Mohism is to deconstruct through another point of view: “Everything has its ‘that’, everything has its ‘this’” (39)⁴, so that the author of this paragraph firstly negates the stability of the right and wrong relationship. Since the two poles of the contradiction are not reliable, the debates on it will be settled.

In the *Zhuangzi*, the author chose to use a typical sentence structure—to convey an affirmative meaning via a negative sentence structure. For example, “The Great Way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken; Great Benevolence is not benevolent” (39). Instead of expressing an opinion or sharing a concept using a direct affirmative sentence, the *Zhuangzi* always address the idea in the opposite manner, way through the use of negatives. In the example above, the litotes, to some extent, undertake a function similar to that of an analogy, which is to replace a traditional way of giving a name or a definition. Unlike the affirmative

⁴ In Chinese, the original text of “Everything has its ‘that’, everything has its ‘this’” is “物無非彼，物無非是。” which is a typical negative sentence structure.

sentence which narrows man's cognition, the negative sentence pattern actually offers a broader thinking space for the readers.

In addition to being reflected as an explicit sentence structure, litotes in *Zhuangzi* is also embodied as a kind of intrinsic logic in his text. For example, in “The Mountain Tree”:

Yang Tzu [Yang Zi], on his way to Sung, stopped for the night at an inn. The innkeeper had two concubines, one beautiful, the other ugly. But the ugly one was treated as a lady of rank, while the beautiful one was treated as a menial. When Yang Tzu asked the reason, a young boy of the inn replied, “The beautiful one is only too aware of her beauty, and so we don't think of her as beautiful. The ugly one is only too aware of her ugliness, and so we don't think of her as ugly.

Yang Tzu said, “Remember that, my student! If you act worthily but rid yourself of the awareness that you are acting worthily, then where can you go that you will not be loved!” (220)

陽子之宋，宿於逆旅。逆旅人有妾二人，其一人美，其一人惡。惡者貴而美者賤。陽子問其故，逆旅小子對曰：「其美者自美，吾不知其美也；其惡者自惡，吾不知其惡也。」陽子曰：「弟子記之：行賢而去自賢之行，安往而不愛哉！」

The text above indicates a more important function of litotes—to eliminate the disputes caused by “rights and wrongs.” In the common sense, “beautiful” and “ugly” are a pair of opposites that represent two poles of a contradiction. However, through the text above, the two opposite concepts, “beautiful” and “ugly,” are no longer stable, and the original valid boundary between them is dispelled. Based on the example of “beautiful and ugly,” it is fair to draw a conclusion that the two poles of any disputes and contradictions are always in flux and able to

mutually conform to each other. In this regard, the antagonistic relationship between rights and wrongs is no longer valid, either. Given the knowledge of the Confucian and Mo-ist viewpoint that “what one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right,” the *Zhuangzi* states that real cause of the division of the objective world is men’s obsession with choosing a prevailing standpoint. The language on this occasion becomes a powerful catalyst which intensifies the division and ossification of the objective world. But through litotes, man may eventually find a way to loosen the two poles of a dialectical unity. In this case, the debate based on a settled view of “rights and wrongs” is rendered moot. Therefore, language will also be released from being a cause of the disputes.

1.3.3 The use of allegory

In addition to analogy and litotes, the last critical method to fix language is allegory. It is worth mentioning that the terminology of “allegory” analyzed in this thesis is a derived terminology to represent a typical trope and a writing strategy in the *Zhuangzi*. It differs from the “allegory” in contemporary usage, and is not equal to “imputed words,” either.⁵ As mentioned earlier, the allegory in the context of this thesis is normally displayed as a short story with fictitious plots and imaginary humans, animals or historical figures as the subjects.

The unstrained imagination present in the large quantity of allegory makes the writing style of the *Zhuangzi* unique and meaningful. However, the frequent appearance of allegories has aroused some concerns about the coherence of the context of the *Zhuangzi*. As far as Wang Zhongling is concerned, due to, the context of the *Zhuangzi* is blurred by the large quantity and

⁵ “Imputed words” is a terminology in the article of “Imputed Words” of the Out Chapters. However, both “allegory” and “imputed words” are sometimes translated as “寓言” (yuyan) in Chinese.

successive use of allegory. Also, the function of reasoning in the *Zhuangzi* has been weakened, and the readers are likely to interpret that function by relying on their own capabilities (4). Even if allegory makes the language of the *Zhuangzi* more protean and subtle, the integral context of the whole book becomes more vague and elusive, and the allegory indeed shoulders a great responsibility for saving the language.

Based on the analysis of analogy and litotes, it appears that the author of the *Zhuangzi* holds a very liberal attitude towards language. As far as he's concerned, language should be a means of enlightenment, wisdom, and freeing individual minds. It should be a ladder leading man to get closer to the Dao but not a rigid symbol system to imprison minds or to convey certain values. This viewpoint once again puts the language view showed up in the *Zhuangzi* in opposition to Confucianism and Mohism. There is a typical viewpoint written in *The Analects*: "I transmit, I invent nothing. I trust and love the past" (18). With the flourishing of different regimes and diverse thought, the traditional values that formed the Zhou Dynasty gradually collapsed in the time of Confucius. Confucius always looks back to the Zhou dynasty, a supposed "golden age" during which the world was united and the patriarchal clan system was clear and certain. To restore the rites of the Zhou Dynasty, language thereby becomes an instrument to restore the orthodoxy of Confucianism. Under the influence of the historical conception of Confucianism, the language system was gradually endowed with authenticity and authority.

However, a question is raised about the capability of language to convey or restore history, and expresses these concerns in "In The World of Men":

Men of the world who value the Way all turn to books. But books are nothing more than words. Words have value; what is of value in words is meaning. Meaning has

something it is pursuing, but the thing that it is pursuing cannot be put into words and handed down. The world values words and hands down books but, though the world values them, I do not think them worth valuing. What the world takes to be value is not real value.

What you can look at and see are forms and colors; what you can listen to and hear are names and sounds. What a pity! — that the men of the world should suppose that form and color, name and sound are sufficient to convey the truth of a thing. It is because in the end they are not sufficient to convey truth that “those who know do not speak, those who speak do not know. (152)

世之所貴道者，書也。書不過語，語有貴也。語之所貴者，意也，意有所隨。意之所隨者，不可以言傳也，而世因貴言傳書。世雖貴之，我猶不足貴也，為其貴非其貴也。故視而可見者，形與色也；聽而可聞者，名與聲也。悲夫！世人以形色名聲為足以得彼之情。夫形色名聲，果不足以得彼之情，則知者不言，言者不知，而世豈識之哉！

In the text above, the author tries to make clear that regardless of books, words and other means of language are insufficient to convey the truth or the connotations. Man's recognition on the objective world is always influenced by the external forms of things. However, as the time passes and space shift, the connotation delivered in words may be constantly changing, so that the authenticity and authority of historical text is unreliable. In the quotation above, the author implicitly pointed out the veiled unreliability of language in the context of Confucianism. Since such language forms are unable to restore or convey history, language is no longer needed to shoulder the responsibility of seeking the truth but become a media of self-expression and free creation.

Unlike the realistic writing style of Confucianism, especially in contrast to the Confucian view that “The Master never talked of: miracles; violence; disorders; spirits” (Confucius 19), the *Zhuangzi* is filled with allegories that are narrated in a fictional setting with metaphorical figures and imaginative plots. Therefore, fictional writing becomes one of the most typical characteristics of the *Zhuangzi*. A willful imagination of the book leads readers to enter a world in which the boundaries between objects have been completely broken up. Utilizing language as a media, Confucianism chooses to state the history and convey the values therein while Daoist uses it to inspire minds. To release language from its realistic function, the *Zhuangzi* abandons the historical context and blurs the context of the writing on purpose. As Diao Shenghu observes, the fiction genre coincides with the implication of “Free and Easy Wandering,” which reflects the comprehensive characteristic of *Zhuangzi*’s integral writing. The status of “wandering” reflects *Zhuangzi*’s willingness to free people’s mind from the shackles of reality, and to build a connection between the spiritual world and the realistic (24). In this regard, allegory becomes the best backdrop for “free and easy wandering.” Daoist like *Zhuangzi* may also get closer to the ideal status via allegory.

1.4 Conclusion

Although the *Zhuangzi* shows some sophisticated and contradictory characteristics regarding discussions on language, the general language view showed in this book is still compatible with the essential Daoist standpoint of language. One of the goals of this book is to perceive the Dao and achieve the ideal situation in which “the ten thousand things are unified and equal.” The philosopher keenly detects the problem and disadvantage of language, especially in the context of Confucianism and Mohism, and tried his best to reverse this trend. Once the

language is utilized as a tool for reasoning or interpreting meanings directly, the original thinking space beyond words will no longer exist. Consequently, to stop the objective world from being ossified and abrupt, the appearance of various tropes become inevitable.

For the three main tropes that will be specifically discussed in this thesis—analogy, litotes and allegory—it is fair to say that each trope has a responsibility to save the language. Analogy is an example of the most commonly used trope in the *Zhuangzi*; analogy is an efficient way to replace traditional definitions. It is also the main strategy to cope with the ossification caused by the system of “names and words,” which is an inevitable derivative of language in the context of Confucianism and Mohism. In this system, the objective world is restrained by the one-to-one correspondence between names and objects. As a result, the world will be trapped in various names and definitions and men’s minds will likewise be confined. However, contrary to the system of names and words, analogy always refers to the inner connections among different kinds of objects or concepts; it transcends the limitations of single definitions and keeps objects in flux and will never be restricted by names. Compared to direct reasoning, analogies provide more space for people to think and comprehend. An analogy maintains the fluidity of the truth behind words and language.

Like analogy, litotes, another writing strategy in the *Zhuangzi*, is considered a solution that can quiet debate or disputes. Once the language is used to address debates, it will be controlled by human experience and lose its inner fluidity immediately. What the language undertakes and represents is only unilateral personal thoughts. However, a language should adhere to the neutral position but not be swayed by rights and wrongs. Using litotes could be considered as an attempt for him to break through the limitation of words and characters. It can be perceived that the *Zhuangzi* reinvests language with more liberal and dialectical connotations. Because of the

analytic characteristic, a language could maintain its neutrality and avoid becoming a tool of debate. It seems that the *Zhuangzi* found a solution to remove the possibility of debate from an inner perspective of language.

As for allegory, which is also the most widely used trope in the *Zhuangzi*, it not only represents the most typical writing art in the *Zhuangzi*, it shoulders a great responsibility—to deconstruct the traditional historical context. Allegory with fictional characteristics has completely released readers from a realistic context. Influenced by the change of time and space, language can never veritably or accurately convey ideology or certain values by duplicating context. Therefore, the authenticity and authority which are valued by Confucianism and Mohism are no longer valid. However, because fiction blurred and weakened the historical context of language, the readers were presented with an opportunity to surpass the limitation of common sense and the realistic objective world and to perceive and comprehend the connotation beyond words.

Known for its protean writing style, the *Zhuangzi* used to be a controversial text because of its blurred and elusive context. Even though the unique art of writing is endowed with aesthetic and literal value, the philosophical value of the writing techniques has been underestimated over a long period of time. Consequently, one of the main tasks of this thesis to explore the significance of the writing skills in the *Zhuangzi*, not only to focus on the literary character, but to pay close attention to the implicit purpose of using various tropes. Through the use of the three specific writing strategies—analogy, litotes and allegory—it is fair to draw a conclusion that the final purpose of the *Zhuangzi* is not just to deconstruct the traditional use of language, but to put more focus on finding a new way of using language.

1.5 Chapter outline

In this chapter, I will further discuss three tropes in the *Zhuangzi*—analogy, litotes and allegory—and the specific functions of being an assistant in the process of perceiving Dao. However, considering that these three tropes are temporarily derived from other contexts, there are no clear and valid definitions of them; the first priority of each section will be to give an accurate and proper explanation or definition of each trope. After the clarification of analogy, litotes and allegory, I will present a further analysis of each trope. The way that I analyze analogy and litotes will be relatively identical. Being two typical writing strategies, both analogy and litotes can be used to address a single sentence or to construct and organize passages. Both imply the intrinsic logical constructions of the philosophical thinking of the *Zhuangzi*. Therefore, the analysis of analogy and litotes is progressive. The focus of the analysis on analogy is to prove that, as a writing strategy, analogy indeed breaks through the restriction of names and words and free language that is trapped into ossification. The exploration of litotes will differ slightly from that of analogy. Before the analysis on litotes in the *Zhuangzi*, there will be a brief introduction of a typical trope in the *Daodejing*. This chapter will analyze the similarity of the writing art of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* and introduce a rhetorical device which constantly appeared in both books: litotes. From the *Daodejing* to the *Zhuangzi*, the similarity of a particular writing structure actually exposes the consistency of Daoist standpoint of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. The rest of this chapter will focus on the function of litotes. Based on the analysis of the cause of debates—right and wrongs—the following chapter will further explore the specific function of litotes. Whether an external language form or an inherent logic, litotes always deconstructs the binary positions. The last chapter will examine allegory, mainly focusing on exploring how the traditional context has been overturned. The chapter regarding allegory further

analyzes some backgrounds that frequently appear in the *Zhuangzi*. The ultimate purpose is to prove that the use of allegory indeed released language from a heavy historical context, and that language is no longer a means of conveying the ideology or certain values but becomes a way to help enlighten personal wisdom.

CHAPTER 2. Analogy

As the origin of “naturalism” in ancient Chinese culture, one of the most typical characteristics and basic standpoints of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is that the world is infinitely changing and flowing. As the author writes in “Autumn Floods,” “The life of things is a gallop, a headlong dash—with every movement they alter, with every moment they shift” (182). As Zhuangzi believes, the world is always in flux, things should “move spontaneously on the course proper to them” (Graham 172). However, compared to things that freely follow their nature, man faces more distractions. For example, as far as Graham is concerned, one of the reasons that man fails to follow his nature that most of the time, he is confined to the principles and doctrines such as “the Way of the Sage” or “the Way of the Former Kings,” which are normally manifested in the form of books (188). Zhuangzi, however, believes that the true meaning conveyed through language is also constantly changing so that the language system should not be confined within a solid framework like “the Way of the Sage” or “the Way of the Former Kings.” For the ancient Chinese disputers, language is a system of signs, which means that names must be fitted to objects and propositions deemed right or wrong according to how well they perform this function. With the involvement of the personal opinion of man, the referential or signifying function of language has been overly emphasized (Møllgaard, “Zhuangzi and The Experience of Language Itself” 213). As a result, language has lost the status of being empty, which means that it is no longer neutral but has to be subjected to man-made principles which will lead man away from the nature and Dao.

However, as mentioned in the last chapter, even if Zhuangzi makes clear the defects of language, he never abandons it. On the contrary, he is always trying to rescue language through the use of specific writing tropes. The background of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is that

men's minds should be freed from the spiritual shackles caused by the sclerotic system of language and words. This point of view also provides a nuanced perspective to interpret the art of language of the *Zhuangzi*—the complicated and changeable language style and abundant forms of rhetoric diction are all endowed with special connotations and significance.

Compared to the work from other contemporary schools of thought such as the *Analects* or the *Xunzi*, which place more emphasis on reasoning and explaining concepts, the writing of the *Zhuangzi* seems more protean and obscure because of its willful imagination and abundant uncommon images depicted in the text. However, it is not the real aim of the *Zhuangzi* to obfuscate the context or the reader's understanding with the rich imagery and abstruse allegory in the *Zhuangzi*. In order to better comprehend the connotation of the text, the function of the tropes is impossible to ignore. Even if the text of the *Zhuangzi* is considered to lack reasoning and explanation, the author has chosen a more unique way to introduce some exceptional concepts and definitions or even to convey his thoughts rather than just skipping or ignoring the interpretive phase in his writing. For instance, one of the most commonly used tropes in the *Zhuangzi*—“analogy”—has become an efficient way to introduce definitions and concepts or even to construct passages (Z. Wang 12).

It is important to note that the “analogy” mentioned in this thesis may vary from its original meaning or from its definition in other contexts. The analogy in the *Zhuangzi* has the basic characteristics of the form: i.e., it presents a comparison between two or more objects based on a relationship or partial similarity. The comparative concepts such as “worthless tree” and “worthless man” in “In the World of Man” or “fixed bodily form” and “given mind”⁶ in “Discussion on Making All Things Equal” are the most typical and explicit kind of analogy that

⁶ In the original text, these two concepts of “fixed bodily form” and “given mind” are 成形 (*chengxing*) and 成心 (*chengxin*). Because of the common character, the analogical relationship between these two concepts is tenable.

appears in the *Zhuangzi*. The paired concepts are connected by one similar word, such as “worthless.” The concept normally starts from a physical object or phenomena that exists in fact and then refers to a more abstract or metaphysical object. This kind of analogy presents a consistency of format and aims to build a connection between the actual world and the spiritual on a logic level. However, as a kind of typical trope, analogy in the *Zhuangzi* is endowed with much richer meaning and connotation. Its expression is also extended and expanded in the text. As Wang Zhongling believes, the analogical relationship is not only confined to single concepts, its also reflects on sentence patterns or even the the structure of passages (12). For example, the pattern used in the following sentence also frequently appears in the *Zhuangzi*: “Great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy. Great words are clear and limpid; little words are shrill and quarrelsome” (37). Compared with the first mode, the manifestation of this kind of analogy is more implicit. In general, the analogical objects comparatively lack internal connections, but through similar sentence patterns, the general characteristics between the concept or phenomena of comparison have been stressed. In addition, the parallel depiction of objects enhances the interaction between various objects and provides more space for interpretation and comprehension. In conclusion, the analogy throughout the writing of the *Zhuangzi* is presented in various forms. It seeks correspondence or similarity among objects but does not rigidly adhere to the fixed form or pattern. The analogy also indicates a typical thought and style of the writing rather than just a trope. From the simple to the complicated, from constituting a single conception to constructing a coherent passage, analogy plays an indispensable role in *Zhuangzi*’s writing (Z. Wang 12). The following content in this chapter will focus on different types of analogy in the *Zhuangzi* and provide a concrete analysis of each specific example.

As mentioned above, one of the major functions of analogy in the *Zhuangzi* is to revamp the method of definition. Compared to the traditional method of definition, which mainly depends on reasoning or explanation, using analogy to define an object or a phenomenon provides a way to avoid the excessive involvement of personal perspective. The most commonly used trope in the *Zhuangzi*, the use of analogy reflects the correspondence or similarity of different objects and then connects the objects with a common point. For example, the concept of “worthless man” and “worthless tree” from “In the World of Man” are connected by a common word “worthless”:

“It’s a worthless tree! Make boats out of it and they’d sink; make coffins and they’d rot in no time, make vessels and they’d break at once. Use it for doors and it would sweat sap like pine; use it for posts and the worms would eat them up. It’s not a timber tree—there’s nothing it can be used for. That’s how it got to be that old!” (63-64)

散木也，以為舟則沈，以為棺槨則速腐，以為器則速毀，以為門戶則液樞，以為柱則蠹。是不材之木也。無所可用，故能若是之壽。

After described the “worthless tree” in detail, the author then extended the function of “worthless tree” in order to introduce the new concept of “worthless man”:

After Carpenter Shih [Shi] had returned home, the oak tree appeared to him in a dream and said, “What are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with those useful trees? The cherry apple, the pear, the orange, the citron, the rest of those fructiferous trees and shrubs—as soon as their fruit is ripe, they are torn apart and subjected to abuse. Their big limbs are broken off; their little limbs are yanked around. Their utility makes life miserable for them, and so they don’t get to finish out

the years Heaven gave them, but are cut off in mid-journey. They bring it on themselves—the pulling and tearing of the common mob. And it's the same way with all other things.

“As for me, I've been trying a long time to be of no use, as though I almost died, I've finally got it. This is of great use to me. If I had been of some use, would I ever have grown this large? Moreover, you and I are both of us things. What's the point of this—things condemning things? You, a worthless man about to die—how do you know I'm a worthless tree?” (64)

匠石歸，櫟社見夢曰：「女將惡乎比予哉？若將比予於文木邪？夫柎梨橘柚，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！」

The key point of this passage is not to define either a “worthless tree” or a “worthless man” but to convey an ideal set of values and a perfect life. In the “World of Man,” everybody is presumptuous, opinionated and self-centered. Through Carpenter Shih's dream of the oak tree, the author exposes the plight that people are stuck in a fixed frame of mind and driven by interest. Regardless of whether or not the author achieved his goal, it is clear that from “worthless tree” to “the Holy Man,” none of the concepts are isolated or disconnected from each other. The analogy thereby becomes a bridge to connect the spiritual world and the world of objective reality. Through the use of analogies, the author provides the readers a unique, unconfined, and flowing context within which the readers could find the final answers by themselves.

As far as Yang Guorong is concerned, “words and names combine the implication of terms with concepts” (9). This property of names may lead the objective world into a potential risk of being over-restricted by the system of names. Once the one-to-one correspondence between names and the objects represented by names, the reality may risk of being concealed by a fixed language form; the objective world may be in danger of becoming more rigid.

The compliant relationship between names and reality has been recognized by Confucianism. For example, in *The Analects*, there is a theory representing a typical standpoint of fundamental view on names and language of Confucianism—“if the names are not correct, language is without an object” (37). This theory illustrates the relationship between names and the reality. In the *Xunzi*, there is another similar viewpoint: “instituted names to refer to objects”:

This is why wise men made “distinctions” and “separations.” They instituted names to refer to objects, making distinctions to make clear what is noble and what base and separations to discriminate between things that are the same and those that are different. When the noble and base are bright and the same and different are kept apart, conveying intentions is no longer frustrated through a failure to explain, and carrying out duties no longer suffers from being hampered and obstructed. This is the purpose of having names. (711-713)

故知者為之分別制名以指實，上以明貴賤，下以辨同異。貴賤明，同異別，如是則志無不喻之患，事無困廢之禍，此所為有名也。

Disputers like Xunzi confirm the correspondence between names and objectives with particular emphasis on the affiliation between them. The view that “making clear what is noble and what base” and “discriminating the same from the different” indicate the names’ impacts on objective “being.” In other words, Confucianism affirms those functions of “the system of names

and words,” which, from the Daoist perspective, will lead the world into separation. Confucians obviously point out that the system of names and words becomes a standard which is used to specify or even judge objective reality. Once the corresponding relationship between names and reality has been determined, it will be easier for people to understand and grasp the objective behind names. Regardless of how different those philosophers’ views are on the relationship between names and objectives, it once again proves the significance of the “debate on names and reality” in the context of Pre-Qin philosophy.

Through the view that “the name is but the guest of the reality” (32), the *Zhuangzi* never denies or tries to overturn the connection of names and reality. However, for him, the referential or signifying function is not the primary mission of language. Language should be placed in between saying and unsaying. In other words, language is unable to take an excessive signifying function other than to stay “empty”; otherwise, it will get lost in the “sea of meaning” (Møllgaard, *Zhuangzi and The Experience of Language Itself* 219). Sculpted by language and words, objective matters in nature are placed in a fixed location and gradually lose internal fluidity, or worse, they swing to the opposite extreme. The unreliability and uncertainty of names are exposed in “Knowledge Wandered North”:

Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] said, “Sir, your questions simply don’t get at the substance of the matter. When Inspector Huo asked the superintendent of the market how to test the fatness of a pig by pressing it with the foot, he was told that the lower down on the pig you press, the nearer you come to the truth. But you must not expect to find the Way in any particular place—there is no thing that escapes its presence! Such is the Perfect Way, and so too are the truly great words. ‘Complete,’ ‘universal,’ ‘all-inclusive’—these three are different words with the same meaning. All points to a

single reality.” (241)

莊子曰：「夫子之問也，固不及質。正、獲之問於監市履豨也，『每下愈況』。汝唯莫必，無乎逃物。至道若是，大言亦然。周遍咸三者，異名同實，其指一也。」

The text above shows how language sometimes becomes a veil of the facts or reality. The reality is always the primary objective. As the author has illustrated in the text above, names indeed correspond to reality and make distinctions of various objects. However, names and reality are not one-to-one correlated with each other. This point of view has been made clear in “Keng-sang Ch’u [Geng Sang Chu]” as well: “In definition the two seem to be opposites but in reality they agree” (259). Using this point of view, the author expresses his skepticism about the one-to-one correspondence between a name or a definition and the reality it represents. An object could refer to more than one names. If names become the primary and reality have to be obedient to names, the reality will be confined within a fixed language form. In other words, as signifiers, names directed towards something constant and definite are signified, which means that in this case, the real connotation of objects is sealed within univocal and consistent definitions, which may cause a separation from the reality. Especially from the perspective of Daoism, even the Dao is only a temporarily borrowed name for this highest category of nature⁷. Therefore, everything in nature cannot be outlined or represented in a fixed name; otherwise, it may cause an ossified or partial recognition of the objective world.

It is worth noting that the *Zhuangzi* never denies the correspondence between names and reality, but names do have limits for conveying a complete definition or concepts. To break

⁷ In Chapter Twenty-five in *Daodejing*, Laozi once make a definition of the word “Dao”: “There is a thing— it came to be in the undifferentiated, it came alive before heaven and earth...I do not know its name. It is called Dao. If I was forced to name it, I would say ‘Greatness’.”

through the limits of names in the writing of the *Zhuangzi*, it is natural to use analogy. In the examples of “worthless tree” and “pipe of heaven,” the author of the book seems to find a new solution for softening the univocal correlating relationship between names and reality. Instead of establishing a direct connection between names and reality, the *Zhuangzi* emphasizes building up the connections between names. Seeking the similarities between related objects makes the new concepts remarkably clear and easy to understand.

In addition to the analogy between “worthless tree” and “worthless man,” there is a similar use of analogy in “Discussion on Making All Things Equal”—the analogy between the concept of “piping of Heaven,” “piping of earth,” and “piping of men”:

Tzu-ch’I [Zi Qi] said, “You do well to ask the question, Yen. Now I have lost myself. Do you understand that? You hear the piping of men, but you haven’t heard the piping of earth. Or if you’ve heard the piping of earth, you haven’t heard the piping of Heaven!” (36)

The conversation that took place between Tzu-yu [Zi You] and Tzu-ch’I [Zi Qi] finally led to the discussion about the “piping of Heaven”:

Tzu-yu said, “By the piping of earth, then, you mean simply [the sound of] these hollows, and by the piping of men [the sound of] flutes and whistles. But may I ask about the piping of Heaven?”

Tzu-ch’I said: “Blowing on the ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself—all take what they want for themselves, but who does the sounding?” (37)

子游曰：地籟則眾竅是已，人籟則比竹是已，敢問天籟。

子綦曰：夫天籟者，吹萬不同，而使其自己也，咸其自取，怒者其誰邪！

In the text above, “piping of men” refers to “the sound of flutes and whistles,” and the “piping of earth” refers to “the sound of hollows.” Obviously, in this regard, the connotation of “pipe” are chosen as an entry point to construct the analogy. In classical Chinese, the word “pipe” is read as *lai*, which refers to music that is considered a kind of dynamic, harmonious unity. As time flows, different kinds of musical instruments mutually coordinate and integrate with each other, then compose a musical piece (Yang 3). Based on this point of view, the “pipe of men” unquestionably means artificial music while “piping of earth” signifies the sounds of nature, which means that “piping of the earth” indicates the motions and variations of objective things that occur in nature. On this basis, the concept of “piping of Heaven” becomes more comprehensible; compared to the “piping of men” and “piping of earth,” it is more inclined to a harmonious and dynamic unified status between human and nature. Linking with the word “pipe,” three concepts are connected with a mutual characteristic. Even if the final purpose is to introduce a concept of “pipe of heaven,” the explanation of the name is not that important; the understanding of this word is still strongly based on the description of the “pipe of earth” and the “pipe of men.” To really understand the “pipe of heaven,” the reader’s thought has to flow across the three correlating concepts and establish a progressive connection. Through the use of analogies, the language not only maintains the fluidity among objectives but also preserve men’s thinking space.

In addition to breaking through the restriction of the system of names and words, analogies in the *Zhuangzi* become a key to connect the objective world and the spiritual world. Different from compromising the one-to-one relationship between names and reality, the *Zhuangzi* always attempts to build a real connection between objects by seeking semantic similarities. From “worthless tree” to “worthless man,” and from “pipe of earth” to “pipe of

heaven,” the *Zhuangzi* completes the transition from the concrete to the abstract naturally. Obviously, the use of analogy specialized in bridging the gap between reality and illusion by seeking the similarities of different objects. The protean text became comprehensive with the assistance of analogy. Hence, it is fair to say that the creative use of analogy successfully broadened the essentiality of words and language, and also led readers to a more open and free spiritual thinking space.

Using analogy as a new way to introduce concepts, the *Zhuangzi* manages to crack the stable system of names and words. By seeking the inner connections between various objects, the understanding of new concepts is placed in a flowing status so that, to a great extent, the use of analogy in the *Zhuangzi* avoids the objective world, and thus avoids being trapped in any ossifications or misunderstandings caused by language. As mentioned in the text about the piping heaven, analogy in the *Zhuangzi* manifested itself in varied forms of expression. In addition to introducing the new concept, analogy also presents in sentence structure through a parallel pattern. Compared to the first mode of analogy, which focuses on the interpretation of particular words, this parallel structure pays more attention to the interactive relationship between the objects. For example, in the “In the World of Man,” once Confucius was asked by his pupil Yen Hui about the meaning of “fasting the mind.” He did not answer the question directly but said the following words to his pupil: “Don’t listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don’t listen with your mind, but listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits on all things” (58).

Given the sentence structure above in Chinese, the explanation of “fasting mind” is regarded as a use of analogy as well. The verb “listen” has been chosen as a join point and then lines up a series of irrelevant sensory perceptions. As Fang Yong observes, even if the transition

from ear to mind seems to be absurd in rational terms, it manages to turn the intuitional physical sensation into a spiritual activity, which precisely matches the poetic nature of the *Zhuangzi* in terms of aesthetics (78). So that the word “listen” here is no longer a real action but becomes a feeling or a special way of sensing. It has connected the physical senses with the mind perception and also breaks the barrier between the physical and spiritual. As a result, the status of “listening with mind but not ears” means that man will not observe the objectivity only with sense perception but with spirit and wisdom. The aesthetic experiences do not just involve the intuitive sense, they actually indicate the process of the interaction between man’s spiritual world and the objective external world. Through the transition and connections of these two worlds, what the *Zhuangzi* really expresses is that there should not be any gaps, not only between these two worlds, but also between the things and things, the self and nature. This point of view indicates the basic perspective to observe the world; meanwhile, it echoes his view on language, which is more than a specific example of analogy in his text—the world view with mobility and fluidity is showed and enhanced through the presentation of analogy.

However, the use of analogy was not limited to the form of paired concepts or a parallel sentence structure. The setup of analogy keeps extending in the text of the *Zhuangzi*. It sometimes even transcends the function of a trope but becomes a broader writing pattern. The analogical relationship is also discovered between stories of allegories in the text. For example, in “Free and Easy Wandering,” the whole passage starts with a depiction of the mythic figure P’eng [Peng], which is able to “rises ninety thousand li” and “mount on the back of the wind, shoulder the blue sky, nothing can hinder or block him.” The passage is followed by another scenario:

The cicada and the little dove laugh at this, saying, “when we make an effort and fly

up, we can get as far as the elm or the spanwood tree, but sometimes we don't make it and just fall down on the ground. Now how is anyone going to go ninety thousand li to the south!" (30)

蝸與學鳩笑之曰：我決起而飛，搶榆枋而止，時則不至而控於地而已矣，奚以之九萬里而南為？

In addition to the cicada and the little dove, the little quail also made a similar joke about P'eng:

Where does he think he's going? I give a great leap and fly up, but I never get more than ten or twelve yards before I come down fluttering among the weeds and brambles. And that's the best kind of flying anyway! Where does he think he's going? (31)

斥鴳笑之曰彼且奚適也？我騰躍而上，不過數仞而下，翱翔蓬蒿之間，此亦飛之至也。而彼且奚適也？

They may be different species—the cicada, the little dove and the little quail—but all their laughter directed towards P'eng not only exposes their ignorance and narrow-mindedness, it shows a cognitive difference between them and P'eng, which reflects the different realms of life. P'eng cannot be understood or accepted by those small and menial creatures with a limited horizon. This this phenomenon is described as the “difference between big and little,” which actually laid a foundation for what follows in the passage, and also gave rise to four-fold realms of life—a man with wisdom, virtue, and good conduct represents the first realm. Yet this man was surpassed by Sung Jung-tzu [Song Rong Zi], who regarded praise and condemnation from the external world as unimportant, so that he became the representative of the second realm. Compared to Sung Jung-tzu, Lieh Tzu [Lie Zi], who has the capability of “riding the wind and going soaring around with cool and breezy skill (Zhuangzi 32),” seems to further transcend the

limitations of the realistic world. However, even if Lieh Tzu escaped many troubles and worldly concerns, he still needs to depend on “something to get around.” This then leads to the fourth and ultimate ideal realm of life—a status that is “mounted on the truth of Heaven and Earth, [and has] ridden the changes of the six breaths, and thus wandered through the boundless. (32)”

Wang Zhongling compared the cognitive differences between P’eng and the cicada to the “fourfold-of-life status” and summarized the comparison as a new structural analogy in the *Zhuangzi* (4). The analogy in this case could also be read as an example of the traditional art of writing in Chinese—“significance is commonplace.” Starting with a figurative scenario—i.e., the conversation between the cicada and the little dove—the passage ultimately gives rise to a life realm progressively. Accordingly, with very limited depiction expression, the use of the textural structure of analogy are still able to inform the readers about the vivid and metaphorical conversation between the cicada and little dove.

The analogical textual structure is also commonly used in the *Zhuangzi*. Using analogies to seek the inner connections between names, the *Zhuangzi* is also adept at connecting events or stories to illustrate life principles. This sort of analogy is more implicit than the one that involves names and concepts. In one of the most famous stories in the *Zhuangzi*, “dismemberment of [an] ox by the Cook Ding,” the craftsman shows his skill as the Lord Wenhui looks on in admiration. Then Cook Ding gives explicit instructions about how to gut an ox:

“A good cook changes his knife once a year—because he cuts. A mediocre cook changes his knife once a month—because he hacks. I’ve had this knife of mine for nineteen years and I’ve cut up thousands of oxen with it, and yet the blade is as good as though it had just come from the grindstone. There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness

into such spaces, then there's plenty of room—more than enough for the blade to play about it. That's why after nineteen years the blade of my knife is still as good as when it first came from the grindstone. However, whenever I come to a complicated place, I size up the difficulties, tell myself to watch out and be careful, keep my eyes on what I'm doing, work very slowly, and move the knife with the greatest subtlety, until—flop! The whole thing comes apart like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground. I stand there holding the knife and look all around me, completely satisfied and reluctant to move on, and then I wipe off the knife and put it away.”

“Excellent!” said Lord Wen-hui. “I have heard the words of Cook Ting and learned how to care for life!” (51)

「良庖歲更刀，割也；族庖月更刀，折也。今臣之刀十九年矣，所解數千牛矣，而刀刃若新發於硯。彼節者有間，而刀刃者無厚，以無厚入有間，恢恢乎其於遊刃必有餘地矣。是以十九年而刀刃若新發於硯。雖然，每至於族，吾見其難為，怵然為戒，視為止，行為遲。動刀甚微，謦然已解，牛不知其死也，如土委地。提刀而立，為之四顧，為之躊躇滿志，善刀而藏之。」

文惠君曰：「善哉！吾聞庖丁之言，得養生焉。」

Despite all of Cook Ding's instructions and explanations, what the lord learned was not how to cut oxen, but how to care for life. Through the story, which is remarkably clear and easy to understand, not only Lord Wen-hui, but the readers receive the same advice of how to care for life. This is a good example of how a comparison—in this case one about cutting the ox and caring for life—structurally constructs an implicit analogy. The ox with a structured mass of flesh and bones in this story becomes a physical carrier of “heavenly structure,” so that this story

conveys the fact that only a man with “spirit”—in other words, a uniquely trained individual—could comprehend the “heavenly structure” and be capable of using it (Dušan 203). Whether we are examining the story of the “dismemberment of ox by the Cook Ding” or the conversation that has taken place between the cicada and little dove in “Free and Easy Wandering,” the true intention is to convey philosophical thinking in the *Zhuangzi* by creating a similar context instead of a direct explanation. Through the analogy constructed by a complete story, the readers’ reception could be completed in a realistic and broader way. As a result, he avoids passing on his own values directly via reasoning. The reception conveyed via stories depends primarily on the readers’ reception and personal wisdom. Like the replacement of names by analogy, the structural analogy has the same function of maintaining the thinking space of readers.

As Wang Zhongling points out, for many years, scholars did not pay attention to the use of analogy as a writing strategy in the *Zhuangzi*. Manifesting a fusion of poetic and prosaic features, and also a consistency of the perceptual and the rational, analogy has already been internalized as one of typical thinking patterns of the *Zhuangzi* and a unique expression of his writing (13). In the *Zhuangzi*, concepts or names are rarely introduced individually but always appear in pairs or groups. The analogy shown as the parallel sentence pattern also adds more of a sense of rhythm to the text. Besides, the progressive relationship that existed in stories or allegories not only reveals the implicit integrality and also deepens the understanding of the text. Even if the analogy in the *Zhuangzi* is presented in various forms and has different functions, in general, the use of analogy maintained the integrity and the flowing state of man’s spiritual world from the perspective of language philosophy. As Wang Zhenjun observes, Saussure depicts the real world as chaotic, ambiguous and infinite. These characteristics are consistent with a status called “Hun-tun [Hun Dun].” However, although *Zhuangzi* and Saussure have very similar

perceptions of the objective world, when it comes to taking a stand, they go in opposite directions (72). When Saussure attempts to regulate the disorderly world with a semiotics system, Zhuangzi stays in the chaos. In the *Zhuangzi*, there is a story about “the death of Hun-tun”:

The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu [Brief], the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden], and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun [Chaos]. Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. “All men,” they said, “have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breath[e]. But Hun-tun alone doesn’t have any. Let’s trying boring him some!” Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died. (97)

南海之帝為儵，北海之帝為忽，中央之帝為渾沌。儵與忽時相與遇於渾沌之地，渾沌待之甚善。儵與忽謀報渾沌之德，曰：「人皆有七竅，以視聽食息，此獨無有，嘗試鑿之。」日鑿一竅，七日而渾沌死。

This story of “Hun-tun” somehow leads us back to the Daoist naturalism and the recognition of spontaneity in Daoism. According to Huang Kejian’s point of view, the vitality of “Hun-tun” arises from the state of chaos. What “Hun-tun” represents here is a unified, natural status without any systems, boundaries, and shape (49). This depiction somehow coincides with Graham’s description of the Dao—a unity cannot be named, a confluence of patternless paths, the universe from its ultimate source (188). In this story, the anthropomorphic “Hun-tun”, which is the embodiment of nature, finally died because someone was boring “seven openings” into him. The death of “Hun-tun” implies a fact that delineate the border of the nature forcibly will

definitely cause the loss of its vitality (49). This viewpoint once again coincides with Graham's recognition of the Dao—to get close to the Dao, man has to first give up marking boundaries (188). In conclusion, the similarity between the imaginative figure “Hun-tun” and the metaphysical Dao has proved one point—in Daoism, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is fair to say that this holism has already become an integral part of the spontaneity of Daoism. The holism of spontaneity is also reflected in the language view of the *Zhuangzi*. Through the use of analogy, the *Zhuangzi* attempts to save the world from being trapped into divisions caused by names. The appropriate role for language to play in the process of man's perception is as a neutral media rather than a tool for marking boundaries or carving the shape of man's spiritual world.

CHAPTER 3. Litotes

As stated in the above chapter, the correspondence that exists between names and reality and is confirmed by Xunzi and other ancient Chinese philosophers does not convince Daoist like Zhuangzi. There is a theory stated in the “Discussion on Making All Things Equal,” “Everything has its ‘that,’ everything has its ‘this.’ From the point of view of ‘that’ you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it. So I say, ‘that’ comes out of ‘this’ and ‘this’ depends on ‘that’ (39).” Through the interrelationship between “this” and “that,” it is clear that things are actually eternally in flux, and both parties to a contradiction can coexist (Graham 178-179). Based on this point of view, the authority of the system of names has been deconstructed. Moreover, the exploration of language did not stop there but leads us to a new trope—litotes.

Like analogies, litotes is another typical strategy and efficient attempt used in the *Zhuangzi* to save language. Appearing as a sort of sentence structure, litotes are widely used in the writing of the *Zhuangzi* and help the author to break through the restrictions caused by binary positions. However, as with analogy, it is necessary to clarify the definition of “litotes” in the *Zhuangzi*. “Litotes” in this thesis refers only to an appropriated but derived concept that represents a kind of typical rhetorical device that appeared extensively in Zhuangzi’s writing. Compared with the authentic definition that “a figure of speech, in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary” in the Oxford English Dictionary, “litotes” as discussed in this thesis regarding philosophical thinking showed in the *Zhuangzi* and the Daoist contextual background somehow has a more comprehensive connotation and abundant manifestations.

The most visible expression of “litotes” might not originate from the *Zhuangzi* but could be traced to the *Daodejing*. Early in the *Daodejing*, a steady and concise expression of language began to appear; this expression used a negative or passive sentence structure to indicate a

positive meaning. The most typical form of “litotes” in the *Daodejing* is normally embodied as a negative sentence with a four-character-phrase. For example, “great completion resembles a vacancy” (107), “the greatly filled resembles emptiness” (107), “the great sound has silent tones” (99), “the great square has no corners” (99). It is obvious from these examples that there is always a pair of binary positions, and those positions always oppose and contradict each other. However, the two poles of a contradiction, to some extent, have constructed a dynamic balance, which made them become penetrated under certain conditions. Through this typical sentence structure, men will be able to more clearly perceive the fluidity and transferability in contrary concepts.

Even if phrases like “the great sound has silent tones” or “the great image has no form” (99) apparently reflect and represent the typical characteristics of the logical thoughts of the *Daodejing*, the manifestations on “litotes” are not restricted within this unitary mode of expression. In the *Daodejing*, litotes actually overcomes the limited language form and gradually has been internalized as one of the fundamental philosophical thinking patterns in the *Zhuangzi*. Based on this recognition, Sun Zhongyuan summed up another mode of “litotes,” which manifested in a more obscure and subtle way in *Daodejing*. Even if, the forms of two kinds of “litotes” has nothing in common, both of them all indicate the relationship between cause and effect, terms and results, purpose and means (5). Take as an example the theory in Chapter 22 of the *Daodejing*: “Flexed then whole, bent then upright, hollow then full, worn out then new, little then gaining, much then confused” (55). The *Daodejing* attempts to point out the flux and compatibility between cause and effect or goals and means. Sometimes the two sides of a contradiction seem to be diverging from each other on the surface; however, the actual relationship between phenomenon and essence is always consistency. This point of view is

thoroughly embodied in Chapter 78 of the *Daodejing*:

Nothing in this world is smoother and softer than water;
but nothing surpasses it in tackling the stiff and the hard,
because it is not to be changed.

That water defeats the solid, that the soft defeats the hard:

No one in the world who does not know this, but still no one is able to practice it.

Therefore the words of the sage are:

To take on the shameful in the state, this is to be lord of the alters of earth and grain.

To take on the unfavorable in the state, this is to be king of the world.

Right words are like the reverse (181).

天下莫柔弱於水，而攻堅強者莫之能勝。以其無以易之。弱之勝強，柔之勝剛，天下莫不知，莫能行。是以聖人云：「受國之垢，是謂社稷主；受國不祥，是謂天下王。」正言若反。

Neither in the *Daodejing* nor the *Zhuangzi* has come up with a concept like “litotes” to represent the typical form of language. However, the last sentence—the theory that “right words are like the reverse”—which is an inductive comment on this fragment of text, is somehow intertextualized with the connotation of litotes. Through the description of the properties of water that “water defeats the solid,” the *Daodejing* has proposed the theory that “the soft defeats the hard.” This phenomenon precisely enhanced the rationality of the mutual transformation that occurred between both parties to a contradiction. In conclusion, no matter which kind of litotes is addressed in the *Daodejing*, the key point is always about the interdependence and transformation between two opposing sides. As the author puts it in “Discussion on Making All Things Equal”:

... So I say, “that” comes out of “this” and “this” depends on “that”—which is to say that “this” and “that” give birth to each other. But where there is birth there must be death; where there is death there must be birth; where there is death there must be birth; where there is acceptability there must be unacceptability; where there is unacceptability there must be acceptability. Where there is recognition of right there must be recognition of wrong; where there is recognition of wrong there must be recognition of right (39-40).

故曰彼出於是，是亦因彼。彼是方生之說也，雖然，方生方死，方死方生；方可方不可，方不可方可；因是因非，因非因是。

The pair of concepts, “this” and “that,” is the best example to illustrate the dynamic interrelationship of things. According to Wang Youru’s opinion, “this” and “that” are actually considered an implicit pattern of things. In other words, all of the pair things that appeared in the context of the *Zhuangzi* could be viewed as involving the relationship of “this” and “that” as a sub-category, such as birth and death, big and small, existing and non-existing, right and wrong, acceptability and unacceptability (Philosophy of Change and the Deconstruction of Self in the *Zhuangzi* 349). However, given the text above, neither one of “this” or “that” could exist without each other; these two factors are mutually dependent on each other. Not only that, the interrelationship between “this” and “that” always maintains a dynamic status instead of being stationary, which perfectly explains the concept of “change” or “transformation,” since changes and transformations universally exist in everything in the world. With no exceptions, both man and things are involved in these endless changes (Y. Wang, Philosophy of Change and the Deconstruction of Self in the *Zhuangzi* 347). As a result, all of the binary positions such as “this” and “that” are no longer stable; any opposing standpoint may transfer to each other. It is in vain

to stick to any stable standpoints.

The instability of language somehow leads us back to one of the major concerns of in the *Zhuangzi* caused by language —disputation, which is the basic background for understanding the view of language in the *Zhuangzi* as well (Møllgaard, “An Introduction to Daoist Thought: Action, language and ethics in *Zhuangzi*” 67). Møllgaard also made it clear that disputation is created based on the prejudiced mind of man, which is also the cause of people’s obsession on discerning right from wrong (“An Introduction to Daoist Thought: Action, language and ethics in *Zhuangzi*” 70). Among all of the binary positions, “right and wrong” is the most typical and subtle pair of concepts. It is because people’s defense over their own right and the denial over other’s wrong may ensnare them into the endless disputation:

When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Mo-ists [Mohist]. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right, but if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity.

(39)

According to Yang Guorong’s interpretation, “clarity” represents a natural and spontaneous status without any divisions, conflicts, and disputes (1). In contrast to the Confucian standpoint that apparently will exacerbate the alienation of Dao— “what one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right”—the *Zhuangzi* tends to seek an efficient way to surpass the viewpoints and advocates from various schools of thought, and to sublimate their narrow comprehension towards rights and wrongs. Being a relativist, Zhuangzi is keenly aware of the polarization caused by words. For him, rights and wrongs only represent opinions that a “particular individual has toward certain things” (Norden 251). In this regard, the

appearance of litotes becomes necessary. Therefore, litotes in the *Zhuangzi* is not only utilized as a thinking instrument to deconstruct the stability of binary positions existing in a language system, but it becomes one of the prompt measures assisting man to achieve the status of “all things are equal” by pointing out the possibility of the mutual transformation between two parties to a contradiction. Therefore, litotes becomes not only a special rhetorical device from the perspective of thinking, it can also be considered a dialectical reasoning device in the *Zhuangzi*, one that aims to break through the limitation of identity law and dogmatism.

Taking the view of “words that are no words” (*Zhuangzi* 304) as an example, the final purpose of the *Zhuangzi* is not to prove the uselessness of language and then eradicate the existence of the language system. In fact, the *Zhuangzi* is attempting to reach the goal of unifying the form “with words” and the form of “no words” through the appropriate use of language. Here, the proposition of “words that are no words” in the *Zhuangzi* is not aiming to place the view of “with words” and “with no words” on a scale and then figure out which one will be a better solution for saving language, but to illustrate that the perfect of solution of perceiving Dao through language is to find the dynamic balance between “say anything” and “not be saying something” (43).

From this perspective, it could be observed that the “counter-grammar,” as a means to address an affirmative by expressing the negative, is quite often appeared in the *Zhuangzi*. Also, the “couter-grammar” is also used to eliminate the self-awareness and value proposition hidden in the language system, so that division caused by artificial consciousness and appearance can be dispelled. The “Knowledge Wandered North” provides a way to reach this status:

Only when there is no pondering and no cogitation will you get to know the Way.

Only when you have no surroundings and follow no practices will you find rest in the

Way. Only when there is no path and no procedure can you get to the Way” (235).

Therefore, Dao can be placed in an impartial and neutral position. In addition to analogies used as a strategy to maintain the fluidity of the objective world, the use of litotes further stresses the possibility for the contradictory both sides to interchange with each other. In fact, long before the *Zhuangzi*, in the *Daodejing*, the author has realized that both aspects of the contradiction are not only interdependent but interconvertible:

That presence and nonpresence generate each other,
 difficult and easy complement each other,
 above and below fill each other,
 tones and voices harmonize with each other,
 before and after follow each other,
 in permanent. (Laozi 7)

故有無相生，難易相成，長短相形，高下相傾，音聲相和，前後相隨。

Based on this point of view from the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi* further explains and emphasizes the conversions existing in the objective world. For example, in “Autumn Floods” he writes: “The Way is without beginning or end, but things have their life and death—you cannot rely upon their fulfillment. One moment empty, the next moment full—you cannot depend upon their form” (182). The text above emphasizes that “all things on earth” are in the process of changing. From birth to death, from prosperity to decadence, nothing on earth will remain stationary. The constant motions and changes in the objective world are absolute and unconditional; they are also the basic law of the universe. Not only that, the view that the opposing sides like “birth and death” and “prosperity and decadence” are interdependent and interchangeable became an inseparable part of the Daoist thinking pattern, which manifested as

litotes.

As a device to save language, litotes is applied and reflected in the language theory of the *Zhuangzi* as well. For example, in “Imputed Words” he wrote: “As long as I do not say anything about them, they are a unity. But the unity and what I say about it have ceased to be a unity; what I say and the unity have ceased to be a unity” (304). In this text, the author uses three negative sentences to state the relationship between the characteristic of “unity” and “ceased to be a unity” of language. Even if these two characteristics of language are still considered two different statuses of language, their opposing positions are diluted and weakened. Flowing in between “with words” and “with no words,” “unity” and “ceased to be unity,” the essence of language kept a dynamic balance, and precisely because of this flow process, the stability of traditional language structure will no longer exist.

In this case, litotes not only changes the conventional use of language, it provides the readers with a diverse perspective for understanding the Dao.

The Way has its reality and its signs but is without action or form. You can hand it down but you cannot receive it; you can get it but you cannot see it. It is its own source, its own root. Before Heaven and earth existed it was there, firm from ancient times. It gave spirituality to the spirits and to God; it gave birth to Heaven and to earth. It exists beyond the highest point, and yet you cannot call it lofty; it exists beneath the limit of the six directions, and yet you cannot call it deep. It was born before Heaven and earth, and yet you cannot say it has been there for long; it is easier than the earliest time, and yet you cannot call it old. (81)

夫道，有情有信，無為無形；可傳而不可受，可得而不可見；自本自根，未有天地，自古以固存；神鬼神帝，生天生地；在太極之上而不為高，在六極之下

而不為深，先天地生而不為久，長於上古而不為老。

The description above shows that on the one hand, the author indeed carries on the fundamental Daoist standpoint of language, which is identical to a view in the *Daodejing* that “There is a thing—it came to be in the undifferentiated, it came alive before heaven and earth...I do not know its name. It is called Dao” (63). On the other hand, through the use of litotes, language no longer played the role of leading the world to divergence and disagreement, but became an efficient way to interpret the Dao. Consider the conversation that took place between Zhuangzi and Master Tung-Kuo [Dong Guo] in “Knowledge Wandered North”: “Master Tung-kuo asked Chuang Tzu, ‘This thing called the Way—where does it exist?’ Zhuangzi said: ‘There’s no place it doesn’t exist’” (240).

The way in which Zhuangzi answered, referring to Dao, is a typical use of litotes. Zhuangzi has laid a foundation of the “conception of limitless” for his interpretation of Dao, which is also the core of his theoretical system. The key point that Zhuangzi tries to convey is that people have to observe and know the infinite world. This is consistent with the view in “Tse-yang [Ze Yang]”: “I look for the roots of the past, but they extend back and back without end. I search for the termination of the future, but it never stops coming at me” (293). It is also consistent with the view in “Autumn Floods”: “There is no end to the weighing of things, no stop to time, no constancy to the division of lots, no fixed rule to beginning and end” (177). The author firmly believes that the universe is in a state of infinite change and development, and that all things in the world are in a constant state of flux. There is no absolute duality because the binary oppositions such as “the great and the small,” “the long and the short,” and “the near and the far” are relative and complementary to each other.

Once again, litotes is used to emphasize the characteristic of de-normalization and un-

limitation of Dao. Obviously, the use of litotes in *Zhuangzi* is not limited to negative sentences about the grammar. Using litotes presents a typical thinking pattern which plays a critical role in the philosophical thinking of the *Zhuangzi*. In addition to expressions such as “the Way has its reality and its signs but is without action or form,” litotes used as a trope can be applied in the allegories in the *Zhuangzi*. For instance, in “The Sigh of Virtue Complete,” the author describes the transformation from beauty and ugliness through the following story:

Duke Ai of Lu said to Confucius, “In Wei there was an ugly man named Ai T’ai-t’o [Ai Dai Tuo]. But when men were around him, they thought only of him and couldn’t break away, and when women saw him, they ran begging to their fathers and mothers, saying, ‘I’d rather be this gentleman’s concubine than another man’s wife!’—there were more than ten such cases and it hasn’t stopped yet.” (72)

魯哀公問於仲尼曰：「衛有惡人焉，曰哀駘它。丈夫與之處者，思而不能去也。婦人見之，請於父母曰『與為人妻，寧為夫子妾』者，十數而未止也。」

After knowing Ai T’ai-t’o for only a few months, Duke Ai of Lu asked him to help rule the state as prime minister. Adopting the vernacular of Confucius, the author compares the love and respect shown to the hideous man to the love and respect that children show to their mothers: “In loving their mother, they loved not her body but the thing that moved her body.” Similar examples can be found in “Mr. Lame-Hunchback-No-Lips” (74) and “Mr. Pitcher-Sized-Wen” (74). All these protagonists are disabled and hideous, but they all earned trust and esteem from emperors and dukes. Not only that, but as the author wrote about one of those emperors, “when he looked at normal men he thought their necks looked too lean and skinny” (75).

This example in the previous paragraph shows the relativity in between of ugliness and beauty; it is possible for these two extremes to transform into each other under certain

circumstances. Litotes, in this regard, is not only a writing skill but has been turned into a line of reasoning and a mode of thinking. The purpose of using this writing strategy is to point out that, in fact, the two aspects in a contradiction are relatively opposing. There is no impassable gulf separating both parties from each other. However, the two sides of the contradiction are interdependent, interconnected, and interchangeable with each other. Litotes capitalize on this characteristic of this possible transformation and become a useful tool to break through the limits caused by absolutism.

In the *Zhuangzi*, litotes is not only used as a writing strategy to break through the limitation of language and to “deconstruct” the mainstream ideology represented by Confucianism and Mohism. For example, in “Free and Easy Wandering,” the author writes that “the Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame” (32). In “Geng-sang Chu [Geng Sang Chu],” he writes, “so it is said, Perfect ritual makes no distinction of persons; perfect righteousness takes no account of things; perfect knowledge does not scheme; perfect benevolence knows no affection; perfect trust dispenses with gold” (259).

Litotes as a writing strategy plays a unique role in the *Zhuangzi*. The theoretical definitions of “litotes” somewhat indicate the enantiosis in rhetoric. As far as Gaoshen is concerned, in the modern Chinese context, normally speakers will have clear reasons to use the interminable, subtle, and marked mode of presentation. Once the speaker chooses a unique expression in the course of language using, the real meaning he wanted to express must be different from the superficial literal meaning (4). As Zhuangzi wrote in “In The World of Men,” “All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless!” (67). Superficially, “useful” and “useless” are a pair of opposites. However, by presenting a concept of “the use of useless,” the clear boundary of “useful” and “useless” is blurred (47).

“The use of useless” proposes that people no longer focus only on face value, but start to notice intrinsic value. In other words, to some extent, the concept enlightens people to see through appearance to perceive the essence. It is quite fair to say that “the use of useless” is internalized as an example of the typical philosophical thinking which manifested frequently in the *Zhuangzi*. For instance, in “Free and Easy Wandering”, Hui Zi once told his friend Zhuangzi that King Wei gave him some seeds from a huge gourd. Later, the fruit of the gourd was too big to be used as a water container or to be split in half to make dippers. Hui Zi concluded that the gourds “were no use” (34). However, seeing Hui Zi’s confusion, Zhuangzi provided a novel idea. He asked, “why didn’t you think of making it into a great tub so you could go floating around the rivers and lakes, instead of worrying because it was too big and unwieldy to dip into things!” (35)

To reinforce the point of view about “the use of useless,” Zhuangzi provided a similar example right after the discussion about “the huge gourd”, which is also addressed in a conversation between Zhuangzi and Hui Zi. Hui Zi told Zhuangzi that he had “a big tree of the kind men call *shu*,” but “its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square.” Because it was so enormous, Hui Zi thought it was also “useless.” However, Zhuangzi once again asked Hui Zi, “Why don’t you plant it in Not-Even-Anything Village, or the field of Broad-and-Boundless, relax and do nothing by its side, or lie down for a free and easy sleep under it?” (35)

According to the two examples above, the common sense meanings of “useful” and “useless” have been deconstructed. The author explored the intrinsic and inherent value of things and proved that even if the relationship between “useful” and “useless” was not fixed, it sometimes could be relatively flowing and interchangeable. The word “use” is able to load richer

connotations so that the essence of meaning is no longer confined to a fixed language sign. Therefore, it is fair to say that litotes has provided a possibility for language to transcend the limitation from the inside of language.

Litotes is well-established as a writing tool. However, litotes also functions as a kind of thinking pattern; for example, it is used to criticize traditional values of Confucianism. For example, in “Rifling Trunks,” the author wrote:

In the world everyone knows enough to pursue what he does not know, but no one knows enough to pursue what he already knows. Everyone knows enough to condemn what he takes to be no good, but no one knows enough to condemn what he has already taken to be good. This is how the great confusion comes about... (113)

As far as Gao Shen is concerned, the author of this passage has rejected the view from *The Analects of Confucius* that “to take what you know for what you know, and what you do not know for what you do not know, that is knowledge indeed” (6). The author is attempting to point out that the chaos of the objective world and confusion of the human mind are the natural outcome when knowledge and morality constrict human nature. Instead of exposing the essence of Confucian morality by analyzing and disassembling the definition of morality, he uses a muddle of a sentence and hopes that will enlighten readers to come to their own conclusions about the adverse effects of traditional morality. Through this kind of ambiguous statement, it is possible to see that the subjective wills of men—self-centeredness, artificial standardization and the traditional moral system—have been subdued or, more precisely “deconstructed.”

As mentioned before, although litotes is used as a thinking pattern that successfully deconstruct the restriction of men’s minds. The *Zhuangzi* does not repudiate ethics systems of Confucianism and Mohism. Instead, it tries to rethink traditional values. Not only that, in “Keng-

sang Ch'u [Geng Sang Chu]," the author re-express the connotation of core values of Confucianism and Mohism through litotes: "Perfect ritual makes no distinction of persons; perfect righteousness takes no account of things; perfect knowledge does not scheme; perfect benevolence knows no affection; perfect trust dispenses with gold" (258-259). Through the use of litotes, Zhuangzi critically subverts Confucian moral codes, not only revealing the insincerity of Confucianism, but also logically advocating a loftier moral ideal (He 87). Therefore, we can conclude that litotes somehow helps Zhuangzi to shed the constraint of mainstream values. Through negative sentences, the *Zhuangzi* guides readers to enter a more extensive intellectual world.

In conclusion, the emergence of litotes shows that the artificial limits constructed by language has been crossed – that language no longer represents individual wisdom and preference or any unified and orderly value system but rather a return to a kind of endless expansion of words. Therefore, it is easy to see that, rescuing language from the traditional order and stable structure is exactly one of the ultimate goals of the using litotes. Through the creative use of language with devices such as litotes, what the *Zhuangzi* tries to convey was a sort of original life experience. After all, the ultimate purpose of the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is to arrive at the perpetual floating and boundless realm. As Chen Qiqing argued, litotes helps men break through and deconstruct a stereotypical and ossified thinking pattern, but language is able to convey more information and provide a wider space of thinking to readers. Consequently, for Zhuang, litotes becomes the inevitable choice for an ideal language. In other words, litotes is a language form that is closes to Dao, a more ideal language with which to address Dao (30).

CHAPTER 4. Allegory

At the end of “External Things,” Zhuangzi has addressed a theory as follows: “The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you’ve gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The Rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you’ve gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning, once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words” (302). As has already been made clear in previous chapters, even if Zhuangzi is known as a skeptic of language, his proposition is far from “anti-language.” Instead, according to the theory above, it is more appropriate to define him as a “pragmatist” of language. In the *Zhuangzi*, language serves as an implementation tool like a fish trap or a rabbit snare that will be easily disposed of or forgotten once the actual goals are attained. The main meaning of this theory seems to be compatible with the basic Daoist viewpoint on language: “The Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way” (Zhuangzi 243). However, attained an actual function as a fish trap or a rabbit snare, language is not just a barrier in the way of perceiving Dao; instead, it shoulders part of the responsibilities to achieve Dao as well. Zhuangzi seems to find a delicate and dynamic balance between words and meaning, language and Dao.

In addition, the theory that “once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words” reveals a fundamental pattern in Zhuangzi’s philosophical system, which is “language-meaning-Dao.” As Wang Zhenjun explains, the relationship between language and meaning is progressive; language and meaning represent two ladders used to reach the Dao (72). In other words, both of meaning and language are playing a foreshadowing role in Zhuangzi’s philosophical world; only Dao is the final pursuit. Now that the antagonistic relations between language and Dao are cleared up, we have a new perspective from which to review the limitation of language identified by Zhuangzi. Given the premise that meaning cannot be adequately

expressed in words, it becomes critical to find a way to overcome the defects of language in order to improve the process of achieving Dao. That problem needs to be solved promptly.

As every coin has two sides, the limitation of language in this regard is no longer merely a defect but also a merit. The disadvantages of language for expressing meaning have somehow promoted the diversity of the textual expressions of Zhuangzi, and also provided more freedom and possibility for Zhuangzi to develop and establish an identity for his writing. In other words, due to the inadequacy of language and the need for expression, Zhuangzi has no choice but to resort to various literary tactics, including analogy or litotes, as mentioned in previous chapters, as well as other rhetorical devices such as metaphors, stories, or dialogue between characters (Lo 89). In this regard, Zhuangzi's pragmatism about language is not limited to the theory stage. He indeed finds a way to break through the restriction of language as a symbol system and express his Dao adequately. Zhuangzi's exploration of language leads us to another typical language phenomenon or a writing technique which appeared widely in the text of *Zhuangzi*—allegory.

To clear up the definition of “allegory” in the *Zhuangzi*, Fang Na compared two definitions of this word both in the context of English and Chinese. First, according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literature Terms*, allegory is defined as “a story or visual image with a second distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning...An allegory may be conceived as a metaphor that is extended into a structured system. In written narrative, allegory involves a continuous parallel between two (or more) levels of meaning in a story, so that its persons and events correspond to their equivalents in a system of ideas or a chain of events external to the tale” (159). However, as Fang observes, compared to the definition above, allegory in the *Zhuangzi* has a broader meaning which also covers the function of fable and parable (18).

By comparing the characteristics of allegory in different contexts, Fang Na eventually comes up with a definition that best represents the allegory discussed in this thesis. As far as Fang Na is concerned, the allegory in the *Zhuangzi* should initially refer to a story with a second distinct meaning. There is always a potential meaning hidden behind the story, so that the allegory is only applied as a media for conveying the author's real opinion. Second, in the *Zhuangzi*, the plots of an allegory should not only be brief and straightforward, but also imaginary. The last point is, the characters that appear in the allegories should be imaginary humans, animals, or historical figures (20).

It is also worth mentioning that sometimes, in the Chinese context, the allegory and “imputed words” are all translated as *yuyan*. Also, these two concepts have some common and intertextual characteristics. In the “Imputed Words” in the “miscellaneous chapters,” the author briefly defines “imputed words” as follows: “These imputed words which up nine tenths of it are like persons brought in from outside for the purpose of exposition. A father does not act as go between for his own son because the praises of the father would not be as effective as the praises of an outsider” (303).

Since the “Great Way” was inexpressible and ineffable in the context of the *Zhuangzi*, it will be infeasible to expound Dao with logical reasoning or theoretical analysis. Therefore, the idea of being “brought in from outside for the purpose of exposition” becomes a practical methodology to “say the unsayable” (Møllgaard, *An Introduction to Daoist Thought: Action, language, and ethics in Zhuangzi* 81). Coincidentally, the use of allegory, to some extent, has a similar function. Comparing to the view that “brought in from outside for exposition”, one typical characteristic of allegory that always was expressing the author's viewpoint in the voice of the outsiders.

In “Perfect Happiness,” the author writes: “Names should stop when they have expressed reality, concepts of right should be founded on what is suitable” (195). This means that language activity should be consistent with a proper scenario and that the specific discourse construction should cohere to a particular context. This theory somewhat reflects a theoretical understanding of rhetorical context and later becomes a fundamental premise of unfolding an allegory (Chen and Lin 409). In the *Zhuangzi*, the use of allegory is always integrated with the unique writing style and fantastic imagination. Nevertheless, based on this theory, no matter how unreliable and absurd these allegories are, they are always compatible with the general context of the *Zhuangzi*.

As mentioned above, one of the unique features of allegory in the *Zhuangzi* is that it is always generated through a strange, mysterious, or even absurd context in stark contrast to the reality. Liu Xizai’s acknowledges this in *The Sum of Literature: Chapter One*: “In the *Zhuangzi*, the reality is revealed in the absurd, and the fact is revealed in the allusion” (4).⁸ This point of view reveals one of the most striking features of the writing of the *Zhuangzi*. It is not difficult to find that a plentitude of allegories and stories in the *Zhuangzi* are taking place in a virtual scene. Here is an example from “Free and Easy Wandering”:

In the northern darkness there is a fish and his name is K’un [Kun]. The K’un is so huge I don’t know how many thousand li he measures. He changes and becomes a bird whose name is P’eng [Peng]. The back of the P’eng measures I don’t know how many thousand li across and, when he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds all over the sky. When the sea begins to move, this bird sets off for the southern darkness, which is the Lake of Heaven. (29)

⁸ Liu Xizai: “莊子寓真于誕，寓實于玄。” p.4.

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。鵬之大，不知幾千里也；怒而飛，其翼若垂天之雲。是鳥也，海運則將徙於南冥。

As one of the most well-known articles and also a key to opening up the spiritual world, “Free and Easy Wandering” starts with the description of Kun and Peng. Because lack a complete context and integrated plots, these vignettes are hardly regarded as allegories. However, the appearance of the images Kun and Peng does establish the pattern in the *Zhuangzi*’s philosophical writing. Wandering in the world of “Free and Easy,” which is filled with details that are born from the author’s unconstrained imaginations, common-sense notions are broken and worldly experiences are no longer that important. The fictional images and blurred context lead the readers into a magnificent and mysterious world that is far from reality. Not only that, the allegory in the *Zhuangzi* implied a vision of the freedom of the spiritual realm and also his attempt at attaining an ideal and spiritual status (Zhang 25). Allegory, in this regard, has broadened the degree of the readers’ cognitive freedom. Stories take place in a blurred context and ultimately ceased to present a realistic standard of value. From this perspective, it is fair to say that when language is used to construct allegory, it also expresses a much broader scope of reality.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the *Zhuangzi* is adept at creating a coherent and interlinked context through his fiction. Allegory in the *Zhuangzi* is not confined to single concepts or stories, but attempts to create an integral fictional context based on the use of words. Within this context, the author aims to offer a broader thinking space for readers. The abundant use of allegory indeed has caused some concern. For instance, Wang Zhongling once pointed out that in most cases, allegories in the *Zhuangzi* do not appear separately. The overlap, comparison, and parallelism of allegories will easily fracture and blur the context. In this case, the

understanding of the text will rely strongly on the readers' own comprehension and may depart significantly from the original meaning: reliance on individual comprehension may cause considerable ambiguity or misinterpretation (5). However, as far as Fang Na is concerned, "allegories in *Zhuangzi* don't intend to mislead. They invite interpretation as an analogy for the real world. An allegory is an extended metaphor" (40). It seems that in the *Zhuangzi*, in fact, the author did not care much about the true meaning of allegory. The real purpose is to free the readers from a fixed mindset that is based on empirical reality and to provoke their independent thinking by creating a completely blurred context.

According to the explanation from Chen Qiqing and Lin Xiuming, it is necessary to be concerned about the potential distortion or misunderstanding of the context caused by the extensive use of allegory. The allegory in the *Zhuangzi* precisely reflects the ongoing reforming of the conventional views of language. In rhetorical activities, just because the rhetorical context affects and controls individuals' specific language expressions does not mean that the stylistic subject can only adapt the context. In fact, the subject could also create a matching context on its own initiative according to the needs of expression (412). In other words, there is no fixed or stable context in the *Zhuangzi*. The existence of context should have created by readers. Returning to the pattern of "Language-Meaning-Dao," in order to leap from "language" to "meaning," the author wants to cut off the conventional connection between these two factors. "Meaning" is no longer a concrete concept or definition that can be explained clearly in words, but has become a more abstract construct highly integrated with individual wisdom.

In "Free and Easy Wandering," the author created various imaginative, splendid, and even absurd and supernatural scenarios, all of which are a far cry from reality. Vignettes such as those about Kun and Peng and "the cicada and the little dove" only existed in this particular context,

which has no natural relationship with the realistic, historical, and objective world. It is tough to find objects in real life that correspond with these fictional characters. However, in the *Zhuangzi*, the author connected these characters and constructed a new imaginary world through his creative way of language use. In this imaginary world, individual images are relatively less significant. The combination and interactions of these characters generated a complex, multifaceted, vague context as a whole. Therefore, the fictional characteristic offers a new perspective for understanding the allegory in the *Zhuangzi*. The allegory in *Zhuangzi* is not objective. Also, as regards philosophical thinking expressed in the text, although the final purpose of this book is always to perceive the essence of Dao, the author never struggles with nor obsesses about pursuing a definite answer, but leaves the readers to find the answers themselves. Unlike schools of thought such as Confucianism and Mohism, in which the writing always occurs in an actual or historical context, the writing context in the *Zhuangzi* is generally imaginary and lacks a realistic foundation.

In fact, there is a more appropriate terminology created by Zhuangzi himself to present the ideal context of his entire writing—“Not-Even-Anything Village.”

In “Free and Easy Wandering,” Zhuangzi writes:

Hui Tzu [Hui Zi] said to Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi], “I have a big tree of the kind men call *shu*. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square. You could stand it by the road, and no carpenter would look at it twice. Your words, too, are big and useless, and so everyone alike spurns them!”

...

It certainly knows how to be big, though it doesn't know how to catch rats. Now you have this big tree and you're distressed because it's useless. Why don't you plant it in Not-Even-Anything Village, or the field of Broad-and-Boundless, relax and do nothing by its side, or lie down for a free and easy sleep under it? Axes will never shorten its life, nothing can ever harm it. If there's no use for it, how can it come to grief or pain?" (35)

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，大而不用，眾所同去也。」 [...]

「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？」

As a metaphor, the spiritual connotations implied in “Not-Even-Anything Village” and “Free and Easy Wandering” embody the characteristics of intertextuality, according to Zhong Bo. Early in the beginning of “Free and Easy Wandering,” the readers’ common sense is deconstructed through the conversion that takes place between Kun and Peng. The transformation implies that there should not be any boundaries and limits between things (53). Furthermore, this point of view undoubtedly leads the readers into a broader and freer world—“Not-Even-Anything Village.” The second paragraph in the above block quotation suggests that “Not-Even-Anything Village” is a world without boundaries, and the goal of going there is to live a completely free spiritual experience. It is pretty clear that both “Free and Easy Wandering” and “Not-Even-Anything Village” refer to the infinity of space, and also encourage men to overcome the barriers and obstacles in the actual world and seize the opportunity to approach the boundless and transcendental world in that can be wandered freely and easily.

In addition to “Free and Easy Wandering,” “Not-Even-Anything Village” appears twice

in other parts of the *Zhuangzi*:

The Nameless Man said, “Get away from me, you peasant! What kind of a dreary question is that! I’m about to set off with the Creator. And if I get bored with that, then I’ll ride on the Light-and Lissome Bird out beyond the six directions, wandering in the village of Not-Even-Anything and living in the Broad-and-Borderless field.

What business do you have coming with this talk of governing the world and disturbing my mind?” (93-94)

無名人曰：「去！汝鄙人也！何問之不豫也？予方將與造物者為人，厭，則又乘夫莽眇之鳥，以出六極之外，而遊乎無何有之鄉，以處壙垠之野。汝又何為以帛治天下感予之心為？」

The other mention is in “Lieh Yü-k’ou [Lie Yu Kou]”: “Man lets his spirit return to the Beginningless, to lie down in pleasant slumber in the Village of Not-Anything-At-All; like water he flows through the Formless, or trickles forth from the Great Purity” (356). According to the text, even though the author of this passage does not precisely define “Not-Even-Anything Village,” we can still see that one of the most basic characteristics of “the Village of Not-Anything-At-All” is “not” (*wu* 無). In Daoism, the concept “not” (*wu* 無) is not equivalent to “nothing” or “not at all” (*meiyou* 沒有). Just like the *wu* from “The great sound has silent tones. The great image has no form” (Laozi 99); *wu* here does not refer to a disappearance of sound and substance but to absolute freedom with no limitations and restrictions (Zhong 52). In the *Zhuangzi*, “the Village of Not-Anything-At-All” sometimes appears with adjectives like “broad and borderless,” depicting the infinite extension of space. In other words, in “the Village of Not-Anything-At-All,” the external material forms are no longer that important. To enter that infinite space, men have to break through the various limitations caused by the changes of time and

space. Only in this way will men be more likely to get close to “casting off form, doing away with understanding.” Reflected in the writing of the *Zhuangzi*, the connotation of “the Village of Not-Anything-At-All” helps man to dispel and remove the restriction of specific values conveyed via language.

Being placed in a large and unrestricted context, readers will not be entangled by the historical context of the words and will be free to focus on the language itself. If this were the case, then in the *Zhuangzi*, “the Village of Not-Anything-At-All” would be not merely a fictional setting but would refer to a broader context of the *Zhuangzi*. Building his philosophical system on the foundation of “Not-Even-Anything Village,” the author successfully avoids the dilemma caused by the misuse of words. Therefore, “the Village of Not-Anything-At-All” that exists in the philosophical world becomes a refraction and reflection of his fiction. In allegory, not only can the author use language freely, the readers’ comprehension of text is no longer biased.

The Spring and Autumn Period is also known as a period of “contention of a hundred school of thought” (百家爭鳴, *baijiazhengming*).⁹ During this era, debates and criticism became the necessary means by which different schools preserved the stability of their philosophical systems. History offers a theoretical basis for people finding evidence to defend their standpoint. Meanwhile the debates aggravated the conflicts between opposing sides and intensified the polarization between right and wrong. This tendency completely defeats the purpose of the *Zhuangzi*, which is to eliminate the boundary between rights and wrongs and achieve the status of “making the similarities and differences equal.” As a mainstream school of thoughts in the Spring and Autumn period, Confucianism displayed a typical attitude toward history.

⁹ An era of great cultural and intellectual expansion in China, the Spring and Autumn Period was known as the Golden Age of Chinese philosophy. However, the “a hundred of schools of thoughts” is an exaggeration. According to *Shiji*, there are approximately seven schools of thought—Daoism, Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism, Logicians, and the school of Yin-Yang.

Confucianism upholds history and regarded the individual's life value as a continuity of history. In other words, the value criteria respected and identified by Confucians are always compatible with historical significance.

Furthermore, Confucianism's worship of history had a typical effect on language. For Confucianism, language that is used to convey history becomes not only the media of perceiving history but a fundamental factor to establish individual values. Based on its respect and worship of history, Confucianism places great trust in language and confirms the integration of historical reality and the paraphrasing of history. It is entirely fair to say that the Confucians' worship of history is equivalent to their worship of language and that their trust of language is equal to their faith in the historical reality behind language. Within this context, language displays an inherent unity and identity with history and therefore gains authority.

However, being a skeptic about history, Zhuangzi has a different attitude towards the subject. For most of the time, the "historical reality" has to be passed on in the sage's words. However, Zhuangzi is always skeptical about the sage's thought and words. As Dušan commented, Zhuangzi "is possibly the first thinker in the Chinese tradition to suggest that we have no way of being sure what the ancient sages thought" (253). According to Dušan, all of the debates and criticism refer to the struggle over right and wrong. This is precisely the phenomenon that the *Zhuangzi* opposed—"what one call right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right." As stated in the *Zhuangzi*, eliminating rights and wrongs while eradicating the "fixed mind," was a gradual process that unfolded during the development of classic Chinese history. It is fair to say that the "fixed mind" presents a particular but rigid mode of thinking that emerged in the dimension of time; it presents a specific historical conception. Not only that, the *Zhuangzi* takes an entirely different stance on language from that adopted by

adherents to Confucianism. In “Discussion on Making All Things Equal,” he provided a specific description of language’s impact on the objective world:

We have already become one, so how can I say anything? But I have just said that we are one, so how can I not be saying something? The one and what I said about it make two, and two and the original one make three. If we go on this way, then even the cleverest mathematician can’t tell where we’ll end, much less an ordinary man.

(43)

既已謂之一矣，且得無言乎？一與言為二，二與一為三。自此以往，巧曆不能得，而況其凡乎！故自無適有以至於三，而況自有適有乎！無適焉，因是已。

The internal unity of language and history somehow made language a cause of the ossification and antagonism that have entrapped our forms of communication. To separate language from the control of history, fiction, as a writing technique, has played a significant role. It becomes an implement to avoid the impact of Confucianism and regain freedom of expression:

Chuang Chou heard of their views and delighted in them. He expounded [on] them in odd and outlandish terms, in brash and bombastic language, in unbound and unbordered phrases, abandoning himself to the times without partisanship, not looking at things from one angle only. He believed that the world was drowned in turbidness and that it was impossible to address it in sober language. (373)

古之道術有在於是者，莊周聞其風而悅之。以謬悠之說，荒唐之言，無端崖之辭，時恣縱而儻，不奇見之也。以天下為沈濁，不可與莊語。

Since that “sober language” is unable to meet Zhuangzi’s expectations, he has to find another way to release language from the control of history. In this regard, using allegories filled with fictional writing has become critical. As some scholars have observed, “odd and outlandish

terms” or “brash and bombastic language” precisely represent Zhuangzi’s practice, which attempts to distinguish language itself from an historical text (Zhou and Ma 39). It seems that allegory not only constitutes the essence of the *Zhuangzi* by interspersing it with other rhetorical devices, it becomes a unique writing style and the core feature of the *Zhuangzi*. Furthermore, the context of allegory in the *Zhuangzi* is not confined to a single and separate story, but to an integral one. Throughout the fictional writing, the context of the whole text has completely broken away from the limitation of realistic and historical perception. In this regard, readers have to comprehend the text of the *Zhuangzi* from a new perspective, which means that the real experience will no longer affect the interpretation of his words. Language, therefore, is emancipated.

Among allegories in the *Zhuangzi*, a dream is an indispensable scene of writing; many of the philosophical thoughts are presented via dreams. In the *Zhuangzi*, allegory with the background of dreams also occupies a prominent position. Once considered a reflection and refraction of reality, dreams have always had a significant impact on spirituality, especially in ancient times. Due to the excessive attention paid to the interpretation of dreams in ancient China, Zhuangzi sometimes uses dreams as a medium by which to impart values. As Li Zhengang puts it, “Dreams are illusory and visional. Discovering the truth and essence of nature in the form of dreams precisely indicates Zhuangzi’s attempt on [the] ‘deconstructing’ and subverting of the actual world” (47). This suggests that dreams are inseparable from the interior spiritual activities of human beings. However, in the *Zhuangzi*, dreams are not only a key factor of the spiritual world, they are a critical medium through which he illustrates his philosophical system:

He who dreams of drinking wine may weep when morning comes; he who dreams

of weeping may in the morning go off to hunt. While he is dreaming he does not know it is a dream, and in his dream he may even try to interpret a dream. Only after he awakes does he know it was a dream. And someday there will be a great awakening when we know that this is all a great dream. Yet the stupid believe they are awake, busily and brightly assuming they understand things, calling this man ruler, that one herdsman—how dense! (48)

夢飲酒者，旦而哭泣；夢哭泣者，旦而田獵。方其夢也，不知其夢也。夢之中又占其夢焉，覺而後知其夢也。且有大覺而後知此其大夢也，而愚者自以為覺，竊竊然知之。

Even if dreams are always illusory and shadowy, it cannot be denied that they are sometimes the reflections and refractions of our spiritual world. Using dreams to inspire and illuminate the truth signifies the deliberate subversion of the present world. Dreams blurs or even shatters the precise boundary between reality and illusion. Descriptions of dreams in the text help the readers break through the limitation of the real world and pursue spiritual freedom. Allegories are no longer limited to being about people, they take place between man and animals, plants, or even the dead. The story of “Zhuangzi’s Dreaming of Becoming a Butterfly” might be the best known story that blurs the boundary between reality and illusion:

Once Chuang Chou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn’t know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn’t know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things. (49)

昔者莊周夢為胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也，自喻適志與！不知周也。俄然覺，則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢為胡蝶與？胡蝶之夢為周與？周與胡蝶，則必有分矣。此之謂物化。

As with the man in the butterfly story who was not able to tell the difference between reality and dreams, the author has successfully blurred and “deconstructed” the reliability of real world. However, the uncertain characteristics of the real world forces people to grasp the essence of things beyond the appearance. It also applies a possibility to comprehend an essential universal truth — “the Way makes them all into one” (41). Compared with striving for the truth among the visionary world, the best way to get close to Dao do is to entirely give up trying to distinguish reality from unreality. This will free people from the struggle of “taking nature as the contrary of the human being,” making it possible to restore a purified life and spiritual freedom.

In the *Zhuangzi*, dreams become the best medium and the ideal context to cross the boundaries of “the past and the present,” “the dead and the alive,” and “the reality and the illusory.” Dreams are also a fertile ground to illustrate his philosophical thinking and unique insights. As an example, consider the conversation that occurred between Zhuangzi and a skull in “Perfect Happiness”: the dialogue sounds reasonable and vivid. When Zhuangzi went to Ch’u [Chu], he saw an old, dry, and parched skull on the way. The skull made him rethink his perceptions about life, and these thoughts confused him then developed some perceptions, thoughts and confusions towards life. In the middle of the night, the skull came to him in a dream. During their conversation, the skull said to Zhuangzi:

“You chatter like a rhetorician and all your words betray the entanglements of a living man. The dead know nothing of these! Would you like to hear a lecture on the

dead?”

“Indeed,” said Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi].

The skull said, “Among the dead there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores of the four seasons. With nothing to do, our springs and autumns are as endless as heaven and earth. A king facing south on his throne could have no more happiness than this!”

Chuang Tzu couldn’t believe this and said, “If I got the Arbiter of Fate to give you a body again, make you some bones and flesh, return you to your parents and family and your old home and friends, you would want that, wouldn’t you?”

The skull frowned severely, wrinkling up its brow. “Why would I throw away more happiness than that of a king on a throne and take on the troubles of a human being again?” it said (193-194).

「向子之談者似辯士，視子所言，皆生人之累也，死則無此矣。子欲聞死之說乎？」莊子曰：「然。」髑髏曰：「死，無君於上，無臣於下，亦無四時之事，從然以天地為春秋，雖南面王樂，不能過也。」莊子不信，曰：「吾使司命復生子形，為子骨肉肌膚，反子父母、妻子、閭里、知識，子欲之乎？」髑髏深顰蹙額曰：「吾安能棄南面王樂而復為人間之勞乎！」

The dialogue between Zhuangzi and the skull is a conversation related to a discussion about “infinity and limitation” and “restriction and freedom” (Li 50). On the surface, in this story Zhuangzi’s standpoint temporarily reflects common people’s outlook on life and death—“It is a human nature of being mortally afraid of death”—which is contrary to the skull’s opinion that death is formidable but is liberating from the cruel actual world. Zhuangzi’s real thinking about life and death is different as he asserted in the allegory. Guo Xiang once made a comment on this

allegory: “Live a happy life and die a happy death. Since life and death are equals, there is no point worrying about death while we live. This is the principle of Zhuangzi” (66)¹⁰. Apparently, Zhuangzi was not confused about the comparison between life and death. His actual viewpoint has nothing to do with choosing a side from these two extremes; his viewpoint is to live in the moment, just as Guo argued.

In the dream in the block quotation above, the *Zhuangzi* conveys a thinking about life and death through the conversation between him and the skull. It is also worth noting that the *Zhuangzi* once again subverted the supremacy of history by deconstructing the authority of language using a subtle perspective. However, one of the fundamental tenets of Confucianism is that man should always “believe in speaking”, which means that Confucians still admit and respect the authenticity and authority of the historical text. As long as the history is conveyed through language, its power will be questionable and unreliable. Language may be a feasible way to express the author’s view and thinking, but it cannot be used to deliver historical reality or to engender unified values. In other words, in contrast to this Confucian attitude, Daoism tries to shake the foundation of history and then dispel the narrative function of language via allegory (Zhou and Ma 40).

Confucianism always tries to explain everything rationally and logically through the use of language. However, the excessive faith in language not only ossifies the relationship between the signified and signifier but also subjects language to the plight of interpretation. The use of allegory has rescued language from this dilemma. Allegory makes it possible to skillfully avoid addressing undisputed realities or facts and to create a particular context without any fixed values (standards of rights and wrongs). In so doing, allegory rescues language from falling into the trap

¹⁰ Guo Xiang: “生時安生，死時樂死，生死之情既齊，無為當生而優死耳，此莊子之旨也” p. 66.

of rights and wrongs. Not only that, allegory is no longer merely a writing skill or a trope, but a kind of thinking pattern that may assist in pursuing the essence of Dao.

In conclusion, through allegory, the author of the *Zhuangzi* walks us through a fantasy world. It is obvious that allegory is neither an illusionary figment that reflected a crazy mind, nor a special expression that reflected the escape from the unbearable mundane world. If we look back, all these allegories bring us back to a central idea of the *Zhuangzi*—“wandering” (Lo 81). Whether the subject matter is dreams, “the village of Not-Even-Anything,” or other scenarios of allegories, the *Zhuangzi* shuttles back and forth in an ever-changing reality, hovers in between life and the death, and throws off the restrictions of the mundane world. The freedom and autonomy that the *Zhuangzi* pursue are precisely the spiritual core of “wandering.”

In the spiritual world of wandering depicted in the *Zhuangzi*, all is forgotten: forms and body, morality, disputations regarding rights and wrongs. To help readers reach the realm of wandering, the writing of the *Zhuangzi* has no other choice but to resort to the assistance of language. Allegory, therefore, becomes a vehicle for him to wander in his spiritual universe. Through allegories, readers are able to witness a bizarre and motley scenario: that of Zhuangzi shuttling between the infinite and the finite. With the help of allegory, the spiritual universe that Zhuangzi used to wander in is no longer inaccessible to readers (Lo 89). Allegory efficiently assists the *Zhuangzi* to break through the predicament of expression. The depiction of dreams and excessive use of dialogue are used as fictional devices in the allegory of the *Zhuangzi*, which provide more freedom and possibility to use language creatively. Not only that, allegory helps language get rid of the historical context, which means that, in this circumstance, language is no longer the media of expressing historical reality. Instead, language can involve in the readers’ imagination and creativity. In other words, man will be able to poetically dwell in the “Village of

Not-Even-Anything,” which is constructed through allegory.

CHAPTER 5. Conclusion

The highest philosophical category in Daoism is, “the Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way” (Zhuangzi 243). Based on that premise, Dao is considered indescribable and ineffable. These two fundamental characteristics also seem to make the Dao more incompatible with language. As a classic philosophical work of Daoism, the *Zhuangzi* shows a great concern about the limits of language. As an important thinker in the time of the “contention of a hundred school of thought” (百家爭鳴 *baijiazhengming*), Zhuangzi sensitively perceived the crisis that might have been caused by the various use of language such as debates, the system of names, and controversy over rights and wrongs. As far as Zhuangzi was concerned, these factors may have distorted man’s understanding of the Dao or the perception of the objective world. In the “Discussion on Making Everything Equal,” the author wrote, “What one calls right the other calls wrong, what one calls wrong the other calls right” (39). This suggests that language is often used as a mouthpiece for people to convey subjective judgments. Once language is involved in the struggle of “right or wrong,” it will definitely become a vehicle for the expressers to defend their own values and it will lose the neutrality of being a media. As a result, in this case, language will foster the “fixed mind” and constantly lead to disagreements about man’s recognition of the world. However, rather than using language as a tool to disrupt the world, the *Zhuangzi* states a theory that “the Way has never known boundaries; speech has no constancy” (43). As with the Dao, language should be limitless and borderless. It cannot be dominated or manipulated by man’s consciousness; otherwise, it may lead to a situation that “‘the art of the Way’ in time comes to be rent and torn apart by the world” (364).

Given the above, the recognition of the restriction and effects of language throughout the *Zhuangzi* forced readers to seek a way to break through the limits of language. However, the

analysis of the specific use of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* showed that tropes such as analogy, litotes, and allegory are presented as solutions for dealing with major concerns of language. For instance, the ossified thinking regulated by the system of names and words, the subjective and biased value judgment caused by the debate on “right and wrong,” and the uncertainty of definitions confined to the system of names and words is gradually clarified via the analysis of tropes. Thus, exploring the function of tropes not only helps us better understand the distinctive writing style of the *Zhuangzi*, it improves our grasp of the holistic language view of the *Zhuangzi*. Most importantly, analyzing the use of tropes helps us to discover the pragmatic value of the writing of the *Zhuangzi* from the perspective of language use. One of language’s major functions is to reconcile the contradiction between language and meaning, or even to redefine their relationship.

It is interesting to note that the *Zhuangzi* is a book filled with the story of artisans. For example, both P’ien [Pian] from the story, “the wheelwright P’ien chiseling a wheel” and Ding from the story, “Dismemberment of ox by Cook Ding” gain life experience from long-term practical labor. These artisans are always highly respected in the *Zhuangzi*. In contrast, *Zhuangzi* is wary of sophists like Hui Shih [Hui Shi]. *Zhuangzi*’s mistrust of sophists mirrors his attitude towards language—language indeed can entrap man’s intellect (Alt 73). Those sophists enjoy a reputation for being profound and knowledgeable, but at the same time their language skills might entrap the world into endless disputes. As far as Alt is concerned, in the *Zhuangzi*, craftsman depicted in the *Zhuangzi* usually choose to let their art speak for them. In other words, their art skill and practice have become a vehicle of reasoning (63).

As Alt pointed out, *Zhuangzi*’s purpose is “to take the words of men like Hui Shih as the material for his own art” (73). In other words, *Zhuangzi* attempts to get closer to being an artisan

of writing. As with P'ien [Pian]'s skill of chiseling a wheel and Ding's craft of dismembering an ox, Zhuangzi's writing is an artisanal skill and craft. Both P'ien and Ding have the same problem: language is not enough for them to successfully express reason or logic, so they have no choice but to resort to other means. They endow logic and reasoning along with their art and daily practice. Zhuangzi is facing the same problem as those artisans so he also needs to turn to the acrobatics of writing.

Apart from the ineffable Dao, many other factors that exist in nature, such as life experience, defy expression in words. "The wheelwright P'ien [Pian] chiseling a wheel" in "The Way of Heaven" and "Dismemberment of ox by Cook Ding" in "The Secret of Caring for Life" both prove that the acquisition of life experience occurs through long-term practical activity; it is a combination of theory and practice that also should be accumulated in laboring activity. In conclusion, as with meanings, experience cannot be passed on in its fullness through language. The over-reliance on language to convey meanings or experience may sometimes backfire.

The *Zhuangzi* is trying to illustrate that language is always at risk of being exploited or even distorted. However, the relationship between language and meaning is inseparable, as he makes clear in the following quote from the *Zhuangzi*: "Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words" (302). Even if one of the *Zhuangzi*'s concerns is that meaning cannot be passed on in its fullness via language, language still critical in the process of acquiring meaning through his writing. In other words, the exploration of language in the *Zhuangzi* does not stop at the recognition of the limits of language; on the contrary, according to Wang Jiehong, Zhuangzi has already developed an efficient methodology to surpass the barrier of expression (131). As Zhuangzi writes in the "Autumn Floods," "From the point of the Way, what is noble or what is mean? These are merely what are called endless

changes” (181). This brief sentence illustrates one of Zhuangzi’s views for perceiving the world, which is to observe everything from the perspective of Dao. Based on this theory, the Dao is no longer a transcendental concept but has been objectified as a specific perspective. Even if Zhuangzi himself did not explain too much about how to observe things from a Daoist perspective, Wang considers that this methodology could be interpreted as objectification, as the act of describing “objects in terms of objective correlatives.” Manifested in writing, objectification requests the expresser to temporarily suspend or hide self-consciousness and to observe or interpret an object in terms of another object (133). To clarify, Wang provides the following example:

Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi] and Hui Tzu [Hui Zi] were strolling along the dam of [the] Hao River when Chuang Tzu said, “See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That’s what fish really enjoy!”

Hui Tzu said, “You’re not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?”

Chuang Tzu said, “You’re not I, so how do you know I don’t know what fish enjoy?” (Zhuangzi 189)

莊子與惠子游於濠梁之上。莊子曰：「儵魚出游從容，是魚之樂也。」惠子曰：「子非魚，安知魚之樂？」莊子曰：「子非我，安知我不知魚之樂？」

This story shows Zhuangzi’s concern about how hard it is for humans, with their limited human perspective, to perceive or experience the inner voices of other objects in nature. Only when man gives up his subjective perspective and identifies himself as an object equal to the target of observation is it possible for him to understand the nature of that target. This form of objectification is not only a manifestation of poetic thinking of the *Zhuangzi*, it emphasizes the relativism and fluidity that exist in the nature, which aim to convince and help man to surpass his

egocentric self. As a result, the *Zhuangzi* pays more attention to language forms. This finding connects the concept of objectification with the specific use of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* and provides us a new angle from which to re-comprehend the function of tropes, because it is easy to discover that the objectification is manifested in these three tropes—analogy, litotes, and allegory.

As one of the most commonly used tropes in the *Zhuangzi*, analogy coincides with the requirement of objectification. It normally starts with one object and then makes a connection with another by seeking the similarities between them. In this process, the relationship between the “object” and “me” is converted into “object” and “object”: the subjective will of man is weakened. As mentioned in the previous text, allegory in the *Zhuangzi* usually occurs in an imaginative context, so that all the images and figures are created. For example, in the allegory “Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi]’s Dreaming of Becoming a Butterfly,” the Zhuangzi in this story is a fictional character, but not Zhuangzi himself. Zhuangzi in the story is an objectified “self” alienated from reality and existing only in the particular context of the story. Apart from analogy and allegory, the use of litotes did not refer to any argument about the relationship between “things” and “I” or “object” and “self.” But litotes also meets the requirement of objectification from another perspective. The author writes, “From the point of the Way, what is noble or what is mean? These are merely what are called endless changes” (181). This is a typical way of expressing a view that there is no boundary in the middle of “noble” and “mean”; these opposites are not stable but interchangeable. This argument is the why litotes is used in the *Zhuangzi* —to emphasize the relativism and convertibility in everything and eliminate the disintegration caused by polarity.

Through the use of all three tropes, the “self” of man is concealed and suspended in the

writing and construct an internal connection among the objects. As a result, the self-will is weakened and is no longer dominated by language. Although the three tropes take different forms of expression, the ultimate goals for applying them in writing are alike: to restore a dynamic balance among the objects in the world of words. The use of tropes represents the objectification of practicality and it redefines the relationship between language and meaning. By using tropes, the acquisition of meaning is no longer confined to reasoning or definitions, but becomes an experiential process. The philosophy of Daoist philosophy is about the experience and perception. The ultimate goal is to achieve the state of Dao. As Wang Zhengjun observed, Zhuangzi's pursuit of Dao developed through a process of "Language-Meaning-Dao" (72). This process has also made it clear that language and meaning are necessary to reach Dao. Their relationship should be progressive from one to another, layer upon layer. Now that the first step, from language to meaning, has been achieved with the help of tropes, it is possible to achieve Dao through some specific methodologies.

Apart from the specific function of analogy, litotes, and allegory in helping man to reach the status of the Dao, the study of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* could be a new angle from which to reexamine the aesthetics of the writing of the *Zhuangzi*. As Li Zehou argues, unlike religions, which emphasized conversion, the *Zhuangzi* focuses on the significance of imagination and the assurance of the spirit (221). Originating in the transitional period between "the age of poems" and "the age of prose," Zhuangzi's philosophy assimilated the essence from ancient Chinese mythologies and reshaped it with his philosophical thinking (J. Wang 13). A skeptic of language, Zhuangzi refused to conceptualize the objective world with the system of names and words but concentrated on conveying his poetic wisdom in special language forms and a unique writing style. Over the years, there has been an immense amount of discussion related to the rhetoric of

the *Zhuangzi*. However, studies about the specific use of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* are rare. This thesis mainly sorts out three typical tropes and makes a clearer definition for each of them. Based on the new understanding of the connotation of tropes, not only do the core concepts of each separate chapter become easier to comprehend, the shattered and ambiguous context of the *Zhuangzi* also becomes more coherent and unified. According to Wang Jiehong, throughout Chinese intellectual history, Daoism, which is complementary to Confucianism, has exerted an enormous impact on Chinese social customs and ideology. The relationship between language and meaning has greatly influenced the development of aesthetics, literary theory, and other aspects of Chinese culture in a very long time. Therefore, to re-understand the text of the *Zhuangzi* from a more accurate perspective of the art of writing may also be furtherance for us to review the human thought development of ancient China (13).

Ultimately, it is interesting to point out that the study of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* may also probe a new train of thought on the *Zhuangzi* in the field of comparative literature. Over the years, because of the diverse philosophical thoughts in the book, *Zhuangzi* has been recognized as one of the greatest thinkers in ancient China. As such, he has been compared to western philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. Both the profound thinking and the artistic charm in his writing provide us with numerous angles from which to study his theory in the context of comparative literature. For example, many scholars believe that the *Zhuangzi* upends the traditional view on authority and rationality, and even challenges the social hierarchy. To some extent, the pursuit of *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy resonates with Derrida's theory of deconstruction. Derrida does not believe that language is capable of passing on rationality or truth, something the *Zhuangzi* concluded centuries ago, as evidenced in his observation that "We can use words to talk about the coarseness of things and we can use our

minds to visualize the fineness of things” (179). In addition to the common view of Derrida and Zhuangzi, the philosophy of Nietzsche and Daoist thought representing by Zhuangzi also seemingly matches pretty well in various ways and for different aims (Möeller 57).

Many of the current comparative studies about the *Zhuangzi* and western philosophers are connected by a common concept. For instance, in “Thinking on the Edge—Heidegger, Derrida, and the Dao,” Burik identifies the “in-between” character as a bridge linking the three thinkers: “That in-between I locate in Heidegger as the *Auseinandersetzung* and the *Lichtung* and *Ereignis*; in Derrida as the trace, difference, spacing, and play; and in Daoism as *dao*, the hinge, the interplay of yin and yang—and, of course, as the gateway (*men* 門)” (507). Burik then explores the specific connotation of “in-between” in each thinker’s work and discovers its relevance with language. The same idea is found in the comparative study between Zhuangzi and Nietzsche. Chen Guying, a well-known Daoist thinker and Chinese Nietzsche scholar, uses the concept of “romanticism” as a foundation to develop a comparison between Zhuangzi and Nietzsche. Chen redefines “romanticism” from three dimensions: “first, the expression of inner feelings and envisioned utopia by means of a poetic language filled with imagery; second, the praise of nature and the unity of man and nature along with a critique of urban lifestyle; and third, the pursuit of individual liberation” (Möeller 60). The new definition of “romanticism” provides a new angle from which Chen can bridge the gap between the two thinkers. It also offers an opportunity for further comparison.

The current comparative studies between Zhuangzi and western philosophers are mainly theoretical; the mainstream research still focuses on the general language philosophy or is carried out based on a mutual concept such as “in-between” or “romanticism.” Tropes have not attracted as much attention. Even though there is no room in this thesis for further discussion, it is worth

noting that the study of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* may bring possibilities of new conversations into the field of comparative study. For instance, in the context of deconstruction, language is supposed to be ambiguous, diverse, and never confined to stable forms. Deconstruction, as a specific methodology, overturns the fixed binary relationship between names and meaning as it reexamines the relationship between language, meaning, and text. In this regard, functioning as writing tools, tropes precisely objectify the deconstruction thought in the *Zhuangzi*. In other words, unfolding the deconstruction in concrete language forms, tropes become a feasible methodology to subvert the traditional language structure, and to free people's minds from the ideological bonds of language.

In conclusion, the exploration of the tropes in the *Zhuangzi* is of great significance for a number of reasons. The use of tropes unveils the mysterious writing style of the *Zhuangzi* and illuminates the path of "language-meaning-Dao." It helps us reexamine the relationship between language and Dao, and reinforces the view that language is no longer a barrier, but a fundamental and necessary link to achieve Dao. On the other hand, the study of tropes creates new possibilities and provides new angles from which to connect the language theory of the *Zhuangzi* with western language philosophy. No matter which point of view, the study of tropes in the *Zhuangzi* should not be ignored or underestimated, but deserves further discussion.

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