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GUO XIANG'S COMMENTARY OF  
THE ZHUANGZI'S IMPUTED WORDS  
AND ITS IMPLICATION ON  
EXPLAINING METAPHOR

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MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2018

GUO XIANG'S COMMENTARY OF THE ZHUANGZI'S IMPUTED  
WORDS AND ITS IMPLICATION ON EXPLAINING METAPHOR

by  
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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
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Lingnan University

2018

## ABSTRACT

### Guo Xiang's Commentary of the *Zhuangzi*'s Imputed Words and its Implication on Explaining Metaphor

by

XIE Dongyu

Master of Philosophy

This thesis discusses how Guo Xiang's Commentary (hereinafter referred to as "the *Commentary*") shapes our understanding of the *Zhuangzi* in regard to the usage of imputed words (*yuyan* 寓言). In order to discuss it, two issues have to be examined first: imputed words in the *Zhuangzi*, and comparison of the *Commentary*'s and the *Zhuangzi*'s usages of imputed words.

As for the first issue, I argue in Chapter 1 that imputed words, echoing the *Zhuangzi*'s indeterminacy, can be regarded as metaphors. The rhetoric and persuasive purposes of imputed words help these words serve as purveyors to allow readers to perceive implicit meanings and understand unfamiliar concepts that are usually difficult to be articulated with direct language. However, there is always a gap between readers' perception and author's intended meaning, and I use Gricean account to examine imputed words to prove it.

As for the second issue, I argue in Chapter 2 that Guo Xiang uses less imputed words in the *Commentary*, and he introduces new concepts to articulate the original texts. I hold that Guo's interpretation may guide readers to understand the *Zhuangzi* relatively straightforwardly, but Guo also promotes his own philosophical views in the *Commentary*, and the new concepts he introduces are not necessarily mirroring *Zhuangzi*'s original implicit meaning, which is not acceptable.

The final chapter discusses the reason why Guo uses this interpretive approach and how the *Commentary* influences people's understanding of the *Zhuangzi*. In this chapter, I examine the *Commentary* in the scope of intellectual history of Han Dynasty and Wei-Jin Dynasty, and relate it to contemporary scholars' views as well. To conclude, I hold that Guo's approach is unacceptable, not only because it deviates from *Zhuangzi*'s intended meaning, but also because it fails to "balance the 'teaching of names' and the 'self-so'".

## DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNED

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(XIE Dongyu)

Date: 26-11-2018

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

GUO XIANG'S COMMENTARY OF THE ZHUANGZI'S  
IMPUTED WORDS AND ITS IMPLICATION  
ON EXPLAINING METAPHOR

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## Introduction

As one of the most significant classics of all time, the *Zhuangzi* has a high reputation in Chinese literature and intellectual history, and that attracts countless people to interpret and study. Guo Xiang was the one who organized the *Zhuangzi* and divided it into three chapters, which became the most common version of the *Zhuangzi* we read today. As Guo is the editor of the dominating version of the *Zhuangzi* (Tang 1999: 46), his work that comments on the *Zhuangzi*, namely the *Commentary*, is one of the most significant and wide-spread interpretative works, and readers' perception of the *Zhuangzi* is consciously or unconsciously influenced by it. Being such an important commentary work, however, the *Commentary* is not that faithful to the original texts as we can easily spot how Guo twists or misinterprets Zhuangzi's original meaning. This thesis discusses how the *Commentary* shapes readers' understanding of the *Zhuangzi*, especially in terms of how Guo uses direct language to replace Zhuangzi's metaphorical language and promote his own philosophical view.

The authorship of the *Zhuangzi* is controversial, as scholars constantly question and debate about who exactly wrote the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>1</sup> But this issue will not be within the scope of my thesis. I do not make any claim about the text's authorship and historical status, except that it is a text compiled before *Shiji* (史記, The Records of the Grand Historian) and its content largely reflects pre-Han social and cultural environment. My method of studying the *Zhuangzi* is to treat it as a reflection on human experience and a response to other strands of thought. None of my elaborations is based on the historical

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<sup>1</sup> Many scholars such as Graham hold that the author of "the Inner Chapters" is one person, commonly recognized as Zhuangzi himself, and "the Outer Chapters" and "the Mixed Chapters" are written by more than one person, usually recognized as "School of Zhuangzi". (Graham 1989: 172-173) It is also a dominating idea that "the Inner Chapters" are composed prior to the other two chapters (Liu 1988: 3-52). Klein, However, holds that it is time to let go the traditional notion that Zhuangzi is the author of "the Inner Chapters", and the assumption that they are the earliest stratum of the texts is problematic. (Klein 2011: 360-361)

Zhuang Zhou. Regarding the *Commentary*, I take the majority view that Guo Xiang (郭象, 253-312) is the author (or at least the main author with some contents from Xiang Xiu [向秀, 227-277]).

There are several English translators of the *Zhuangzi*, including Giles, Legge, Watson, and Graham (Graham 1989: 173), and I follow the majority to mainly rely on Watson's (2013) translation in my thesis, although I have made some tiny changes in terms of the choice of words. The *Commentary*, however, does not have as many English translations as the *Zhuangzi*. It seems that there is not a complete and well-accepted translation of the *Commentary*, but when some scholars discuss it, they translate some key paragraphs and concepts into English. In my thesis, the English quotations from the *Commentary* are mostly translated by myself, but I refer to Ziporyn's work (2003) in which he has translated some key concepts of the *Commentary*.

Zhuangzi uses a large number of metaphorical discourses, including imputed words (*yuyan* 寓言, hereinafter referred to as “*yuyan*”), weighted words (*chongyan* 重言, hereinafter referred to as “*chongyan*”) and goblet words (*zhiyan* 卮言, hereinafter referred to as “*zhiyan*”) as three common metaphorical discourses that he uses throughout the *Zhuangzi*, and among these three I choose *yuyan* as the focus of my thesis. In Chapter One, I will discuss Zhuangzi's usage of *yuyan*, and the reasons why he has to use this metaphorical discourse instead of direct language. I will also discuss how the metaphorical discourses are irreducible both in understanding Zhuangzi's philosophical view and in human understanding in general.

The *Commentary*, on the contrary, uses little metaphorical language and tries to express the “real meaning” of Zhuangzi's metaphors. It may seem reasonable because when one comments on something, he has to make it direct and explicit. But Guo does not just spell out the original meaning, as he evidently twists it to fit in his own philosophical views. Whether or not Guo deviates from Zhuangzi's original meaning, and whether or not it is

acceptable for a commentator in general to act like Guo, have arisen scholars' research interests. Some scholars such as Tang (2001) and Ziporyn (2003) hold that it is not acceptable to deviate that much from the *Zhuangzi*. Chen (2014) holds that although it seems that Guo is not faithful to the details of the *Zhuangzi*, it is still acceptable because Guo is just trying to fix the mistakes of the *Zhuangzi*. Mou (1962) even holds that although Guo is not faithful, the *Commentary* goes beyond the *Zhuangzi* so it should be regarded as more complete. Although this topic attracts sufficient attention, not many scholars have discussed this issue with the focus of *yuyan*. Chong (2006) and Wang (2003) have discussed Zhuangzi's metaphorical discourses, but their works mainly focus on the *Zhuangzi*, not on the *Commentary*. And for those who researched on the *Commentary*, such as Tang (2001) and Ziporyn (2003), did not choose metaphorical discourses such as *yuyan* as the focus. I hold that as such a significant work, it is not acceptable for the *Commentary* to deviate that much from the original texts. I will discuss this issue in Chapter Two by articulating how Guo reinterprets the meaning in order to fit in his own philosophical view. I will also compare his philosophical view to that of Zhuangzi regarding to "the origin of world", "things", "knowledge" and "skill".

As the *Commentary* is so influential, most of us are inevitably influenced by it, even for those who disagree with Guo's interpretive methods. In Chapter Three, I will discuss how the *Commentary* shapes our understanding about the *Zhuangzi*, and how this interpretive method is influenced by the historical tradition of Guo's time, including a reaction to the scholastic method in Han Dynasty and the project to balance "the teaching of names (*mingjiao* 名教)" and "self-so (*ziran* 自然)". I will also comment on whether we should read the *Zhuangzi* according to Guo's concerns.

## Chapter 1: The Indeterminacy of Zhuangzi's Imputed Words

### 1. Introduction

*Yuyan* (usually translated as “imputed words”) is a mode of discourse that is often identified with metaphor, which often invites multiple interpretations. Its meaning is opaque and in flux, sometimes it is even used to reflect on the boundary of ordinary language.

While *yuyan* may be the most fascinating among three modes of speech mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* Chapter 27, it seems to receive less attention from scholars in Chinese philosophy. Still, those who comment on *yuyan* usually touch on three aspects: interrelation of *yuyan*, *chongyan* and *zhiyan*; reasons why Zhuangzi uses *yuyan*; and methods for interpreting *yuyan*. For instance, regarding the first aspect, Wang (2003) and Chong (2016) agree that all of them are indirect expressions, while Wang (2004) holds that only *yuyan* and *chongyan* are indirect but *zhiyan* is direct language. The second aspect receives most attention. Chen (1992), Hansen (1992), Schwitzgebel (1996), Wang (2003) and Wang (2004) explain that Zhuangzi's using *yuyan* is a logical consequence of his view about language, though they disagree about how we should articulate that view. Some scholars seek rationale of *yuyan* in the intellectual climate of Zhuangzi's period, for instance, that Zhuangzi uses *yuyan* about trees because it is “a common strand running through a considerable part of the philosophical and political texts of the time” (Galvany 2009: 72), yet Zhuangzi probably intends it to be “the mainstay of staunch resistance to the coercive, standardizing, and authoritarian ideas of the political, ritual and educational institutions” (Galvany 2009: 97). Some scholars focus on the perlocutionary force of *yuyan* and explain its usage by referring to its impact on readers, for instance, that it promotes openness and non-attachment (Chong 2016: 370) or that it expresses and induces a free spirit that is hard to be described using direct and logical language (Cui 1992: 308-09). The third aspect attracts relatively little attention. Some scholars tend to believe that the indeterminacy of Zhuangzi's language prevents

readers from using any fixed methods to interpret the text's content. Therefore, they pass over the issue of how one gets Zhuangzi's message, if any (Schwitzgebel 1996, Wang 2004, Chong 2016). Scholars who do talk about the issue tend to be brief. For instance, Wang (2003) holds that readers can interpret *yuyan* in a relatively pragmatic way for her self-exploration, and Allinson (2015) argues that the literary devices in the *Zhuangzi* appear in a developmental sequence, so the delivery of the message works in stages. Wu (1990) argue that *yuyan* "lodges" us strategically for us to see the new implications, and such lodging is often situational, creative but also risky (Wu 1990: 370). Consequently, one is required to figure out the particular role of a story or metaphor in Zhuangzi's overall philosophical horizon.

While all these scholars do tell us about the significance of *yuyan*, I believe more can be said if we want to understand its unique role in Zhuangzi's philosophy. In this chapter, I will analyze first the *yuyan*'s structure, and then elaborate on why Zhuangzi uses *yuyan*. I argue that there are two reasons, in which one deals with rhetoric power and another reflects Zhuangzi's view of world and human practices. Lastly, I explore how audience<sup>2</sup> attempt to decipher the implicit meaning in a metaphor, and why it has inevitable limitation.

## 2. The Structure of *Yuyan*

This section discusses formal features of *yuyan*. Zhuangzi defines *yuyan* at the beginning of the chapter bearing the same title, where he also provides a brief justification of the reason why he has to use it instead of direct language. I shall hereafter call the following quotation the "three-mode passage":

These imputed words that make up nine-tenths of it are like persons brought in from outside for the purpose of exposition. A father does not act as a matchmaker for his own son because the praises of the father

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<sup>2</sup> Although in Zhuangzi's case we perceive the metaphor through reading, I use the term "audience" to include the both readers, hearers and any people who perceive author's expressions through any sort of media.

would not be as effective as the praises of an outsider. It is the fault of other men, not mine, [that I must resort to such a device, for if I were to speak in my own words], then men would respond only to what agrees with their own views and reject what does not, would pronounce “right” what agrees with their own views and “wrong” what does not. (Watson 2013: 234)

寓言十九，藉外論之。親父不為其子媒。親父譽之，不若非其父者也；非吾罪也，人之罪也。與己同則應，不與己同則反；同於己為是之，異於己為非之。(Guo 1961: 948)

In Chinese, grammatically speaking, the subject of “...is not my fault, but the fault of men” is missing here in the passage. The reason of supplementing it with the practice of borrowing is this. Prior to this sentence, “borrowing other expressions to support the discourses” and “a father not acting the part of matchmaker” are the only subjects mentioned, and the latter is merely a metaphorical expression of the former, so both of them can be summarized as the general practice of borrowing. So it makes sense to infer that the subject of “...is not my fault, but the fault of men” is also “borrowing other expressions to support the discourses”. And “men” refers to audience who receive Zhuangzi’s statements, which means to say that at least one of the reasons why Zhuangzi uses *yuyan* is concerned with audience’s reception of Zhuangzi’s discourse. This issue will be discussed in section 1.3 and 1.4 of this chapter. For now, let me first focus on the characters 寓言 before returning to the three-mode passage.

The character “言” can be regarded as a noun or a verb in Chinese, and here in the word “寓言”, “言” is a noun that refers to words. More importantly, we need to look at the character “寓”. Its written form already gives us some clues about *yuyan*’s etymological meaning. The construction and the meaning of Chinese character “寓” echo the features of *yuyan*. “寓” means “to reside, often in relation of home and residence” (Gu Wen Zi Gu Lin 1999: 841). Its radical “宀” means “home (somewhere to reside)”.<sup>3</sup> If we

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<sup>3</sup> The other part “禺” is a phonetic symbol that does not have significant meaning.

comprehend these two characters as a whole, “寓言” means “words that lodge its meaning in somewhere”.

Here, I shall clarify the relation between *yuyan* and metaphor. I follow the view that although “metaphor” is not a term raised by Zhuangzi himself, his *yuyan* can be regarded as metaphors because these discourses are similar in structure and function. Metaphor also has a “hiding” effect like *yuyan*, because it says something to express another thing implicitly. Chong takes all of the three modes of discourse (*yuyan*, *chongyan* and *zhiyan*) to be metaphors, and he agrees with Lin that “goblet words” is the most philosophical one. (Chong 2016: 101) Among these three modes of discourse, *yuyan* may be the one that can undoubtedly fit in the structure of metaphor. A metaphor has at least a primary subject and a secondary subject. The secondary subject illustrates the primary subject and is in some way related to it. Since the primary subject and the relationship between two subjects may not be mentioned, its meaning is not said explicitly. Audience need to use the explicit or the literal meaning as a clue to go beyond it and determine the implicit meaning. Because it does not say what it means, it is a form of indirect language. In the *Zhuangzi*, a whole story or a piece of fragment, or a sentence can all be regarded as *yuyan*. No matter which kind of *yuyan* it is, it fits in the structure of metaphor in this way: the story/fragment/sentence is the secondary subject that illustrates Zhuangzi’s implicit meaning, which is the primary subject.

If we are granted that *yuyan* is a metaphorical mode of discourse, then in “words that lodge its meaning in somewhere”, “meaning” should refer to implicit meaning and “somewhere” refers to explicit meaning of a metaphor. Explicit meaning is straightforward and literal, which is found by referring to the ordinary use of words involved. On the contrary, implicit meaning is hidden, which may cause indeterminacy, especially in Zhuangzi’s case. It can

be further divided into two parts:<sup>4</sup> author meaning and expression meaning. These parts are not always identical. To be more specific, author meaning is what author intends to express through a metaphor, while expression meaning is what can be reasonably found out by competent audience following general guidelines of interpretation.<sup>5</sup> When competent audience interpret a metaphor, they can, sometimes even need to, consult author's intention. However, as long as it is possible to have a gap between interpretations following guidelines and author's intention, a metaphor's implicit meaning cannot be always definite, not to mention that sometimes the author does not even have a clear intention, thus author meaning itself is already indeterminate. In *Qiwulun* (齊物論, Discussion on Making All Things Equal), Zhuangzi states that "Words are not just wind. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, then do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds, but is there any difference, or isn't there?" (Watson 2013: 9) If "something" includes the implicit meaning of an expression, then he seems to imply that we can say that words have meaning, but the meaning is indeterminate. We cannot be sure whether language is as "meaningful" as users intend it to be. At the very least, there are no linguistic rules that we can rely on to guarantee that.

When Zhuangzi uses *yuyan*, his implicit meaning is hidden and "lodged" in the explicit meaning of his *yuyan*. There is always a gap between the two layers of meaning. Moreover, when his implicit meaning is related to something even harder to be captured by direct language used in daily life, such as the limit of human epistemological inquiry, then we cannot reliably

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<sup>4</sup> I assume that it is not necessary to distinguish expression meaning from author meaning when only explicit meaning is concerned. This is not because the distinction is not valid, but because it is not useful for the audience's understanding. In most cases the author alone cannot influence how the words are ordinarily used, hence there is no need to consult the author's intention. However, regarding metaphors' implicit meaning, knowing author's intention may change audience's interpretation of expression. Of course, this does not imply that explicit meaning or implicit meaning is always unequivocal.

<sup>5</sup> More about the method of interpreting metaphors will be discussed in section 1.5.

infer from explicit meaning to implicit meaning by conventional linguistic rules. All these obstacles lead to uncertainty of audience's interpretation. Although sometimes descriptive plain languages are left as hints or rough guidance for audience to try finding out the meaning behind, this clue cannot fully solve the indeterminacy involved.

Interestingly, the three-mode passage itself is also metaphorical, in which *yuyan* is compared to “another man”, “father” to “utterer”, “son” to “utterer's implicit meaning”. The practice of a father employs a matchmaker to praise his son sets up an image for us to understand what “borrowing” in writing should be. The key is the construction of a medium that hides and shows the subject matter of communication at the same time. This is *yuyan*'s basic structure: a metaphor (usually a story) not only serves as a medium to bridge utterer's implicit meaning and audience's reception, but also twists the implicit meaning. By twisting the implicit meaning, it creates a gap which would not have existed if the utterer uses only direct language to communicate. Since this gap causes indeterminacy, it may lead to misunderstanding as well. However, the gap also allows the writer to lead audience to imagine something in a new way that she wants to highlight.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, direct language says what it means, and is in stricter accordance to conventional semantic rules.

The significance of the three-mode passage can be better illustrated if we contrast Zhuangzi's approach to speaking and writing to that of Confucians and Mohists. For Confucians, “It is a rare thing for glib speech and an insinuating appearance to accompany authoritative conduct (*ren* 仁)” (Ames 1998: 71). Zhuangzi's usage of metaphorical language to “insinuate” rather than directly articulate his implicit meaning, may be regarded by Confucians to be a kind of “fine words” that disorient people to cultivate true virtue. For Mohists, they take the need of making clear distinctions in speech and act

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of how it works to highlight utterer's implicit meaning by inviting audience to imagine through a metaphor will be discussed in details in the next section.

very seriously. As it is said, “‘Distinguishing’ will be used to make clear the distinction between so and not-so; investigate the rules of order and chaos; make clear the locations of similarity and difference; examine the patterns of name and stuff; locate benefit and harm, and resolve doubts”. (Johnston 2010: 620-621)

“Distinguishing” is the basic activity of separating *shi* (是, right) and *fei* (非, wrong), and for Mohists, clarity and correctness are major concerns. They aim at firmly establishing the distinction of different *shi-fei*, and even when they occasionally use metaphors they highlight the image of measuring tools. “If the distinction is not recognized then even someone whose moral worth is like that of Yu, Tang, Wen or Wu will not find advancement.” (Johnston 2010: 87-89) For Mohists, language should function as measuring tools to clarify things. In order to avoid ambiguity and indeterminacy, Mohists prefer direct language to metaphorical language. Therefore, for Confucians and Mohists, Zhuangzi’s approach may cause confusion and chaos, not only because Zhuangzi does not embrace a fixed *dao*<sup>7</sup> (Fraser 2009: 446)<sup>8</sup>, but also his *yuyan* exploits the gap between implicit and explicit meaning, thus opens the possibility of disguising one set of *shi-fei* in another. Zhuangzi, however, would not find it problematic if one is always concerned with a changing environment that does not have only one set of fixed distinctions (Fraser 2009: 444-57).<sup>9</sup> If circumstances change, any pair of distinction can have a chance to be reversed in use, which means that any *fei* can be a *shi* and vice versa. “Everything has its ‘that,’ everything has its

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<sup>7</sup> In my thesis, I write the term “*dao*” in this way instead of capitalizing it (“*Dao*”) or adding on an article for it (“the *Dao*”/“the *dao*”) because I hold that *dao* does not specifically refer to the only one superior power, and it is a more general concept that is adapted to everything in or beyond the reality.

<sup>8</sup> Such a framework is one way of articulating a conception of *dào* (way)—one taken for granted by the Mohists and Xúnzi, for instance. So, skepticism about *shì-fēi* distinctions extends naturally into skepticism about whether we can know and follow an authoritative or privileged *dào*. (Fraser 2009: 446)

<sup>9</sup> ...how we apply action-guiding distinctions—examples include delight versus dislike, social ranks such as shepherd or noble, and what I am versus what I am not—depend partly on contingent, shifting circumstances. (Fraser 2009: 444-57)

‘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’—which is to say that ‘this’ and ‘that’ give birth to each other.” (Watson 2013: 10) As the distinctions themselves are not fixed, it follows that we need not attempt to mark them with rigid forms of language.

Not resting in any one particular set of *shi-fei*, Zhuangzi keeps asking Confucians and Mohists if there really is a fixed and clear line in between of one view and its opposite, right and wrong.<sup>10</sup> Or, even if there were one, how should we draw the line and how should we know when we will succeed? Therefore, instead of seeking a fixed line between *shi* and *fei*, Zhuangzi simply leaves the position of line open by using language in three special modes. For *yuyan*, however, the line is more ambiguous than the other two. Compared to *yuyan*, *chongyan* is more explanatory that usually states utters’ views about certain perspectives; *zhiyan* is also indeterminate, but it at least displays some options for audience, and that its indeterminacy lies on the imperfectness of each options, not on the content of options themselves. While in *yuyan*, by hiding the implicit meaning, Zhuangzi can allude to many different possibilities. Below are two examples:

i). The image of giant Peng (Watson 2013: 1): In the metaphor of a small fish transforming to a giant bird, Peng seems to refer to a spirit that is free, but we are not sure what exactly that spirit is. Peng wavers under the sky (interacts with the world), and then flies above it, so does it refer to a spirit that is within the reach of human beings or not? Does this metaphor suggest that we should try to follow Peng’s spirit, or suggests that Peng’s spirit is beyond our reach so we do not have the vain hope of following it? The author does not give a determinate answer.

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<sup>10</sup> Sometimes Zhuangzi poses this question to himself as well. “I don’t know whether or not it fits into the category of other people’s statement. But whether it fits into their category or whether it doesn’t, it obviously fits into some category. So in that respect, it is no different from their statements” (Watson 2013: 12). David Wong comments about that fundamentally, Zhuangzi may find it “amusing that scholarly obsession of being right on the meaning of his texts” (Wong 2005: 91).

ii). In the story of dying fish in dried-up springs, Zhuangzi says that “it would be much better if they could forget one another...” (Watson 2013: 44), addressing that for the dying fish, “forgetting one another” is better than “spewing and wetting one another to survive”. The story, of course, is not concerned with fish only and we are supposed to find out what “fish”, “water” and “spewing with moisture” refer to. A common interpretation is this: spewing with moisture means some sort of struggling to help each other. Water refers to the environment people living in. Fish refers to people struggling for a goal that is very unlikely to be achieved, given the current situation. There can be many candidates for the “goal” mentioned, and each candidate may well help us to understand the story’s implicit meaning in different ways. Another line of interpretation may stipulate that spewing is something one is forced to do but does not like to do. Water refers to resources or life essential that disappears all of a sudden. Fish refers to people being forced to share resources in a situation that is too late to do so. Likewise, there can be many candidates for the cause of force, and each of them guides our understanding of the story in different directions. As each secondary subject in the metaphor has more than one interpretation, there can be more than one implicit meaning overall, such as “people who lost their life essentials yet still struggle to survive”, or “external changes force those people to mutually support each other” and so on. Before the dying fish metaphor, Zhuangzi states that “Life and death are fated — constant as the succession of dark and dawn, a matter of Heaven” and following the metaphor, he says that “the Great Clod burdens me with form, labors me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death”. (Watson 2013: 44) It seems that Zhuangzi associates this metaphor to people’s meaningless struggle to avoid death, yet he does not specify that this association is the only option to interpret this metaphor. The audience are again invited to find the author meaning and expression meaning, but it ends up with equivocal alternatives.

By setting up a stage whose message requires audience's participation, Zhuangzi invites us to consider the inevitability of ambiguity. The ambiguity generated here fits in his attitude towards language and the world, both of which are constantly changing. For example, it is said that "Blank, boundless, and without form; transforming, changing, never constant. Are we dead? Are we alive? Do we stand side by side with Heaven and earth? Do we move in the company of spiritual brightness?" (Watson 2013: 295-296)<sup>11</sup> From an outsider's point of view, Zhuangzi seems to play around ridiculousness and wildness (Wang 2004: 18-19), and he does not mind to employ apparently contradictory words to talk about things. When indeterminacy becomes intertwined with the hinge of *dao* (*dao shu* 道樞), talking about *dao* allows one to employ apparently nonsensical words, thus "insofar as Zhuangzi uses language metaphorically, the conventional distinction between the logical and the paradoxical becomes peripheral." (Wang 2003: 108)

### 3. Reasons for Using *Yuyan*: Rhetoric Effect

Why does Zhuangzi have to employ *yuyan* given what he is trying to convey? Although he exalts *hun-dun*<sup>12</sup>, it is not purely whimsy images and random thoughts that he wants to produce. To the extent that *yuyan* has a rough structure, there should also be some reasons for its functioning. Indeed, one reason is that Zhuangzi is skeptical of the Confucian-Mohist project of establishing fixed norms, as discussed above. However, he still shares the basic assumption in pre-Qin philosophy that language is about guiding, as the character 道 means both "speaking" and "guiding".<sup>13</sup> Using *yuyan*, therefore,

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<sup>11</sup> More about Zhuangzi's view of transformation will be discussed in section 1.4.

<sup>12</sup> In Zhuangzi's text "*Fit for Emperors and Kings*", *hun-dun* (chaos) is personified as someone that would die if being forced to have clear senses like an ordinary person: *Shu* and *Hu* discussed how they could reply his (*hun-dun*'s) kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But *hun-dun* alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some!" Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day *hun-dun* died. (Watson 2013: 59).

<sup>13</sup> Fraser says, "[for Mohists] the primary purpose of language and judgment is to guide action appropriately" (Fraser 2012: 357). While Zhuangzi may ponder on the criterion of "appropriateness", he does not deny that language guides people in some ways.

should not be taken as mere playful monologue, but as a channel to orient audience. It is just that, since Zhuangzi is skeptical to whether there is a correct way to guide people with language, it follows that when Zhuangzi discusses something, raises an example or so, he does not insist on persuading or promoting a particular standpoint to audience. In Zhuangzi's expressions, especially metaphorical modes of speech like *yuyan*, the author meaning is indeterminate. To be sure, sometimes Zhuangzi may even guide without words<sup>14</sup> and one thing he ridicules Huizi is that the latter is too fond of disputation<sup>15</sup>. Still, there is no way that he prefers silence to speech, for neither of them is without limits<sup>16</sup>. As long as words are allowed, Zhuangzi uses all kinds of literary device to convey his vision (Schwartz 1985: 216) and the text becomes a masterpiece in Chinese literature. Here, I argue that *yuyan*'s rhetoric power consists of at least two aspects.<sup>17</sup> The first one is a broadening effect: that it arouses audience's imagination. The second one is a relieving effect: it soothes audience's resistance to an alien or unconventional idea. Both of these aspects are *yuyan*'s uniqueness and not covered by *chongyan* or *zhiyan*.

Regarding the first aspect, "imagination" is a process in which one comes up with possibilities about a subject, usually in a vivid, pictorial way that is

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<sup>14</sup> "Who can understand discriminations that are not spoken, the *way* that is not a way?" (Watson 2013: 14) "He doesn't stand up and teach, he doesn't sit down and discuss, yet they go to him empty and come home full. Does he really have some wordless teaching, some formless way of bringing the mind to completion?" (Watson 2013: 34).

<sup>15</sup> Zhuangzi: "You, now—you treat your spirit like an outsider. You wear out your energy, leaning on a tree and moaning, slumping at your desk and dozing—Heaven picked out a body for you and you use it to gibber about 'hard' and 'white'!" (Watson 2013: 41).

<sup>16</sup> "When there are no names and realities, you exist in the absence of things. You can talk about it, you can think about it; but the more you talk about it, the further away you get from it. . . . . The perfection of the *way* and things—neither words nor silence is worthy of expressing it. Not to talk, not to be silent—this is the highest form of debate." (Watson 2013: 225-226).

<sup>17</sup> One may say that the rhetoric function of Zhuangzi's *yuyan* includes not just these two aspects, for there are other purposes such as to create personification (as in Zhuangzi's *yuyan*, things and animals are personalized to voice their thoughts) and to construct paradoxes (inviting a movement of interpretation through working with opposite positions within a conceptual network). These, however, may be subsumed under either the rhetorical effect or the philosophical vision that I am going to discuss.

closely related to perception. Wu's idea of "exploratory language" captures this aspect of Zhuangzi's *yuyan*, as it opens our eyes to initiate feeling for new connection of things. (Wu 1990: 370) This is supported by empirical evidence: Imagery not only engages the motor system, but also affects the body, much as can actual perceptual experience. (Kosslyn et al 2001: 641) Recent studies show that imagery is a factor that causes multi-sensory integration<sup>18</sup>. Since it is about not how things are or how things should be, but how things can be, by triggering imagination one's experience is enriched. In the case of *yuyan*, it invites readers to step into new zones and broadens their horizon without relying on conventions. On the contrary, direct language that is non-narrative tends to be more definite: the content shall not be shifting and the audience are supposed to follow either the writers' intention or what convention or authority stipulates. Even *zhiyan* contains only uncertainty of picking out alternatives, not uncertainty in the content of alternatives. Besides seeing *yuyan* as a metaphorical and indirect language, here I shall also address that *yuyan* is also a narrative form of language. According to scholars such as Ricoeur, the meaning-effects produced by metaphorical and narrative form of language belong to the same basic phenomenon of semantic innovation. In both metaphorical and narrative form of language, this innovation is produced entirely on the level of discourse, that is, the level of acts of language equal to or greater than the sentence. Metaphor's innovation lies in the producing of a new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution, while narrative's semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis— a plot. By means of the plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action. It

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<sup>18</sup> Berger and Ehrsson point to a behaviorally relevant interaction between imagery and perception that leads to multisensory integration, and show that endogenously generated sensory signals are not only capable of activating areas responsible for perceiving sensory stimuli, but are in fact of sufficient quality and signal strength as to fully integrate with exogenous sensory stimuli from a different sensory modality to form coherent multisensory representations of external events. (Berger and Ehrsson 2013, 2014: 13690).

is the synthesis of heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor. (Ricoeur 1984 vol.1: ix) As Zhuangzi's *yuyan* is both metaphor and narrative, and the narrative perspective of it also invites readers to imagine and learn from something "unwritten" in the literal meaning.<sup>19</sup> Although Ricoeur holds a semantic view of metaphorical discourses, which is different from my pragmatic view of metaphors, his articulation of narrative can still shed light on our understanding of Zhuangzi's *yuyan*. Ricoeur addresses that the major presupposition of his essay is that narrative, no matter it is historical or fictional, only portrays the features of temporal experience. And the "time" constructed by the author in the narrative is never the same as the true reality, for it is something innovated by the author (Ricoeur 1984 vol.1: 3). In Zhuangzi's case, many of his *yuyan* are obviously stories and parables that are fictional narrative. Zhuangzi "builds" a temporal experience in his *yuyan*, introducing characters, dialogues, actions and so on as an unity. For example, in the famous *yuyan* of Peng (Watson 2013: 2), Zhuangzi portrays a world with giant bird like Peng and tiny doves, the huge contrasts of their body shapes, as well as the dialogues and their actions and so on. There are also human-like fictional characters such as He and Ruo, and Zhuangzi introduces their conversations about the contrast of enormous and tiny things and so on. The characters and their dialogues unify as a whole and invite readers to imagine: Why is the world portrayed by Zhuangzi so different from the reality? What is his point behind that is unwritten? So here as a fictional narrative, the story-telling nature of Zhuangzi's *yuyan* also shares the metaphoricity, and it enhances readers' curiosity to trigger imagination.

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<sup>19</sup> That metaphors provoke imagination in the *Zhuangzi* will be discussed in detail later on in this section. And as for how metaphors preserve indeterminacy in influencing readers' perception of the *Zhuangzi* will be discussed in section 1.5.

As for Confucians, learning should be based on role models in the past<sup>20</sup>, and one should not consider things remote from his position<sup>21</sup>. Even when it comes to literature, one should focus on the moral lessons instead of appreciating them simply for their beauty<sup>22</sup>. In general, when one thinks (*si* 思), one has to think in accordance with social norms<sup>23</sup> and when one has to imagine, say, how one should put into practice what one learns, the bridge between perception and imagination should be relatively determinate. If we regard imagination as associating A when you perceive B, for Confucians, the association of A and B should be constrained by the spirit of tradition. As for Mohists, “Words that are not good enough to be put into practice, yet are frequently used, are a waste of breath.”(Johnston 2010: 651). Words are subject to evaluation by models (*fa* 法), whose application should involve minimum imagination. It is not surprising, therefore, that neither *si* nor *fa* are emphasized in the *Zhuangzi*.

When audience engage in imagination, their mind is less inclined to draw definite conclusions, so they are more suited to accept what is different from or even opposite to what they are used to think. This is the second aspect of *yuyan*'s rhetoric power, especially when the author intends to invite audience to savor a pioneering, controversial or even judgmental idea. When doing so it is easier to use *yuyan* as a buffer, regardless of whether the content is positive or not. When the content is positive, one avoids over boasting as in the three-mode passage, “a father does not act as a matchmaker for his own son because the praises of the father would not be as effective as the praises of an outsider” (Watson 2013: 234), here the matchmaker acts as a medium to relieve the sense of bragging, in order to make the praise more convincing.

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<sup>20</sup> “Following the proper way, I do not forge new paths” (Ames 1998: 111).

<sup>21</sup> “The thoughts of exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子) do not wander beyond their station.” (Ames 1998: 178)

<sup>22</sup> “Although the *Songs* are three hundred in number, they can be covered in one expression: ‘Go vigorously without swerving.’” (Ames 1998: 76)

<sup>23</sup> “.....in looking they think about clarity, in hearing they think about acuity, in countenance they think about cordiality, in bearing and attitude they think about deference, in speaking they think about doing their utmost.....”(Ames 1998: 199).

When the content is negative, in order to minimize antagonism and avoid directly criticizing or educating certain sort of people, using a decent *yuyan* also serves as a buffer. For example, when a teacher has to inform a student that she is not qualified to join the school choir, the teacher can avoid telling the student directly that “you cannot sing well” by telling her that “It is just like the water is for the fish and the sky is for the bird, you cannot blame the fish for not being allowed to fly. Instead, a fish should go for swimming to give free rein to its talent, not struggle to fly.” In addition to direct her to pursuit to somewhere else, this can have a soothing effect when accompanied with suitable tone and gesture.

To further illustrate the rhetoric power of *yuyan*, consider an excerpt from a story in the *Zhuangzi* Chapter 17, *Qiushui* (秋水, Autumn Floods). Here is a part of the dialogue between two fictional characters, the Lord of the River and Ruo of the Northern Sea:

Ruo of the Northern Sea said, ‘You can’t discuss the ocean with a well frog — he’s limited by the space he lives in. You can’t discuss ice with a summer insect — he’s bound to a single season. You can’t discuss the Way (*dao*) with a cramped scholar — he’s shackled by his doctrines.’ (Watson 2013: 126)

北海若曰：「井鼃不可以語於海者，拘於虛也；夏蟲不可以語於冰者，篤於時也；曲士不可以語於道者，束於教也……」 (Guo 1961: 563)

First of all, using Ruo’s words as accounts is already to borrow the explanatory power of a third party, where *Zhuangzi* avoids stating that those explanations are directly raised by himself.<sup>24</sup> The first three single-term metaphors invite audience to imagine how shallow a well frog’s view, a summer insect’s view and a cramped scholar are, and how difficult it is to discuss something beyond their horizon. In these metaphors, the imaginative highlight is the shortsightedness of the frog, the insect and the scholar. Ruo compares them to the Lord of the River, and the audience are invited to

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<sup>24</sup> In *Chongyan*, it matters whether the characters really exist. However, in *yuyan*, once the imagination process starts, it is relatively less important to focus on the question of historical existence.

imagine Ruo and Lord of the River's feelings and thoughts when Ruo makes his remarks. Among some audience, a certain empathetic effect takes place and they now understand shortsightedness in a new way. They might know about shortsightedness before, but if this is their first time to read the fable, their understanding of shortsightedness becomes richer.

Here, it may be pointed out that in *yuyan*, between the primary subject and secondary subject, there must be some disparities. For example, some audience may point out that the shortsightedness of a frog, an insect, an cicada and dove is inevitable, while that of a scholar is not inevitable. The Lord of the River seems to resemble the scholar rather than those little creatures. However, it is impossible to require that primary subject and secondary subject must be identical, so the disparities cannot be totally avoided. The audience is supposed to catch the relevant similarity and pass over the dissimilarity. It remains a question, though not a problem in Zhuangzi's views, whether the parts passed over are really irrelevant when one tries to figure out the implicit meaning of fable.

Another story for illustrating the rhetoric power of *yuyan* is contained in a dialogue between Zhuangzi and Huizi. When Huizi argues that Zhuangzi's words are big and useless, Zhuangzi replies that:

Maybe you've never seen a wildcat or a weasel. It crouches down and hides, watching for something to come along. It leaps and races east and west, not hesitating to go high or low—until it falls into the trap and dies in the net...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?

(Watson 2013: 6)

子獨不見狸狌乎？卑身而伏，以候敖者；東西跳梁，不辟高下；中於機辟，死於罔罟.....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！（Guo 1961: 40）

In this metaphor, Zhuangzi invites readers to imagine the wildcat and the big tree. Readers associate wildcats to their “usefulness” because those cats are able to catch rats. A big tree, according to Huizi, is considered to be “big and useless” like Zhuangzi’s words, and people who agree with Huizi may also agree that a big tree seems to lack usefulness. But then Zhuangzi depicts a scene in which it is relaxing to sleep under a tree. This gives audience an alternative way to think about it. Those who follow the metaphor may come to imagine a situation when there is affinity between one and the tree, and this in turn gives them an alternative way to think about “usefulness”. Zhuangzi then polishes the attractiveness of this relaxing scene by highlighting that it is free from grief and pain. This implicitly criticizes the dogma that what is useful must help humans to achieve something. However, this criticism is not said explicitly. Zhuangzi does not address Huizi or people who hold similar view to Huizi’s. Instead of using direct language to couch in harsh terms, he uses metaphorical language to lead readers to view things in perspectives other than usefulness. In this way, he guides audience to think outside of their habit and entertain a new idea.

To sum up, in different stories, Zhuangzi raises metaphors that contain images for imagination, and those stories themselves are metaphors that prepare audience to entertain some views that they may not be interested in if only direct language is used. In doing so, elaboration becomes fresh and criticism becomes palatable. Since pre-Qin thinkers do not presuppose that rationality (the ability to engage in abstract reasoning) is the essence of human being<sup>25</sup>, they do not rely on formal inference only in persuasion. *Dao* is a guidance that is not as theoretical as the concept of “truth” that we usually suggest. As for Zhuangzi, who likes to play with language’s different possibilities, there is no reason not to shift among different modes of speech

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<sup>25</sup> A.C. Graham addresses that “.....Taoists are not flunking of the Way as ultimate Truth or Reality. They merely have the good sense to remind us of the limitations of the language which they use to guide us towards that altered perspective on the world and that knack of living.” (Graham 1989: 199)

in order to take care of different faculties in audience's mind and avoid rejection of his words out of feeling dull or blatant. A good and fresh metaphor is an insightful way to make a message get through, and indirectly creates a new *dao* in language.

#### 4. Reasons for Using *Yuyan*: Philosophical Vision

If we restrict the use of *yuyan* to its rhetoric effect, it might be said that the content of its implicit meaning can be spelled out by direct language, only with its force diminished. However, as Wang argues, Zhuangzi refutes the correspondence theory of language and suggests a philosophy of language that is listener- or reader-oriented and non-teleological. (Wang 2003: 139) The use of indirect language, avoiding being unequivocal and transparent, is concerned with not just how Zhuangzi says but also what he says. As Chen (1992), Hansen (1992), Schwitzgebel (1996) and Wang (2003) suggest, the very content Zhuangzi puts on the stage logically compels him to employ indirect language, including of course *yuyan*. The use of *yuyan* is concerned with Zhuangzi's philosophical vision as well. We already see, in the story of *Qiushui* (Watson 2013: 126), that Zhuangzi likes to point out the world's flux and indeterminacies. It is natural for someone like him to use a form of language that reflects these characteristics. Thus *yuyan* is not just an art of persuasion, but also part of the message it wants to convey. Its form and its content are inseparable.

As discussed in section 1.2, authors cannot alone decide a sentence's meaning, and sometimes there is no rule of disambiguation that gives us only one definite meaning. For Zhuangzi, language always contains indeterminacy, and this should not be a problem to be solved but an inevitable feature to be acknowledged. This does not imply that he promotes radical skepticism that refuses to believe in human's capability to comprehend language and carry out speech acts. Zhuangzi may doubt that, given the limitation of human intelligence and an always changing world, whether it is possible to fully

comprehend *dao*, but it does not necessarily follow that one cannot talk about it. “Talking about” a certain topic involves any attempt that guides audience to entertain it, without necessarily giving clear definitions or comprehensive descriptions. (Schwitzgebel 1996: 88-91) Even saying that something is ineffable counts a way to talk about it. Besides, Zhuangzi does give descriptions about ideal personhood<sup>26</sup>. An ideal person is an embodiment of *dao*, and one cannot know what *dao* is without knowing what an authentic person is<sup>27</sup>. Even if it is uncertain whether becoming an authentic person is realistically possible, one can be assured that Zhuangzi shares the usual assumption among pre-Qin thinkers that “the way of inner sagehood and outer kingship” is an essential aspect of *dao*, if not the only one. Thus, we can say that Zhuangzi has a positive horizon, instead of only criticisms. In this section, I will look into Zhuangzi’s worldview and explain why it can only be expressed in indirect language such as *yuyan*. My discussion involves four parts: The origin of things and metaphysical speculation, things (*wu* 物) in general, human understanding and skills.

#### (1). The origin of things and metaphysical speculation

Zhuangzi’s view about the origin of things is ambiguous. On one hand, in *Qiwulun*, it is said that “as to what is beyond the Six Realms, the sage admits it exists but does not theorize” (Watson 2013: 13). “The Six Realms” refers to “heaven, earth, and the four directions, that is, the universe” (Watson 2013: 13), so “beyond the Six Realms” refers to things that are not within the universe. Apparently, that which gives rise to the universe, i.e. the origin of

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<sup>26</sup> For example, “The Perfect Man is godlike. Though the great swamps blaze, they cannot burn him..... A man like this rides the clouds and mist, straddles the sun and moon, and wanders beyond the four seas. Even life and death have no effect on him, much less the rules of profit and loss!” (Watson 2013: 15)

“There must first be a True Man before there can be true knowledge... His knowledge was able to climb all the way up to the Way like this” (Watson 2013: 42)

<sup>27</sup> “Knowledge must wait for something before it can be applicable, and that which it waits for is never certain. How, then, can I know that what I call Heaven is not really man and what I call man is not really Heaven? There must first be a True Man before there can be true knowledge.” (Watson 2013: 42)

all things, is not knowable even to the most intelligent person, so the sage does not argue or theorize about it. On the other hand, in *Dazongshi* (大宗師, the Grand Master), “[*dao*] 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” (Watson 2013: 45). In this passage, *dao* “gave birth to...” and “exists beyond...” things, and it can reasonably be taken as the origin of all things. This cosmological speculation seems to be in tension with the agnostic attitude in *Qiwulun*. It is still controversial among scholars whether Zhuangzi intends to propose a cosmology or metaphysics. Chad Hansen, for example, thinks that “Zhuangzi uses *dao* as a concept of guidance rather than a reality concept” (Hansen 1992: 268). Harold Roth, on the contrary, capitalizes *dao* as “the Way” and suggests that it is “the ineffable cosmic power” (Roth 1999 : 102), “mysterious vital energy, or vital essence, that comes to actually permeate your entire being..... (Roth 1999: 105)”. One may be connected to the Way within one’s mind, but it is still mysterious. Chen even holds that Zhuangzi’s *dao* has these following features: it exists, but it is invisible; it exists within itself; it generates everything; it is not restricted with time and space, rather, its flux cannot be captured by words or senses; it is the ultimate reality (Chen 1992: 186-196) which is hard to be sketched or concluded by natural language invented by human being. Without adjudicating among these scholars, I think it is safe to say that Zhuangzi does consider some issues in cosmology and metaphysics. If he has no commitment to any position, it is natural that he employs indirect language to avoid giving a definite answer. Even if he has, the character of *dao* as the ultimate origin prevents him from using direct language. As said in the *Qiwulun*:

The Great *dao* is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken... If *dao* is made clear, it is not the *dao*. If discriminations are put into words, they do not suffice. (Watson 2013: 14)

And in *Zeyang*:

*Dao* cannot be thought of as a being, nor can it be thought of as a nonbeing. In calling it *dao*, we are only adopting a temporary expediency. ‘Nothing does it,’ ‘something makes it like this’ — these occupy a mere corner of the realm of things. What connection could they have with the Great Method? If you talk in a worthy manner, you can talk all day long, and all of it will pertain to be *dao*. But if you talk in an unworthy manner, you can talk all day long, and all of it will pertain to mere things. The perfection of *dao* and things—neither words nor silence is worthy of expressing it. Not to talk, not to be silent—this is the highest form of debate. (Watson 2013: 226)

And in *Dazongshi*:

*Dao* 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. (Watson 2013: 45)

These paragraphs show the difficulty of naming *dao*. *Dao* is hard to be verbalized for it encompasses all things<sup>28</sup>, and is the limit of them. Since each name in ordinary language operates on the basis of discrimination, their normal use presupposes a boundary. Furthermore, a name’s boundary is not fixed by itself, but may change in regard to other names. For example, there exists a color called “teal”, which is a mixture of green and blue that looks similar to green. We could have just called teal “green”, yet some people bother to give it a new name to distinguish it from green and blue. Therefore, names sometimes represent our perspectives in viewing things in the world. Now, since *dao* not only generates all things but is also immanent in them, there should be no fundamental difference between the change of *dao* itself and the total transformation of all things. “For Taoists, this Way (*dao*) is the ultimate power in the cosmos, paradoxically transcendent yet immanent. As a unitive principle beyond the grasp of any specific thing in the cosmos, it mysteriously operates within it to facilitate the generation of all phenomena and to serve as the inner guiding force throughout every moment of their lives.” (Roth 1999: 44). *Dao*’s operation is within this world, there is no

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<sup>28</sup> The Master said: The Way covers and bears up the ten thousand things—vast, vast is its greatness! (Watson 2013: 84).

aspiration to give up this world for a higher order, as in Greek or Christian tradition. This, however, does not counter the description that *dao* has no boundary. If we use a name to describe it, we risk excluding parts of the world and miss its comprehensiveness. We can have a closer look to the risk if we compare naming of *dao* to the naming of color teal I mentioned above. Though teal is a blue-green color, by giving it a new name we draw a boundary among it and other colors that is “non-teal”. Similarly, if we use direct language to distinguish *dao* from other things, it implies that *dao* has a boundary that distinguishes it from any other things that are “non-*dao*”. But there is nothing that can function without *dao*. Thus *dao* has no boundary and cannot be “caged” by names. Now, one may argue that we can use direct language to define *dao*, for example the definition that “*dao* is something ineffable, has no boundary and lies in everything including beings and non-being”. This approach has two problems. The first problem is that it inevitably involves contradictory categories, thus defeats the purpose of using direct language. When an author tries to describe *dao* as comprehensively as possible, direct language may confuse readers or fail to convey the dynamic and inclusive character of *dao*. The very act of speaking or writing with direct language also risks performative contradiction when one says that which cannot be said. The second problem is that, unless we can free direct language from indeterminacy, we cannot be sure which words are “final vocabularies” for *dao*, even if we think that there must be some final vocabularies. Using direct language falls back to the category of “temporary expediency” in the passage of *Zeyang* mentioned above.

If we use *yuyan* to illustrate *dao*, can we avoid these two problems? Obviously, for Zhuangzi the second problem is not really problematic, because Zhuangzi well accepts the possibility that his own words are not final vocabularies (I will explain more about it at the end of this section). Using *yuyan* can avoid the first problem, because it is acceptable that its explicit meaning is constituted by contradictory terms, if only for enhancing its

expressive power. To use contradictory terms to construct the secondary subject of a metaphor does not necessarily generate a contradictory or nonsensical meaning. For example, parents may say that “Taking care of a new-born baby is like both heaven and hell”. Here, the secondary subject seems to contradict to itself because heaven is right to the opposite of hell. But we do not find this metaphor obscure or puzzling, because it is quite understandable that this metaphor illustrates the bittersweet life of taking care of a baby: the pleasure of being with a beloved new life feels like heaven, while it could be overwhelming to stand for those sleepless nights when she cries and screams. These two feelings can exist at the same time, so here, the primary subject, “taking care of a new-born baby”, is not self-contradictory. In this case, we can see that although the secondary subject seems to be a contradiction, it is possible that it nonetheless triggers a more comprehensive understanding of the primary subject, which is not self-contradictory. Similarly, Zhuangzi uses *yuyan* that seems to be self-contradictory to illustrate the ubiquitous presence of *dao*. In different passages of *yuyan*, Zhuangzi says that *dao* is everywhere, it can be as low as being in ants, shit and piss<sup>29</sup>, but it is also as high as Heaven and “the highest point”<sup>30</sup>. It seems self-contradictory to say that *dao* is something existing both at the highest and lowest points, but this is a method to illustrate that *dao* is everywhere. The ubiquitous presence of *dao* is too vivid to be articulated by direct language, and the self-contradiction in this *yuyan*, namely that it exists in lowest and highest things at the same time, highlights the ubiquitous presence of *dao* in a vivid way.

Even if we remain agnostic about the origin of things and does not

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<sup>29</sup> “There’s no place it doesn’t exist.”.....“It is in the ant”..... “It is in the panic grass” .....“It is in the tiles and shards.”..... “It is in the piss and shit!” .....you must not expect to find *dao* in any particular place—there is no thing that escapes its presence! Such is the Perfect *Dao*, and so too are the truly great words. ” (Watson 2013: 182)

<sup>30</sup> “[*dao*] 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” (Watson 2013: 45)

entertain cosmology about *dao*, it does not mean that direct language will be the most suitable to convey Zhuangzi's philosophy.

(2). Things (*wu*, 物)

When we come to focus on things in daily life, sometimes indirect language, and *yuyan* in particular, may better fit our ordinary experience. There are two reasons for this. The first one is the tension between language as a fixed tool and things as embedded in transformation. The second one is Zhuangzi's perspectivism in classifying things.

Regarding the first reason, as mentioned in section 1.2, for Zhuangzi things are not static entities but always changing.<sup>31</sup> Words describing them are only approximation from a specific temporal perspective, like a photo approximates a living person. Since direct language tends to be definite, its correspondence with things is questioned by Zhuangzi. In fact, Zhuangzi probably questions the significance of the idea of correspondence in the first place, given that he regards things as transforming into each other.<sup>32</sup> Since *yuyan* can allow different interpretations, the audience can regard the same words as implying different things in different contexts. Indeterminacy in names then matches indeterminacy in things.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "The life of things is a gallop, a headlong dash—with every movement they alter, with every moment they shift. What should you do and what should you not do? Everything will change of itself, that is certain!" (Watson 2013: 132)

<sup>32</sup> "...death is the transformation of things." (Watson 2013: 99)

"Once Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased..... Between Zhuang Zhou and a butterfly, there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things." (Watson 2013: 18)

<sup>33</sup> A reviewer addresses that although Zhuangzi's language does not correspond to "things" in a way that is prescribed in Western mainstream correspondence theory, his fluid language still corresponds to a fluctuating reality. I think that the question is not whether Zhuangzi's use of language in fact corresponds to the reality, but whether Zhuangzi views correspondence as the primary function of language. Even if we try to fit Zhuangzi's language into a broader sense of correspondence theory as the reviewer suggests, we will still find that his language relatively aims at communication rather than giving an accurate description of reality. This of course does not mean that it fails to anchor to the world, but he does not justify the value of language by appealing to its correspondence. Instead, language is used to influencing readers, like the rhetoric effects that I discussed in section

Here, Wang remarks that the unreliability of correspondence also lies in the other way round, namely that the author uses different words to articulate the same reality. He raises the example of monkey trainer, arguing that “four bananas in the morning and three at night” equals to “three bananas in the morning and four at night”, but the former is more attractive to the monkey, so sometimes the language changes but reality does not.<sup>34</sup> Whether or not Wang’s conclusion about the relation of language and reality is correct, his example here does not support this point. He holds that the reality does not change because the total number of bananas remains the same, yet the language changes. However, the different ways of distributing bananas should also be counted as changes, as “four in the morning and three at night” refers to a different way of distribution from “three in the morning and four at night”, both semantically and pragmatically. And in this passage, Zhuangzi said “there was no change in the reality behind the words, and yet the monkeys respond with joy and anger” (Watson 2013: 11), and before that, at the beginning of this passage, he addresses that “But to wear out your brain trying to make things into one without realizing that they are all the same” (Watson 2013:11). It seems that Zhuangzi is not simply questioning the use of language, but actually questioning why monkeys fail to find that in these different ways of distributions, the total amounts are the same. This example does not quite satisfy Wang’s argument, and I have not find sufficient supporting details in the *Zhuangzi* regarding to this point of view, so it seems

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1.3. Besides, as Wang addresses, although Zhuangzi’s language seems to have a limnological nature, his language is actually an indirect communication, which makes the conventional distinction between the logical and the paradoxical becomes peripheral. (Wang 2003: 108) Or, we can say that his view of language, like other pre-Qin thinkers, is that it should be evaluated according to the effect it has on the audience or readers. As I mentioned in section 1.3, pre-Qin thinkers tend to use language pragmatically to guide the audience or readers, and although Zhuangzi uses language differently from many of other pre-Qin thinkers, he at least shares this pragmatic view with them.

<sup>34</sup> The story indicates that there is no underlying reason why the expression “four in the morning and three at night” is more attractive (than “three in the morning and four at night”) to the monkey, even though the reality (seven a day) remains the same. (Wang 2003: 99)

relatively evident to say that the other way round, namely the unreliability of correspondence lies in describing changing reality with fixed language.

The second reason of using *yuyan* to talk about things is Zhuangzi's perspectivism. This is compatible with, but does not depend on, the view that all things are embedded in transformation. It is the view that things cannot be classified with fixed criteria or standard. As Zhuangzi suggests, "His (the sage's) 'that' has both a right and a wrong in it; his 'this', too, has both a right and a wrong in it" and "where there is birth, there must be death; where there is death, there must be birth". (Watson 2013: 10) When we view things from different perspectives, that "standard" may change, and we may find that the categories change accordingly. For example, think back to the example of color "teal" I mentioned earlier in this section, most people do not have to know the name of color "teal" because they can simply recognize that color as "green" or "blue" in their daily life. But, as for people like art designers, painters and so on, it is one of their job requirements to use a complicated color classification. From these professionals' perspectives, the color category is different from other people's. Such different practices of categorization are common in our daily life, as people tend to categorize things according to their own practices and professions: botanists definitely know way more categories of plants than we do, and astronomers know more complicated categories of celestial bodies, and so on. Direct language tends to put things in this or that category, but it is difficult to capture the potentiality of being categorized into infinite ways. Therefore, direct language tends to constrain the fluidity of language. If we take a particular category for granted, we will be caught by partiality. Wang holds that for Zhuangzi, the supposed one-name-one-thing relation between language and reality is like something naively built on running water. The disputatious language based on such a descriptive or referential view of language only misleads people. (Wang 2003: 100) Wong also addresses that Zhuangzi would probably be "highly amused at the scholarly obsession with being right on the meaning of his text,

especially on the matter of whether he ultimately believes in a right versus a wrong.” (Wong 2005: 91) All things, even including Zhuangzi’s texts themselves, are not subjected to only one way of categorization. So there is no point to struggle to reach a “right” perspective to perceive everything.

### (3). Understanding (*zhi* 知)

Not just the communication of knacks relies on metaphor; the communication of anything new must rely on metaphor, as it is a form of human’s basic understanding. As Hui Shi had pointed out:

Hui Zi asks, “If one has no idea what *Dan* is and asks ‘what does *Dan* look like’, only to be replied that ‘*Dan* is in the shape of *Dan*’, will that be understandable enough?” The King says, “Not really”. “Then how about this, ‘*Dan*’s shape is like a bow and its string is made of bamboo’, will that be clear enough?” The King answers, “Yes”. Hui Zi says, “The speaker uses something known knowledge as the basis to introduce something unknown to others, in order to make it understandable. As you admitted without metaphors, it is impossible to do so.”

惠子曰：「今有人於此而不知彈者，曰：『彈之狀何若？』應曰：『彈之狀如彈。』諭乎？」王曰：「未諭也。」「於是更應曰：『彈之狀如弓而以竹為弦。』則知乎？」王曰：「可知矣。」惠子曰：「夫說者固以其所知，諭其所不知，而使人知之。今王曰無譬則不可矣。」〈說苑·善說〉 (Lu 1988: 358)

Suppose “*dan*” is a brand new term to most people, while “a bow” and “bamboo” are within the range of most people’s common sense, and they have similar shape as *dan*. By mentioning similar and common knowledge as reference, one can make new knowledge understandable. Actually, it may be said that metaphor is an essential way of epistemological advancement for both individual and society. The reason is that it grounds new knowledge in existing knowledge in a vivid and practical way. The Chinese character 諭

(also written as 喻)<sup>35</sup> can mean “instructing”, “understanding” and also “making analogy”. To teach by metaphor helps to remove the foreignness of new knowledge and let it share some familiarity of what one already gets used to. This is important especially for learning abstract knowledge, so it is said that using metaphor is a fundamental method for constructing basic human understanding. (Cua 1982: 251) There are some basic metaphors we use for handling base abstract knowledge, and they promise fundamental insights about human experience. For example, when we say “time flies”, we implicitly and metaphorically use a flying object to illustrate “time”, and time is not an ordinary object that can accelerate in the sky; when we say “love is like a rose”, we use “rose” to illustrate love when love is not a plant. Think back the time when you were a kid, parents and teachers may use a lot of metaphors to teach you about everything that is new to you: “Ozone layer is like a cover that shelters the Earth”, “Courage is like your weapon to fight against your fear”, etc. Without metaphors, it is difficult to illustrate these abstract ideas, and scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson hold that the necessity of using metaphors is not only for certain kinds of knowledge, but for general everyday life, and that our understandings all rely on metaphors: “that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 4)

When we introduce some new concepts cross-culturally, just like “time”, “love”, “ozone layer” and “courage” as I mentioned, it is also obscure to tell people with other cultural background with direct language. Metaphor, then, can serve as a linguistic “sign” of otherwise inaccessible, shared, deep conceptual structure. (Slingerland 2004: 336) For example, in the “ozone

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<sup>35</sup> In Chinese, “諭” means “to tell” or “to teach”, and “喻” means “metaphor/to use metaphor”. As the original character of “喻” and “諭” are interchangeable, we can say that Chinese thinkers implicitly acknowledge their close relationship: using metaphor is the basic way of teaching.

layer” example mentioned above, to tell children with little understanding of astronomy, using the metaphor of “cover that shelters” allows people to understand, because it is probably universally acknowledged what “a cover” is, and people from diverse background are very likely to be able to understand the metaphor, then have a vivid (though not most comprehensive) picture of ozone layer. Also, as Lakoff and Johnson note, “Though we have no access to the inner lives of those in radically different cultures, we do have access to their metaphor systems and the way they reason using those metaphor systems”. (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 284) For example, in the “*dan* (彈)” example I mentioned earlier in this section, people with other cultural backgrounds, especially those who have little understanding of ancient Chinese may have no idea what “*dan*” is. But as Hui Zi constructs a metaphor to illustrate that “*Dan*’s shape is like a bow and its string is made of bamboo” (Lu 1988: 358), then most readers, no matter where they are from, would have a clearer picture of what “*dan*” is. In the *Zhuangzi*, metaphors themselves can serve to bridge audience with different backgrounds to *Zhuangzi*’s thought, for some of those *yuyan* use stories of personalized animal, non-animate things and so on as secondary subjects, which may easily arouse imagination than abstract descriptions, so it is possible that they can invite people from other culture to have their own interpretation of the metaphors.

Here, one may worry about whether metaphorical understanding is reliable, as it is difficult to draw a line between what is comparable and what is not. Huizi does not address this issue in existing texts, but later Mohists mentioned, “Making inferences about classes is difficult. The explanation lies in their being large and small (in scope)” (Johnston 2010: 467). Not just in inference, in learning we also have a problem of partiality. As explained by Cua, one of the features of the basic metaphor is “the selective decision” that involves a judgement and ascription of value. When one builds up the understanding of something new through a basic metaphor, the “selective

decision” always involves focusing only on elements that are of vital similarity and excluding the rest, which may lead to partial understanding. And to see X as Y may lead someone to think that X is Y (Cua 1982: 252-253) This may be one reason why our cognition is so easily bounded with completed hearts (*cheng xin* 成心). “Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment. No thing is either complete or impaired, but all are made into one again.” (Watson 2013: 11) Therefore, one’s understanding of the world always starts with adhering to some perspectives. This is according to Fraser, one of the limitations of education that Zhuangzi is probably aware of. Fraser has suggested that learning, especially “education” in the sense of typical early Chinese thoughts has both positive and negative outcomes, and one of the negative outcomes is that when you learn something, you have to start from certain perspectives and tend to omit the others. And for Zhuangzi, it can result in fixed inflexible patterns of behavior that blind us to alternative ways. (Fraser 2006: 529-531, 535) This insight of education echoes Zhuangzi’s idea of “predetermined mind”: If we were to insist on the judgment of predetermined mind<sup>36</sup>, who would be left alone and without a teacher.....not only would it be so with those who know the sequences (of knowledge and feeling) and make their own selection among them, but it would be so as well with the stupid and unthinking. (Watson 2013:12) Zhuangzi holds that those who know the knowledge and those who are stupid and unthinking all make their own selection following judgments of the predetermined mind, and Zhuangzi himself is also included. That means to say, when he uses metaphors, he also has to go through the selective decision, then who would decide whether Zhuangzi’s decision is right or wrong? Maybe Zhuangzi already answers this potential question on his own: “Now I have just said something. But I don’t know whether what I have said has really said something or whether it hasn’t

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<sup>36</sup> I use “mind” instead of “heart” because I hold that predetermined preference of judgment is like one’s mindset.

said something.” (Watson 2013: 13) In this passage, he promotes a spirit that though he guides through his language, he does not provide audience with final vocabularies. It is not problematic that Zhuangzi does not provide final vocabularies, because according to Zhuangzi, *dao* and things are ever-changing, so any candidate one wants to put forward as final vocabulary will also have its meaning changing across different perspectives. We come to appreciate Zhuangzi’s view exactly from our different perspectives. In next section, I will discuss how audience capture Zhuangzi’s meaning through interpreting his *yuyan*, and what uncertain are involved during the process.

#### (4). Skills (*ji* 技)

And if we restrict our inquiry to the practical realm, and look at our practice, we might find that the hardship still blocks our way. Even if the utterer uses relatively direct language to sketch her ideas, it still does not follow that audience can in fact capture them, especially when it involves long-term cultivation and personal modifications of her practice.

Wheelwright Bian said, “I look at it from the point of view of my own work. When I chisel a wheel, if the blows of the mallet are too gentle, the chisel will slide and won’t take hold. But if they’re too hard, it will bite and won’t budge. Not too gentle, not too hard—you can get it in your hand and feel it in your mind. You can’t put it into words, and yet there’s a knack to it somehow. I can’t teach it to my son, and he can’t learn it from me. So I’ve gone along for seventy years, and at my age I’m still chiseling wheels.” (Watson 2013: 107)

輪扁曰：「臣也以臣之事觀之。斲輪，徐則甘而不固，疾則苦而不入。不徐不疾，得之於手而應於心，口不能言，有數存焉於其間。臣不能以喻臣之子，臣之子亦不能受之於臣，是以行年七十而老斲輪。」 (Guo 1961: 491)

Bian states that we can only get the skill of chiseling in our hands and feeling it in our mind. This skill is not as simple as basic arithmetic that can be introduced step by step. As Graham says, “The denial that the Way is communicable in words is a familiar paradox of Taoism... [but] Taoists are

trying to convey a knack, and aptitude, a way of living, and when the carpenter tells Duke Huan that he cannot put into words how much pressure to exert in chiseling wood we both understand and agree” (Graham 1989: 199). This point about skill training remains reasonable recently: A violin teacher provides her beginner students with instructions of music theory and instructs them how to read music scores, how to bow and so on. But if they want to be expert at performing, it is not enough to simply memorize the theories and techniques. Instead, they have to be as a whole with music and develop their own style when immersed. And even if you consult the greatest violinists in the world, they are very unlikely to be able to “tell” you how exactly to follow some steps to play as excellent as them. In skill training we must use our whole person—here the separation between mind and body no longer holds—and we cannot have a very clear picture of how we are going to perform until we actually do it. Wang holds that here the inadequacy of language consists of two points: unable to guide people to achieve the state of art, and unable to teach how to engage subjectivity which transcends itself and objectivity. (Wang 2003: 101) In the *yuyan* of Bian, he can only give brief instructions such as “not too gentle and not too hard”, but unable to tell people how exactly to reach to the state of harmony. And he is also unable to tell people how he transcends his living experience engaged in his art, for this changing and merging process can be imperceptible, and language is inadequate to articulate something imperceptible. Schwitzgebel suggests that Zhuangzi highlights the difficulties of describing skills (and even further examples such as walking, talking, teaching, etc.) with language in order to invite us to take words less seriously. (Schwitzgebel 1996: 76). By saying “take words less seriously”, Schwitzgebel means to suggest that Zhuangzi invites us to embrace various perspectives, and be skeptical on a daily basis (but not being radically skeptical). Being “less serious” about words also suggests that instead of sticking to one “correct” way to articulate things with direct language, we can be playful with words, be open to use various forms

of language including metaphors.

## 5. How Do Audience Capture *Yuyan*

As mentioned in section 1.3, the indeterminacy of *yuyan*'s implicit meaning lies on the gap between interpretations following guidelines and author's intention, and the uncertainty of author meaning itself. I have discussed how Zhuangzi's message may be utterly indeterminate, and in this section I aim at analyzing this indeterminacy from the audience's perspective, focusing on the method they use when interpreting a metaphor at hand. As there is relatively little discussion on this topic, I will draw on contemporary pragmatic theories about interpreting metaphor, most notably Grice's pragmatic accounts. I shall first introduce why and how Grice's accounts can help explaining the way by which audience capture *yuyan*, and then use two examples from the *Zhuangzi* to demonstrate how it works. In doing so, I point out why the audience cannot be sure about their interpretation of the implicit meaning involved.

Since a metaphor uses words in a way that the explicit meaning is not what the author wants to convey, interpretation of a metaphor does not aim at capturing the most accurate semantic meaning of that expression, but author's meaning<sup>37</sup> or, in case, when this is impossible, expression meaning that can be reasonably taken to approximate the author's meaning.<sup>38</sup> When audience attempt to figure out author's intended meaning, it does not mean that they shall be mind-readers, for all they have to "read" is the expressions and other supporting details. Now, of course, in Zhuangzi's case, the impossibility of

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<sup>37</sup> "Strictly speaking, whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expression, or sentence actually means. We are, therefore, talking about possible speaker's intentions." (Searle 1979: 84)

<sup>38</sup> As discussed in section 1.2, author meaning is what author intends to express through a metaphor. It shall be noted that this is not necessarily accessible through the author's self-report. In the case of the *Zhuangzi*, authors' self-report intentions are inaccessible, and even in other situations when it is possible to consult authors about their intentions, it does not follow that their explanations are necessarily authoritative.

directly consulting the author(s) about their intention increases the difficulty of confirming the plausibility of one's interpretation. Nevertheless, this shall not let us conclude that there is simply no guideline available and the audience can inject any content they please into the metaphor. Basic linguistic and human psychology rules still constrain one's interpretation. If we make use of them as assistance to examine metaphors, we can at least assign different possibilities to different interpretations, some more reasonable given the current context and some less. It is just that these rules admit exceptions, which means that in some cases they cannot be applied,<sup>39</sup> or that the application leads to more than one interpretation. They do not guarantee to work out determine interpretations for each metaphor.

Grice suggests that in order to know how metaphors are interpreted, we should look into author's intention. According to his account, for an expression to have meaning, the intended effect must be something which in some sense is within the accessibility of the audience, or that the audience's recognition of the intention behind the expression is recognition of a reason and not merely a cause. (Grice 1957: 385) As for supporting details, Grice usually refers to clues in real life communications such as gestures and facial expressions in a conversation<sup>40</sup>. Of course, these do not seem to be relevant in interpreting an ancient classic such as the *Zhuangzi*. However, while it is true that interpreting the *Zhuangzi* is not a face-to-face conversation, historical knowledge about Zhuangzi's social background may compensate the discrepancy to a certain extent. The reason is that when Grice draws on clues

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<sup>39</sup> In Grice's theories, there are some cases when the lack of answers may lead to difficulties to interpret. For example, when we want to know what a person means, we ask for a specification of the intended effect. But it may not always be possible to get a straight answer involving a "that" clause, for example, "a belief that ..." Grice thinks that to have some exceptional cases is not a major problem of his accounts, though. (Grice 1957: 385-387)

<sup>40</sup> Take frowning as an example: If I frown spontaneously, in the ordinary course of events, someone looking at me may well treat the frown as a natural sign of displeasure. But if I frown deliberately (to convey my displeasure), an onlooker may be expected, provided he recognizes my intention, still to conclude that I am displeased. (Grice 1957: 383)

in conversations, he often relates them to social conventions or questions whether social conventions are always reliable.<sup>41</sup> It means that during a conversation, when we rely on or challenge those clues, we eventually rely on the social conventions behind the conversation. From the intelligent climate, we can have a peek of social conventions that constrain word usage at Zhuangzi's time, which facilitate our interpretation. In his analysis of Zhuangzi's metaphor of tree, Galvany notices that the author meaning is related to his rebellion against the system-oriented desire of the society at his time, and to his refusing to build up a systematic, well-organized society where everything has its "meaning" and "usage".<sup>42</sup>

Grice's "cooperative principles" are his main theory about interpreting a metaphor and I shall focus on them. Cooperative Principles are to "make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". They are further divided into four categories: quantity, quality, relation and manner, and in details he specifies maxims of each category (Grice 1989: 26-28):

Quantity: (1) Make the contribution as informative as required

(2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

Quality: (Super Maxim) Try to make your contribution one that is true

(1) Do not say what you believe to be false

(2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

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<sup>41</sup> Grice uses examples such as "*x* meant something" is (roughly) equivalent to 'Somebody meant something by *x*', with *x* as an expression. Here again there will be cases where this will not quite work. I feel inclined to say that (regarding traffic lights) the change to red means that the traffic was to stop; but it would be very unnatural to say, 'Somebody (e.g., the Corporation) meant by the red-light change that the traffic was to stop.' Nevertheless, there seems to be some sort of reference to somebody's intentions. (Grice 1957: 385)

<sup>42</sup> Through his enormous, useless and uncultivable trees, Zhuangzi manages to bring about a complete inversion of the prevailing values of the society of his time and he effectively negates the craving for total order, the desire to transform the world and life into a perfectly systematised, harmonized and regulated organic whole, in which everything functions as planned. This, then, is a metaphor that is intended as the mainstay of staunch resistance to the coercive, standardising, and authoritarian ideas of the political, ritual and educational institutions.....(Galvany 2009: 97)

Relation: Be relevant

Manner: (Super Maxim) Be perspicuous

- (1) Avoid obscurity of expression
- (2) Avoid ambiguity
- (3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- (4) Be orderly

The first three maxims are about metaphor's content, and the last one is about the method and style of expressing a metaphor. Following the first three maxims orients one to reconcile the content of a metaphor as close to utterer's intention as possible. The first maxim, Quantity, stipulates that there are enough hints to infer utterer's implicit meaning, while avoiding the audience's confusion by not providing them with too many hints that mislead them to infer to more interpretations (Grice 1989: 26). The second maxim, Quality, is for making the metaphor as spurious as possible, which increases the chance for audience to sense that there is something different from the explicit meaning. It is exactly because normally we expect that what is expressed by the utterer should be "genuinely believed" by her, that metaphor's two layers can be made accessible. The requirement of adequacy of evidence then helps audience to draw on what they know to interpret what they do not know. The third maxim, Relation, deals with the change of each stage during the conversation. As for the last maxim, Manner, which is about "how to say a metaphor", aims at minimizing the confusion caused by the utterer's behaviors while introducing a metaphor. Most of these maxims are not all-or-nothing prescriptions. Instead, they involve issues of a matter of degree. For example, it may be hard to decide the perfect balance of "sufficiently informative yet not too informative". However, this shall not be an obstacle for the audience.

In cases of metaphor, Quantity can be regarded as a maxim for specifying the primary and secondary subjects. Regarding Quality, besides examining whether there is anything self-contradictory in the metaphor, we have to relate

it to what else the author has said, her background and so on to infer to what extent she believes in the explicit meaning. Regarding Relation, we can narrow it down by examining whether the relation of the primary and secondary subject is clear and whether this relation is relevant to the author's implicit meaning. In the following, I will give an example demonstrating how these four maxims work in helping us to interpret a metaphor.

In *Forrest Gump*, Gump says his famous quote of all time, which is a metaphor: "My mum always said, 'Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.'" The metaphor he introduces has fulfilled Quantity by providing the audience with sufficient yet not too much information: That he intends to talk about life, that he thinks one cannot know one's own future, and that the characteristics of chocolates are supposed to illustrate this unknown. This is because before you open the box, you have no ideas what are inside, etc. And sometimes, a metaphor's explicit meaning falls short of Quantity by omitting the primary subject. For Quality, the audience who watch the film up to this point should know that Gump's character is slow-witted but determined and kindhearted, that he always captures what he believes to be true. This should rule out the possibility that he is insincere or deceptive. For Relation, by saying "you never know what you'll get", Gump invites the audience to focus on those characteristics of chocolate box that resemble life's uncertainty and pass over the rest (e.g. that the box is a square). But, since uncertainty is neutral, we may not know that whether he thinks that there are "unexpected merits" or "unexpected disasters" ahead. Another possible interpretation may be that Gump stays neutral to this problem, namely that he has no intention to promote forthcoming good or bad luck at all. But the relation of primary and secondary subjects here does not make it clear to suggest his neutral standpoint, either. So here lies an indeterminate point. Finally, when we consider Manner, Gump makes the expression as brief, orderly and unambiguous as needed. It is a

simple metaphor after all. Next, I will demonstrate how Grice's principle works on audience that attempt to interpret Zhuangzi's *yuyan*.

A. The story of Peng in *Xiaoyaoyou* (逍遙遊, Free and Easy Wandering)

To examine if Peng's story (Watson 2013: 2-6) meets the criterion of Quantity, we shall look into how informative it is. The story itself is rich with metaphorical figures such as Peng, sky and so on, and the explicit meaning of this story is informative. Readers have no problem seeing that this story is about a giant fish turning into a giant bird that wanders freely, if we regard the story as a literal description of a legend, then, here is basically the end of discussion because we have no motive to figure out Zhuangzi's implicit meaning. It is well accepted that this story is a metaphor, but how do we know that it is a metaphor? That is because, just like some of other stories, Zhuangzi has provided with some comments and clues in direct language<sup>43</sup>, to hint readers that he intends to tell us something through these stories, and that this is not just a literal and informative story. If we regard the story as a *yuyan*, then we have to look beyond the explicit. As in Grice's theory, it is the authors' intention that matters. At the first glance, this story is not informative enough to allow readers to know what the author intended to convey, because we do not know the subject matter author wants to talk about. The subject matter is the primary subject, which is not specified. Taken at face value, the explicit meaning may meet the criterion of Quantity, but fail that of Quality because the author does not provide enough evidence. Without knowing the subject matter, it is also indeterminate whether the criterion of Relation is satisfied. Regarding Manner, the story is not straightforward enough for readers to capture.

Facing the gap between their expectation and the explicit meaning, readers who want to read the text charitably may be led to strive for the

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<sup>43</sup> Such as "Little understanding cannot come up to great understanding; the short-lived cannot come up to the long-lived." (Watson 2013: 2)

primary subject: is Zhuangzi referring Peng to free spirits? But even if that is the case, what exactly that “free spirits” refer to? Is it an ontological idea of “freedom”, or does it specifically refer to some certain forms of freedom? Or, is Zhuangzi referring Peng to those who have supernatural powers? This may link Peng to Liezi later in the same chapter who can ride the wind, and it interprets Peng in a different way. The various characteristics of Peng can be deemed as relevant or not depending on how readers perceive the theme behind the story. It might be thought that Zhuangzi invites readers to focus on Peng’s traveling, which is related to how free it is to wander for boundless horizon. It might also be thought that Zhuangzi invites readers to focus on Peng’s size and horizon, which is related to how unusual (but not necessarily right) one’s experience can become. In each case, readers are supposed to focus on some characteristics and omit other issues (e.g. does Peng have parents?) about Peng. But as long as we are not sure about what exactly the primary subject is, then we still do not know whether our proposals fit the four criteria. Thus the process of interpreting the story such that it fulfills the maxims cannot fix the implicit meaning, but retains a gap between readers’ understanding and Zhuangzi’s intended meaning. Note that even though Zhuangzi leaves some hints in direct language, it is still not that easy to get his implicit meaning. When readers wish to figure out his meaning, they carefully examine his direct language hints, only to find that there can still be way more than one possible interpretation.

To sum up, if we examine the explicit meaning of Peng’s story with these four categories, it fails all of them. We are forced to find an appropriate implicit meaning, but the primary subject remains hidden under an obscure method of telling a story.

#### B. The story of drying Fish *yuyan* in *Dazongshi* (大宗師, The Grand Master)

If we look into the story of fish in drying-up springs (Watson 2013: 44), similar to Peng’s *yuyan*, there is no problem for readers to know the explicit

meaning of the story, namely fish in the drying-up springs have to spew moisture to one another to barely survive. However, it is not that clear that what exactly Zhuangzi implies so the implicit meanings are open for various interpretations.<sup>44</sup> Like the story of Peng, we are clear about the secondary subject of this metaphor, while the primary subject still looks uncertain. But this time, it seems that Zhuangzi provides readers with more information: struggling fish, spewing, direct language hints such as “it would be much better if they could forget one another...” (Watson 2013: 44) and so on. Fish, unlike Peng, are not fictional. Therefore, readers can at least make sense of the explicit meaning: that fish live better in water, not on dry lands. This observation about fish can fit both Quantity and Quality, but it does not seem relevant to the subsequent discussion of *dao*. So, when charitable readers imagine fish’s behavior in the story, and their life condition in different environments, the search for implicit meaning is still needed. A primary attempt is to see Zhuangzi as telling us not to waste efforts on something that is unlikely to be achieved. However, this information cannot help readers to locate what exactly that “unrealistic goal” is and still cannot fulfill Relation. This is because, when readers attempt to infer the implicit meaning of this metaphor from the information Zhuangzi provides, they may have a general idea that this metaphor tells us that sometimes it is better to let go than to insist in doing something that is hardly to be achieved. But what exactly does that “something” refer to? Candidates can vary from “using up one’s energy to help others” to “avoidance of death”. It can also be a general idea that does not necessarily have only one reference. And the “unrealistic goal” is but one candidate among all interpretations of what the fish are doing. Again, readers are not sure, so it may be difficult for them to precisely relate this metaphor to what they expect. Regarding Manner, this metaphor is not ambiguous or too wordy, so I think it fulfills the requirement of “avoid ambiguity”, “be brief” and “be orderly”. However, this does not compensate the ambiguity of

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<sup>44</sup> I have elaborated this story in details in 1.4.

metaphor. And as mentioned above, when readers try to figure out the interpretation from Zhuangzi's obscure metaphors, they will soon find that it is quite difficult as there are more than one option for us to choose, and we simply have not enough information to help us decide which one to choose. Zhuangzi's implicit meaning, if any, remains elusive.

To sum up, these metaphors, along with similar ones in the *Zhuangzi*, motivate readers to seek an implicit meaning by displaying an explicit meaning failing all or most of Grice's maxims. When readers try to figure out the implicit meaning by reconstructing or interpreting these metaphors in order to make them fit those Maxims, they will eventually find that it is hard to do so because there are always more than one option, and hints are sufficient for guessing but not ascertaining.

For now, I have discussed the structure and function of Zhuangzi's *yuyan*, and relate them to Zhuangzi's philosophical vision in general. I also discussed how the audience may try to interpret *yuyan*, following some general guidelines but without fixed answers. This indispellable indeterminacy is the *Zhuangzi*'s style and content as one. For the next chapter, I will look into the linguistic style of the *Commentary*, and discuss its unique characteristics and the vision behind.

## Chapter 2: The Language Style in the *Commentary* on the *Zhuangzi*

### 1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the language style by which the author of the *Commentary* interprets the *Zhuangzi*, and the philosophical visions within, in order to prepare for their comparison.

In section 2, I discuss how the author of the *Commentary* interprets the *Zhuangzi*'s *yuyan*, to see the *Commentary*'s view about metaphorical discourses and Zhuangzi's view of language. I argue that, while in the *Zhuangzi*, indeterminacy is generated by metaphorical discourses; the *Commentary* does not follow to promote indeterminacy through these discourses. Instead, it aims at using direct language to articulate Zhuangzi's

view. This does not mean that the *Commentary* is a word-to-word philological explanation of the *Zhuangzi*. Quite on the contrary, sometimes the *Commentary* does not bother to provide an “accurate” interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*, not even of those figurative terms that are usually attention-drawing. Sometimes it does not seem to be an interrelated interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* at all, hence it is said that “it is the *Zhuangzi* that comments on the *Commentary*”. (Dahui-Zonggao 1994: 444) Tang suggests that Guo Xiang does not struggle to figure out the implicit meaning of Zhuangzi’s metaphorical figures such as Peng and Kun. In Guo’s era which is different from Han Dynasty, people spare little scholastic effort to research on, or even over interpret vital terms of the *Zhuangzi*. (Tang 1999: 94) And when Guo interprets metaphorical discourses, he makes adjustments in order to make the expressions fit in his own meaning. (Ziporyn 2003: 30) When Guo finds that his view contradicts to Zhuangzi’s, he steers clear of articulating Zhuangzi’s view instead of articulating and interpreting the original text. (Xu 1992: 192, 193) It is fair to say that the *Commentary*’s interpretation is not simply for the sake of figuring out the original implicit meaning of the *Zhuangzi*, instead, it reflects the linguistic view and philosophical visions of a new era.

In section 3, I discuss the new concepts generated in the *Commentary*, and the rhetoric effects of them.

In section 4, I discuss the philosophical view of the *Commentary* including its interpretation of *dao* (道), things (*wu* 物), knowledge (*zhi* 知) and skills (*ji* 技).

## 2 . Interpretation of *Yuyan* in the *Commentary*

In Wei-Jin era, intellectuals opposed to the scholastic study in Han Dynasty and exalted intuition and logical inference in order to balance “the teaching of names” (*mingjiao* 名教) and “the self-so” (*ziran* 自然). The self-so (also known as “spontaneity”) was commonly associated with the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, while the teaching of names (also known as “morality”)

concerned with the ordering of society, was associated with Confucianism and especially its emphasis on rituals, which had been the dominant official ideology throughout most of the Han. (Ziporyn 2003: 23) To balance the self-so and the teaching of names is actually to balance the requirement of ritual and spontaneity. “In fact, this is the general aim of intellectuals in Wei-Jin (except for Ji Kang and Ruan Ji who opposed to Confucianism), both in their living style and their writings. Wang Bi applies the Taoist methods to articulate Confucianism, and Guo Xiang balances Confucianism and Taoist by coming up with the idea that the teachings of names equals to the self-so. And this idea is frequently reflected from Guo Xiang’s *Commentary* to the *Zhuangzi*.” (Xu 1992: 5-6) Actually, Guo gives new interpretation to the *Zhuangzi* in order to articulate or to avoid introducing thoughts in the *Zhuangzi* that contradicts to his own view. In this section, I will discuss “Distinction of names and patterns” in Guo’s philosophy and linguistic views of the *Commentary*. I start with the three-mode passage.

#### (1). Distinction of names and patterns

The term “distinction of names and analysis of patterns” (*bianmingxili* 辯名析理) was not brought up in the *Zhuangzi* as a whole, but “to distinguish (*bian* 辯)”, “names (*ming* 名)”, “to analyze (*xi* 析)” and “patterns (*li* 理)” were mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* respectively. As mentioned in Chapter 1, “distinguishing” is the basic activity of separating *shi* (是, right) and *fei* (非, wrong). *Zhuangzi*, of course, points out that “distinguishing” does not necessarily lead to clarification, instead, there is a risk that people are drown in endless disputes or confusion. Although he does not object to give up distinction altogether, there remains a cautious attitude towards distinction in the *Zhuangzi*. The same goes for names: a name’s function is to mark distinction, and using a name is using it to make distinctions. For *Zhuangzi*, distinction of names would probably mean picking out appropriate names with regard to certain situation. “To analyze” has been brought up with

“patterns” together in the last chapter of *Zhuangzi*, and they refer to one’s making separations among things to attain comprehensive understanding of the ancient *dao*.<sup>45</sup> However, *Zhuangzi* criticizes that this attempt too often comes from a partial perspective and fails to see the interdependence of all things. Overall speaking, “distinguishing names” and “analyzing patterns” in the *Zhuangzi* are regarded as not quite positive.

Nevertheless, in Wei-Jin era, these two methods are jointly regarded as a process of recognizing and clarifying names and the relationship among things. Besides, in pre-Qin era, “names” drew more attention than “patterns”, but when it came to Profound Studies (*xuanxue* 玄學)<sup>46</sup> in Wei-Jin era, “patterns” were relatively more important. The meaning of “patterns” originally refers to the texture of jades (or to analyze the texture of jades). If we broaden its meaning, then it does not only talk about the “jades”, but also refers to the “texture” of everything, and that “texture” means the various elements and their inter-relations of things. For instance, if we are talking about a society, then “patterns” of the society are its social norms and laws. Though the meaning of “patterns” changes from time to time, it always implies, or clearly refers to the meaning of “format”. (Wang 1996: 196-198) To distinguish patterns of something, is to distinguish its texture and format, meaning its elements and how those elements interact with each other. This may seem like a philological or even exegetical approach in Han Dynasty, but they are different. While Han Dynasty’s scholastic method is also meticulous and strives to distinguish names for setting up social norms, “distinction of names and analyzing patterns” aims at understanding the pattern behind social realm and even go beyond empirical realm. This is also regarded as glancing

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<sup>45</sup> The scholar cramped in one corner to learning tries to judge the beauty of Heaven and earth, to pry into the principles of the ten thousand things (to analyze the ideals of things), to scrutinize the perfection of the ancients, but seldom is he able to encompass the true beauty of Heaven and earth, to describe the true face of holy brightness. (Watson 2013: 288-289)

<sup>46</sup> The name of “*Xuanxue*” has more than one English translation, and I choose “Profound Studies” among them for my thesis. The debate on which translation is the best is not within the scope of my thesis.

at the unspeakable through the speakable. As Tang remarks, “distinguishing names” is to use the appropriate name to correspond it with reality (Tang 1999: 104), which goes beyond conventions or “traces” (*ji* 跡).<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, when assigning an interpretation to a passage, intuition and personal inferences are placed over traditional authoritative commentaries in order to ponder its esoteric message. This is similar to Zhuangzi’s detachment from ritual, law and rectification of names, but with a more positive tone: while Zhuangzi does not advocate the act of analyzing, in Wei-Jin era, this is considered to be a method for revealing something profound (Wang 1996: 204). When it comes to the *Commentary*, its application of “distinction of names and analyzing patterns” is close to other Wei-Jin writers’, not to Zhuangzi’s.

While there is a difference between the attitude towards distinction and analysis in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Commentary*, the latter is still concerned with the orientative function of language, in particular how language plays a role in self-cultivation or social transformation. Of course, Guo arguably has different views on these two issues, and the *Commentary* aims at dragging readers to certain directions that fit Guo’s own thoughts, not necessarily mirroring Zhuangzi’s thoughts. Besides, Guo demonstrates a selective process in order to choose expressions that he agrees with to emphasize, and abandon what he disagrees with by pleading that these figurative contents are not that relevant to Zhuangzi’s thoughts and do not need to be addressed. Guo develops and highlights thoughts that he agrees with in the *Zhuangzi*, while modifies and even criticizes some thoughts of the *Zhuangzi*. (Tang 1999: 50) This can be rationalized by “distinguishing names and analyzing patterns”, because Guo can reprioritize the importance of different terms in the original text base by claiming that this distinction is essential to make the hidden pattern accessible. One example is that, in a story about Confucius comparing himself unfavorably to those who roam “outside the realm” in Chapter 6

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<sup>47</sup> This idea will be explained in section 2.3.

(*Dazongshi*), Guo and Zhuangzi have different views towards Confucius and the spirit of “roaming outside the realm”, so when Guo remarks about the reproach of Confucius, he argues that Zhuangzi intended to praise Confucius as the perfect sage who could harmonize spontaneity and morality, who could remain spiritually lofty and free while at the same time participating in worldly affairs<sup>48</sup> (Ziporyn 2003: 30). Instead of claiming to guide readers to read the text more closely, the *Commentary* emphasizes “forgetting”, a concept which is associated with psychological emptiness and harmony with environment in the *Zhuangzi*, to mitigate readers’ attachment to word-to-word accuracy, and to avoid taking Zhuangzi’s criticism of the sages seriously. Guo discusses the concept of “forgetting” in various perspectives, he suggests people to forget and ignore their traces, not to be fooled by them into imitation. (Ziporyn 2003: 137) “Forgetting” allows Guo to fuse new ideas with existing terms, but if the degree of “forgetting” is not specified, then we are uncertain about how much we shall “forget” and how much details we can pass over when reading the original text. When the idea of forgetting is applied in metaphorical discourses, it allows even greater liberty to claim the implicit meaning of the original text. Faithfulness at the literal level is not an essential criterion for judging quality of an interpretation and may be regarded as shackles to profound understanding.

(2). Guo’s general attitude towards *yuyan*

Besides “Distinction of names and analysis of patterns”, Tang suggests that Guo also uses “lodging an outside meaning in language” (寄言出意).

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<sup>48</sup> “At the point where principle reaches its ultimate, outside and inside [the realm of social rules] vanish into one another; there has never been one who roams outside [i.e., in spontaneity] who does not at the same time vanish into the inside [i.e., morality]. Thus the sage constantly roams outside the realm to vanish into what is inside it, following along with existence with no deliberate mind, and hence although his body is waving about all day long, his spirit and breath remain unchanged, looking above and below along with ten thousand different circumstances, and yet calmly constant and selflike.” (Ziporyn 2003: 30)

(Tang 1999: 85-86)<sup>49</sup> In *Xiaoyaoyou* of the *Commentary*, he gives an instruction for reading the passage, which is also generally regarded as a method used throughout the whole work: “It is better to pick the essentials, and sift what the meaning is lodged in”. (Guo 1961: 3)<sup>50</sup> “What the meaning is lodged in”<sup>51</sup> refers to the conveyor of meaning, and as mentioned in 1.2, in the *Zhuangzi*, *yuyan* means “words that lodge its meaning in somewhere”. *Yuyan* serves as the conveyor, so according to Guo, it should be sifted. Therefore, we expect Guo to abstract the secondary subject in *yuyan* and not to consider every detail. I will further discuss Guo’s view towards *yuyan* in detail, as well as his interpretation of the three-mode passage.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, three modes of discourses, namely *yuyan*, *chongyan* and *zhiyan* are frequently used in the *Zhuangzi* to stimulate imagination and minimize antagonism, as well as presenting a world view without fixed boundaries among things and words. The *Commentary*, however, employs them a method of distinction and analysis, with a larger proportion of literal arguments.

In doing so, it claims to focus on the thoughts behind, not the semantic meaning of metaphorical terms themselves. For example, in the *Commentary*, the semantic meanings of Peng and Kun are not specified. When commenting on *Xiaoyaoyou*, the author notes that “I have not specified what exactly Peng and Kun are. *Zhuangzi* aims at addressing wandering around.....so he contrasts the most enormous and the tiniest.” (Guo 1961: 3) Instead of interpreting the meaning based on a comprehensive observation of Peng and

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<sup>49</sup> If following Tang’s and Ziporyn’s idea to understand and translate the term “寄言出意” as “lodging the meaning outside of language”, it would be problematic because it fails to note that Guo cares about the meaning of *Zhuangzi*’s expression rather than its lodging place. So I followed scholars like Chien’s idea to translate this term as “lodging an outside meaning in language” (Chien 2013: 42-46)

<sup>50</sup> I translated it on my own while borrowing Ziporyn’s translation of some key terms.

<sup>51</sup> As a reviewer addresses, “寄言出意 (*jiyanchuyi*)” is also Guo’s description of *Zhuangzi*’s use of language, including imputed words. Although both Guo and *Zhuangzi* speak of going beyond the language it signifies literally, they are looking for different things: Guo tries to dissolve the meaning in the *Zhuangzi* that is at odd with Confucian norms while *Zhuangzi* simply wants to have unbounded meaning which is free from any literal meaning so one can be open to the possibilities of thought.

Kun as described by Zhuangzi, the *Commentary* claims to extract the most important feature, namely the equality between big and small, from the *yuyan*. According to Guo, this is trying to specify “what Zhuangzi uses Peng and Kun for”. The author seems to argue that the semantic meaning is not essential so we do not have to bother to articulate it, because the contrasts of “the most enormous and the tiniest”, and the sense of “wandering around” are the essential features that Guo would like to grasp and retain, and the rest can be distinguished as irrelevant. This fits in the pragmatic view that the essential of an expression is the author’s implicit meaning and intention behind, not its explicit meaning which is simply a conveyer where the implicit meaning is lodged in. And this echoes what I mentioned in 2.2.1, as Guo cares more about the meaning of Zhuangzi’s expression, not its lodging place. However, Guo also implicitly suggests that the style and content of *yuyan* can be separated: Guo does not fully consider *how* Zhuangzi expresses his point, and Guo offers no elaboration on why a particular setting of *yuyan* is preferred by Zhuangzi over other alternatives. For example, in *Xiaoyaoyou*, Zhuangzi borrows the *yuyan* of small birds laughing at Peng to criticize the shortsightedness<sup>52</sup>, and Guo comments on this *yuyan* that “Peng does not consider itself a cut above the small birds, and small birds do not have to admire the boundless horizon...they have different size, but they are equally carefree.” (Guo 1961: 9) The apparent criticism towards short-sightedness is downplayed, while only the contrast between big and small is retained. For Guo, this contrast is taken as face value without value judgment: he suggests that little birds are equal to Peng.

Scholars who suggest that Guo does not deviate from Zhuangzi’s intended meaning may argue that “although here the *Commentary* seems to deviate from Zhuangzi’s meaning, it does not mean that Guo’s meaning deviated

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<sup>52</sup> “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 sapanwood 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!” (Watson 2013: 1-2)

from the general spirit promoted in the *Zhuangzi*.” For example, Chen argues that it is hard to judge what exactly Zhuangzi’s implicit meaning is, and it is possible that Zhuangzi intends to suggest that everything is equal, that the little birds concern with things within their horizon, and Peng cares about things in a wider range, and that does not follow that we can judge that Peng is superior. (Chen 2014: 367) Chen seems to imply that as Zhuangzi has promoted a spirit of equality of all things in other chapters of the *Zhuangzi* (especially in *Qiwulun*), thus, it makes sense to argue that Zhuangzi agrees that Peng is not superior to any others. And he presupposes here that first, we can regard the *Zhuangzi* as a continuous work, that the thoughts in each chapter can jointly constitute a systematic work. But whether we should view the *Zhuangzi* as a systematic work<sup>53</sup> or not is still under discussion, and, given that it is precisely the *Commentary* that constitutes the first “systematic reading” of the *Zhuangzi*, this casts doubt on finding a “Zhuangzi’s spirit” independent of Guo’s articulation. Secondly, it is true that as we are not mind-readers, we cannot guarantee to be the final judges of Zhuangzi’s intended implicit meaning. What we can do is to search for hints and supporting details. Chen suggests that we can use other chapters of the *Zhuangzi* as hints, and if we can find hints that are similar to Guo’s interpretation, then it follows that Guo does not deviate from Zhuangzi’s implicit meaning. (Chen 2014: 367) But when we search for hints, should we not regard hints near the metaphor as the most relevant and reliable ones? Actually Zhuangzi has provided with supporting hints right after he introduces the little birds’ *yuyan*: “Little understanding cannot come up to great understanding; the short-lived

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<sup>53</sup> One may question that if the *Zhuangzi* is not systematic enough, can it still be called “philosophy”? My response would be that the unsystematic style of the *Zhuangzi* is reasonable and meaningful because Zhuangzi promotes indeterminacy, and he cannot and should not build a “system”, which involves assigning fixed roles to its parts, to discuss something indeterminate. When we read the *Zhuangzi*, we should not read it as a systematically philosophical way, either. However, if we regard philosophy as an art of questioning but not necessarily a method for drawing definite conclusions, we should also agree that we can explore everything in Zhuangzi’s way and accept the openness of our questioning.

cannot come up to the long-lived.” (Watson 2013: 2) Here Zhuangzi distinguishes “little understanding” from “great understanding”, implying that they are not the same. And by saying “cannot”, Zhuangzi seems to imply that the little is not as capable as the great so they cannot broaden horizon rather than suggesting that it is acceptable for the little to care only things within their reach. While these hints are not conclusive for interpreting the fable, it forms a tension with other chapters and constitutes a *zhiyan*, resisting to be incorporated into an unequivocal whole. This is when the *Commentary* does not consider every detail in the original text but puts forward a controversial interpretation. By doing so, Guo may guide readers to his own idea even when it does not have sufficient supporting evidence in the original texts of the *Zhuangzi*. The lack of connection to textual research and clarification of primary subjects makes it easier to deviate from Zhuangzi’s original meaning, because Guo does not have to bear the risk that his meaning deviates too far from the primary subjects’ meaning thus hard to be deviated.

Another example showing how the *Commentary* addresses Zhuangzi’s intention rather than the semantic meaning of an expression is that, when commenting on the three-mode passage, Guo says that:

People tend not to accept your view when you use your own direct language to persuade them, that is why the meaning has to be lodged in somewhere else, and expressions such as Jian Wu and Lian Shu’s story fall into this category. Father’s praises of his own son is not that trustworthy, and it is even suspicious when someone believes in those words, so he borrows other people’s words. (Guo 1961: 948)

As we can see here, the original text in the *Zhuangzi* borrows the “father-son” metaphor to explain why Zhuangzi uses a large number of *yuyan*, and as mentioned in 1.2, the three-mode passage in the *Zhuangzi* reveals why Zhuangzi uses *yuyan* frequently, and the passage itself uses the father-son metaphor to explain. Here in the *Commentary*, the three-mode passage begins with direct language to explain that expressions that lodge the meaning in somewhere else have more persuasive power, and comes up with an example (Jian Wu and Lian Shu’s story) to illustrate what *yuyan* is. In this sentence,

Guo uses direct language instead of metaphorical expressions to articulate Zhuangzi's intention, and this method helps with dissipating obscurity, allowing readers to understand Zhuangzi's intention directly. Following this straightforward beginning, Guo proceeds to detail the explanation of the father-son metaphor. He does not replace "father" and "son" by any explanatory or direct language. Instead, he simply explains that father's comments on his own son are not convincing and persuasive enough. Here Guo does not specify primary subjects of the father-son metaphor, but as the first sentence of this passage provides readers with sufficient information of Zhuangzi's intention, here readers can have a relatively clear understanding of this metaphor without being informed of what exactly "father", "son" and "matchmaker" refer to. As Guo does not have a contradictory view towards *yuyan*, the *Commentary* does not deviate from Zhuangzi's implicit meaning here, and by highlighting the pragmatic meaning of this expression, it still succeeds in allowing readers to capture Zhuangzi's intention, and this is even better for readers to focus on the essentials of this metaphor because it prevents them from paying attention to less important elements and issues.

Combination of "distinction of names and analysis of patterns" and "lodging an outside meaning in language" enables Guo to manipulate the text during interpretation, and the image used by Zhuangzi can be used by Guo to fit his view, regardless of whether it can be ascertained that their views coincide. This manipulation serves the agenda of balancing ritual and spontaneity. For example, in *yuyan*, Zhuangzi says that "Confucius has been going along for sixty years, and he has changed sixty times. What in the beginning he used to call right he has ended up calling wrong." (Watson 2013: 235), Zhuangzi borrows a fictional Confucius to criticize Huizi, but Guo suggests that "As time goes by, the reality changes accordingly. Carefree as he is, he changes according to the reality, too".<sup>54</sup> (Tang 1999: 48) In this case, the *Commentary* still does not specify the semantic meaning of

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<sup>54</sup> This is Guo's comment on Chapter 31 (Guo 1961: 1035).

metaphorical figure (does not explain Zhuangzi refers Confucius to which sort of people), instead, it attempts to convince readers that the actual Confucius is a carefree person that has changed according to time. Therefore, when Guo's idea deviates from the *Zhuangzi*'s implicit meaning, the *Commentary* promotes its author's idea, not necessarily Zhuangzi's. Borrowing "hints" from other chapter is not strong enough to justify Guo's interpretation as fitting Zhuangzi's implicit meaning. It is possible that Guo helps to reduce the risk of one chapter contradicts to the other in the *Zhuangzi*, for example as mentioned above in the little birds *yuyan*, Guo's interpretation avoids the challenge of "why Zhuangzi claims that everything is equal in *Qiwulun* but here in *Xiaoyaoyou* he suggests that the little is not as superior as the great." But even though there exists risk of contradiction here in the *Zhuangzi*, the commentator does not have to omit or correct it, especially when the use of contradiction (if any) may very well be a message put forward by the original text, as discussed in Chapter 1. At the very least, it would be better to leave the passages in tension there for readers to judge and analyze. Besides, Guo does not even explicitly state that his choice of interpretive focus in a passage is made because he wants to reconcile different parts of the *Zhuangzi* or resolve contradictions therein. If Guo insists in proposing improvement for the *Zhuangzi*, he could have explained how the text contradicts to itself and proposed an alternative solution, not simply addressed his own interpretation without acknowledging readers that it is not necessary Zhuangzi's implicit meaning.

While Zhuangzi does not provide final vocabularies and we may not be able to judge which interpretation is the perfect fit, at least Guo's claim that he is discovering Zhuangzi's intention in *yuyan* is not fully warranted. It is similar to translation: sometimes it is hard to find a "perfect match" if there are hardly words in one language that share exactly the same connotations with a particular word in another language, especially if the word waiting to be translated is polysemous. In this case, we can only search for words with

similar meanings and struggle to choose a closest one, but no one can claim to be the final judge to decide which one it is. But when a word appears in a passage, then the context sets some constraints for translation. If the proposed translation does not consider the subtleties of context, then regardless of whether the final match is known or not, at least it is not faithful. Similarly, it is true that, as suggested in Chapter 1, *yuyan* may not have a determined implicit meaning, but its explicit meaning and direct language hints provided by the story constraint its interpretation within a certain range, even though we are not sure which option in this range is the perfect match (or whether there is “perfect match”). We can examine whether the interpretation takes all hints into account and judge its faithfulness. And Guo’s deviated interpretation is not just a single special case, it is actually quite a general practice of the *Commentary*, especially when Confucius is mentioned. Guo “defends his interpretation with outrageous sophisms for the sake of his (Guo’s) polemic. As a general hermeneutic device, this use of the notion of parable is Guo’s solution to the conflict between what the text says and what he wants it to say.” (Ziporyn 2003: 30)

### 3. New Concepts Introduced in the *Commentary*

As scholars often note, there are plenty of new concepts introduced by Guo in the *Commentary*. They are new either in the sense that the whole *Zhuangzi* does not contain them, such as “lone-transformation (*duhua* 獨化)”; or in the sense that they do not appear in the corresponding passages that the *Commentary* is working on, such as “forgetting (*wang* 忘)” and “nature” (*xing* 性). These new concepts reflect the tendency of blending “the teaching of names” and “the self-so” mentioned in section 2.2. Their function is twofold: when Guo’s idea does not quite deviate from *Zhuangzi*’s original implicit meaning, he may simply develop and deepen *Zhuangzi*’s concepts, introducing new ones to allow readers to understand the *Zhuangzi*. When the *Commentary* employs ideas that are different from the *Zhuangzi*, it is possible

that a new concept is coined in order to deviate Zhuangzi's original implicit meaning.

In order to promote his own philosophical vision and bypass certain subtleties in the original text, Guo introduces the idea of “trace” (*ji* 跡 lit. footprints) and “that which gives rise to trace” (*suoyiji* 所以跡). On one hand, in cultivation (Guo 1961: 1076), traces are something left by sages and mistakenly regarded as the essence of sage: “The name of Yao and Shun are their traces.....” (Guo 1961: 375) Those who are too attached to names fail to notice that “names have their impacts, and those impacts are fetters.....” (Guo 1961: 206) One who distinguishes names but attaches too much importance on them risks having a wrong impression, namely that one can reach sagehood through careful study and commitment to the literal meaning of classics. This is like one who tries to walk away by imitating exactly a precursor's footprint. On the other hand, in interpretation, traces are regarded as images (*xiang* 象) that bridge meaning or intention (*yi* 意) and words (*yan* 言). In this sense they provoke some kinds of imagination—but eventually they should be forgotten, and those who indulge in it will be trapped in words and fail to grasp Zhuangzi's implicit meaning, or so claimed by Guo. As he says, “It is better to forget the language in which the core meaning is lodged. One does not have to cover everything involved”. (Guo 1961: 3) Zhuangzi does mention *ji* and *suoyiji* in the original text or address their difference: “The Six Classics are the old worn-out *ji* (trace) of the former kings—they are not *suoyiji* (that which gives rise to trace). What you are expounding are simply these traces. Traces are made by shoes that walk them; they are by no means the shoes themselves!” (Watson 2013: 118) Judging from this paragraph, it is fair to say that Guo has followed Zhuangzi's idea to emphasize the difference between *ji* and *suoyiji*, but this is the one and only passage in which Zhuangzi introduces “*suoyiji*”. Guo's *Commentary* attaches way more importance to “trace” and “that which gives rise to trace”, extends the scope of this pair of terms to include all phenomena instead of only texts

and sage's teachings. This also constitutes to his project of systematizing the *Zhuangzi*, as he identifies "nature" with "that which gives rise to trace" and uses the former as a core concept to explain many tensions in the original text, especially that between "the teaching of names" and "self-so".<sup>55</sup>

"Nature" is not a new term coined by Guo. However, while a significant part of the *Zhuangzi* does not mention it, Guo uses it throughout all the chapters. In the *Commentary*, Guo suggests that different kinds of "nature (*xing* 性)" have their own corresponding "role of nature (*xingfen* 性分)", for example, the tiniest should not be judged as something worse than the largest as long as it is within its role of nature to be tiny. (Guo 1961: 81) Guo even defines sagehood in terms of "nature", suggesting that "'sage' is only a name for those who get their nature. This is not sufficient for naming that by which they get their nature". (Guo 1961: 22) Moreover, the sage goes beyond the "trace", so that even people can know and discuss sage's trace, they are not able to understand the sage's nature according to the trace: "Ordinary people can only know the sage's trace, not that which leaves the trace (that people are unable to know sage's nature). When they discuss the sage, they are like discussing the sage's trace." (Guo 1961: 337)

From the above, we can see that the terms "nature" and "trace" sometimes appear in the *Commentary* together. "That which gives rise to trace", according to Guo, is "nature (*xing* 性)". Ziporyn holds that "the *xing* is for Guo the *suoyiran* (所以然) of the traces, which is spontaneity. Since there is no further nature that is the *suoyiran* of that which is self-so, which is what, relative to the traces, is described as the *xing*" (Ziporyn 2003: 31). When discussing the relation between trace and nature, Ziporyn agrees to Tang's view in regard to the stress and the unknowability of that which leaves the traces. However, Ziporyn thinks that Tang is incorrect to take a thing's nature to be therefore static, for in the light of Guo's entire system, Guo emphasizes on change and transformation (Ziporyn 2003: 48-50). As for Ziporyn, trace

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<sup>55</sup> I will discuss "the teaching of names" and "self-so" in section 3.4 in more detail.

and that “that which leaves the trace” and their relation are not fixed. Without settling their dispute, we can say that Guo’s idea of “what leaves the trace” adds a new layer to Zhuangzi’s world view (which emphasizes *qi*). This connection between “that which leaves the trace” and nature also influences subsequent understanding of the *Zhuangzi*, as the contrast between *qi* and *li* becomes prominent in Chinese Buddhism and Song Confucianism.

Another term introduced by Guo in a similar vein to “nature” is “self-so” (*ziran* 自然). Guo comes up with definitions of this term in various perspectives. His notion of self-so includes a value dimension signifying the “rightness” (*ran* 然) of each thing to itself.<sup>56</sup> This term is already quite complicated in the *Zhuangzi*, and Guo’s use is no less complicated.<sup>57</sup> As Guo addresses, *ziran* is the state in which one does not intend to do anything and remains at peace with oneself: “Self-so, it is something one does not have to take action to generate. That Peng can fly high up to Heaven.....are all because of self-so (that they are born to possess certain kinds of capabilities), not because they make effort to achieve.” (Guo 1961: 20) The original text here does not have the term “self-so”. Zhuangzi only uses the metaphorical story of Peng and little doves to discuss the limit of one’s horizon, and that one’s shortsightedness blocks her way to understand something broader, and neither in the story nor in the direct language hints Zhuangzi provides does he introduce the term “self-so”. By introducing the term “self-so”, Guo not only associates this passage with other “self-so” passages, but also assigns a meaning to the metaphor by direct language. Furthermore, Guo’s use of “self-so” here constitutes his claim that both Peng and little doves are self-sufficient and equal, as noted in section 2.2 above. For Guo, since “self-so”

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<sup>56</sup> It is arguably interchangeable with “dark joining” or “vanishing into” things (*ming* 冥).

<sup>57</sup> “*Ziran* is for Guo, we will find, a word predicated of all things, signifying their spontaneous becoming, which is not motivated by teleological intention to attain an extrinsic goal, is not knowable from outside, is without reference to anything outside itself, not a result of knowing or conscious will, and not comprehensible in terms of cognitive concepts of causality, and hence to be conceived of only as self-sufficient, uncaused, self-so.” (Ziporyn 2003: 19)

implies self-sufficiency, there is no need for one to seek anything outside one's current state. There is nothing in oneself that calls for replacement or modification. This is then used to justify that there is no need to strive for a breakthrough to understand something beyond one's reach. As Guo chooses to emphasize one perspective, there is a risk that he leads readers to focus on only one petal of a flower, omitting other petals. That being said, it is nevertheless true that Guo's interpretation allows readers to understand the passage relatively easily.

The practice of introducing new ideas throughout the interpretation and using them as abstraction of the original text is a common one in Wei-Jin era. For Guo, this improves coherence among passages and makes his interpretation more persuasive. With the idea of trace, he can regard the concept borrowed from other passages as the core of Zhuangzi's implicit meaning and regard the images in current passage as trace. A typical example is "nature" mentioned above. In the *Zhuangzi*, Ruo of the North Sea said that "Horses and oxen have four feet— this is what I mean by the Heavenly. Putting a halter on the horse's head, piercing the ox's nose— this is what I mean by the human." (Watson 2013: 133) In this passage, Zhuangzi distinguishes "piercing" from the Heavenly by addressing that it is not nature that gives those pierces to animals. However, in the *Commentary*, the corresponding comment is:

Isn't it unavoidable for human to relying on oxen and horses for transportation? Isn't it necessary to pierce the oxen and horses to tame them? It is the oxen's and horses' destiny to be pierced and this fits in their destiny.....The true-self of them lies within their role of nature." (Guo 1961: 591)

Guo modifies Zhuangzi's meaning by asserting and introducing the term "role of nature", arguing that it is these animals' nature and destiny to be pierced, which is not suggested in the original text of the *Zhuangzi*. According to Tang, this method of interpretation could be problematic because Guo can possibly introduce anything he likes by addressing that "it is one's nature to..." (Tang 1999: 51, 52) I agree with Tang's view here,

because although a new concept or a new interpretation of concepts of the original texts can serve as a bridge to connect the meaning to Zhuangzi's implicit meaning, when the meaning of the "bridge" is subjective to interpreter's preference, his words may become the final vocabularies that shape readers' understanding of the original text.

So far in this section, I first discussed the term "distinction of names and analysis of patterns" of the *Commentary* to show how Guo works on interpretation by employing a method from his era. Then I discussed how the *Commentary* interprets the *Zhuangzi* in a way that is not necessarily loyal to the latter's original implicit meaning, and that Guo coins new terms or uses Zhuangzi's terms in a new way in order to constitute a systematic work different from the *Zhuangzi*'s presentation style. Billeter holds that interpretations like the *Commentary* are not necessarily the best guide for reading the *Zhuangzi*, because Guo has led readers to believe in something more straightforward and superficial than the original spirits of the *Zhuangzi*, and other interpreters who follow Guo's step are often simply repeating themselves.<sup>58</sup> In my view, this comment is reasonable to warn us to stay in caution with respect to any systematic reconstruction of the *Zhuangzi* using only a few technical terms. However, as a classic, the *Zhuangzi* cannot avoid not to be re-interpreted over time. Simplification may serve the need of era, as noted in section 2.1. It is acceptable to borrow or coin new concepts to serve this purpose as long as he does not claim to "find out" Zhuangzi's implicit meaning while at the same time promoting another philosophical view. Other purposes such as "avoiding self-contradiction in the *Zhuangzi*" and "promoting interpreters' own thoughts", however, should be viewed with caution. The same should go for the status of *Commentary* as a guide to understand pre-Qin thoughts.

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<sup>58</sup> "They (readers) misunderstood that referring to Guo's interpretation, they can understand the whole of the *Zhuangzi*. . . . Guo also shows people how to make use of Zhuangzi's talents to promote the interpreter's thoughts, not Zhuangzi's." And a large number of interpreters followed Guo's approach, but many of them are simply repeating themselves. (Billeter 2011: 100-101)

#### 4. Philosophical Horizon of the *Commentary*

##### (1). The origin of things and metaphysical speculation

As mentioned in 2.1, by making distinction of names and ideals to introduce new concepts in the *Commentary*, sometimes Guo ends up promoting his own view. So when his meaning is apparently not promoting Zhuangzi's implicit meaning, we can grasp the connection of Guo's philosophical view from his interpretation. One important philosophical view of Guo is that he holds that there is not an origin of everything. And this view is slightly different from Zhuangzi's view towards the origin of everything, because although *dao* in the *Zhuangzi* is not god-like, Zhuangzi does not definitely deny the existence of transcendental origin as Guo does. As mentioned in 1.4, Zhuangzi's view about the origin of things is ambiguous, sometimes he seems to suggest that the origin is not within the scope for us to discuss;<sup>59</sup> sometimes he seems to refer *dao* to the origin of the universe<sup>60</sup>. But in either way, Zhuangzi does not object to the existence of the origin of all things, he simply does not decide whether we should discuss and give a concrete decision of what that origin is. In the *Commentary*, however, Guo does not reflect Zhuangzi's ambiguous view towards the origin of all things, he simply suggests that there is no such "origin", for he rejects postulating any nature behind the self-so of all things. When Guo comments on the passage mentioned above in the *Zhuangzi* about the origin ([*dao*] gave spirituality to the spirits and to God; it gave birth to Heaven and to earth), the *Commentary* says that "How non-existence can give spirituality to anything? The spirits and God are not given spirituality yet they claim to be given, it is spirits without spirituality. Heaven and earth are not given birth to, they exist by themselves, and the existence is without a birth". (Guo 1961: 248) Here

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<sup>59</sup> "as to what is beyond the Six Realms, the sage admits it exists but does not theorize" (Watson 2013: 13)

<sup>60</sup> [*dao*] 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" (Watson 2013: 45)

when interpreting Zhuangzi's text that seems to admit the existence of the origin of things, Guo chooses to avoid admitting it in order to avoid contradicting to his own view. By turning from agnostic to denial, he strips away the possibility of any religious belief in the text.

(2). Things (*wu* 物)

Guo does not suggest that there exists a god-like origin of things, so when he discusses “things” in the *Commentary*, he emphasizes that the origin of their existence and their developments lie within themselves. As mentioned in 2.2.3, in Guo's philosophical view, “traces” refer to that which can be described and constrained by names, while “that which gives rise to trace” is the nature of that thing. According to Tang, Guo makes a clear clarification between *ji* and *suoyiji* because in this way, he can promote the idea that things own the origin of themselves, and they leave traces on their own, so that they do not necessarily need a god-like origin involved. (Tang 1983: 328-329) So when Guo discusses “things” in general, he suggests that everything has its own nature: “Everything has its own nature, and there is a limit of that nature.” (Guo 1961: 11) And Guo suggests that everything's self-so is the origin of its existence<sup>61</sup>, and as self-so lies within itself, it means that the “origin” of everything lies within itself, not in somewhere beyond or someone superior. And here we can see that Guo's view towards “things” echoes his view towards the origin of things and metaphysical speculation. This also emphasizes self-sufficiency of all things, a theme that Zhuangzi does not provide with a determined view about, yet Guo has promoted a certain view when commenting on it. So this is another perspective to show that when commenting on the *Zhuangzi*, Guo imposes his own view to the texts, and this is well recognized if we examine Guo's term “lone transformation” (*duhua* 獨化), a term that is not found in the *Zhuangzi*. Although Guo does not

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<sup>61</sup> “I regard *yinyang* (陰陽) as things, and what exists before *yinyang*? I think it is self-so.” (Guo 1961: 764)

frequently use this term, it attracts a significant attention. “*Duhua*” is an oxymoron, because “*du*” means “lone” and “*hua*” means “change”, and when they are put together, “*duhua*” suggests that while transforming, one is nonetheless remaining the same one; one is all alone. But “change” contradicts to “remaining the same”, so it is quite self-contradictory when they are put together as the term “*duhua*”. When “*hua*” is used in the *Zhuangzi*, for example, in the term “self-transformation” (*zihua* 自化), although “self” is similar to “lone”, there is no such self-contradiction. (Ziporyn 2003: 99-100) This self-contradiction here, again, is a result of Guo’s highlight of the independence of things’ existence, that even though there is transformation, they do not borrow or become something else, they are all by themselves. Ziporyn suggests that “*zi* (self)” is similar to “*du* (lone)”, and that “lone transformation” is self-contradictory, so why is “self-transformation” not as self-contradictory as “lone transformation”? Ziporyn does not go into details to explain the reason why, but I think it is because “lone” emphasizes the status of “remaining the same one” and “lacking connection with others” that “self” does not necessarily do. That is to say, “lone transformation” implies that “the transformation involves only one thing that remains the same and has no relationship with others”, which is self-contradictory because “transformation” should involve at least two things, namely the one before changing and the one after changing. “Self-transformation” does not necessarily suggest that self is alone, it rather emphasizes that the driving force of transformation does not cause alienation or distortion to the self, in other words “something changes by itself”. It also does not suggest that the “self” remains the same one after changing.

### (3). Understanding (*zhi* 知)

As mentioned in 1.3 and 1.4, *Zhuangzi* uses a large number of *yuyan* for rhetoric effects and to deliver his philosophical view. And here in the

*Commentary*, Guo uses less *yuyan*, so what is his view about the way readers get access to philosophical ideas?

First of all, sometimes Guo also uses metaphors, although he does not use metaphors as frequently as Zhuangzi. When Guo discusses about understanding knowledge, he borrows a metaphor to suggest that “if understanding something that one did not know before is to have knowledge..... (it is like) fish swim in the water, water and everything else in their sight are all their knowledge. But for fish, they may regard people’s well-known knowledge as the unknown.” (Guo 1961: 92) Zhuangzi does not use this fish metaphor in exactly the same sentence that Guo is commenting on, but later in the same passage, there is a similar metaphor in Zhuangzi’s original text, so there is a chance that Guo’s metaphor is inspired by Zhuangzi’s metaphor which says “Maoqiang and Lady Li were beautiful, but if fish saw them, they would dive to the bottom of the stream”. (Watson 2013: 15) Both metaphors introduce the limitation of the scope of one’s knowledge. In Guo’s metaphor, “fish’s perspective” serves as the secondary subject to represent the primary subject, which is the limitation of one’s scope of knowledge. He agrees on Zhuangzi’s view that there is a limit of human’s knowledge, and he uses the term “role of nature (*xingfen* 性分)” to interpret this view by arguing that the unknown is outside of the scope of one’s role of nature. When commenting on “Therefore understanding that rests in what it does not understand is the finest” (Watson 2013: 14), Guo addresses that “The unknown is all outside the role of nature, so it is the greatest to stop at what it does not know.” (Guo 1961: 88) Guo defines “role of nature” as one’s characteristics and capabilities that she is born with, and one should not be judgmental to the contrasts of different people’s roles of nature. (Guo 1961: 81) It is better if we are aware that our roles of nature can be different, and the difference does not lead to a judgmental comparisons. Before we claim that we have knowledge of something, it would be better for us to first understand our role of nature and to bear in mind that there is bound to be limit of our

knowledge which is determined by our role of nature. Guo does not specify how exactly we can understand our own nature and how we can absorb knowledge that is new to us. But at least we can infer that one's so-called "new knowledge" in daily life cannot be alien to one's nature. And one's highest knowledge is to know one's nature, hence going beyond traces. Therefore, what ordinary people regard as acquiring new knowledge should be better thought as revealing new manifestation of one's nature. A possible example is that, when one spots some contrasts between herself and others and find that she can be herself comfortably in some zones rather than others, she may come to reflect on her own talent. The way she improves herself is this interplay of reflection and spontaneous transforming with the environment. For Guo, metaphorical thinking is probably not considered as basic and essential. Rather, human nature contains a faculty of intuition that lets one grasp the pattern of things.

#### (4). Skills (*ji* 技)

When Zhuangzi discusses mastered skills, it seems that generally he has a positive attitude to those who are in possess of unspeakable but magnificent skills. And as mentioned in 1.4, in the story of Wheelwright Bian, Zhuangzi portrays Bian (who has a mastered skill but not a significant social status) as criticizing those who are rich and powerful. In the *Commentary*, Guo comments on Bian's story that "things (and people) have their own nature, and this is why teaching is not beneficial." (Guo 1961: 491) It seems that he agrees with Zhuangzi that some skills are unable to be taught (though he may not provide with the same reasons as Zhuangzi's) and those who master in a certain skill express something more advanced than simple practice, namely *dao*.<sup>62</sup> However, Guo does not uphold the contrast between those who are skillful yet come from lower class and those who hold power. If we look into

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<sup>62</sup> When commenting on Pao Ding's story, Guo suggests that "(Pao Ding) lodges *dao* and *li* (textures) in his skills, so he does not simply pursue skills." (Guo 1961: 119)

his comments on Bian's story, although he admits that Bian has a mastered skill, he does not comment on the contrast between Bian's social status and that of the duke. This is also an example of his skipping some details in a metaphor in order to make it fit his philosophical view. While Zhuangzi's skill stories have a dimension of social critique (or at least can be interpreted in this way), Guo's view, when combined with his idea of that one should already be satisfied when she has fulfilled her own nature (even if others may judge that her performance is not good enough), does not develop this dimension. When discussing how to rule a country and how to settle people by helping them find their own business, he indicates that "Skill is of the least usage" (Guo 1961: 405). He also does not encourage an appreciation of skill improvement. At the end of Chapter 19 in the *Zhuangzi*, "Dasheng" (達生, Fathoming Lives) that contains many skill stories, Guo comments that "this chapter discusses that those who know the secret of caring for life follow the property of their own nature" (Guo 1961: 666). No cultivation or skill perfection is highlighted, and while only one story mentions "nature", Guo makes a bold assertion here that all skills are just "to follow the property of their own nature". The development of skill, therefore, does not rest on training or developing a method, but letting one's nature manifest itself. It is fair to conclude that, here Guo does not value the mastered skills as much as Zhuangzi does.

In this chapter, I examined the *Commentary*'s interpretation of *yuyan* and claimed that it uses more direct language and less metaphorical language to articulate the *Zhuangzi*. Also, the interpretation involves some new concepts coined or deviated from Zhuangzi's concepts, and by using them throughout the interpretation, Guo attempts to abstract the *Zhuangzi*, constitute a systematic work for both of the original text and his own philosophical view at the same time. The *Commentary* claims to decode the implicit meaning of Zhuangzi's *yuyan*, but this should be a project viewed with caution. In the next chapter, I will state the significance of using direct language in

interpreting a polysemic text such as the *Zhuangzi*.

### Chapter 3: Implication of the *Commentary*

#### 1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the *Commentary*'s impact on readers' understanding of the *Zhuangzi*. As Guo is the one who organizes the *Zhuangzi* in the shape of a dominating version for readers, his commentary of this work is significant and well-spread. Being such an important interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*, the *Commentary* has influenced our understanding of the *Zhuangzi* in various perspectives. In section 3.2, I will discuss the impact of two features of Guo's interpretive method, namely using new concepts in direct language instead of metaphorical language, and reconstructing the *Zhuangzi* with a systematic philosophical framework that the commentator prefers. In section 3.3, I will discuss the rationale behind Guo's interpretive method, explain why the *Commentary* uses "distinction of names and patterns" to articulate the *Zhuangzi* and how it achieves the goals of shaping our understanding of the *Zhuangzi* and balancing the teaching of names and the self-so. And in the last section of this chapter, I will evaluate the plausibility of Guo's arguments in terms of whether or not he successfully strikes a balance between "the teaching of names" and "the self-so".

#### 2. How the *Commentary* Shapes Our Interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*

The *Commentary* mainly reads the *Zhuangzi* in these two methods: summarizing the *Zhuangzi* with key concepts in direct language, and reconstructing the *Zhuangzi* with a systematic philosophical framework. In this section, I discuss how Guo's methods influence readers' understanding of the *Zhuangzi*.

##### (1). Key concepts in direct language

As mentioned in 2.3, Guo introduces new concepts in the *Commentary*.

Some of these concepts were never brought up in the *Zhuangzi*, and some appeared in the *Zhuangzi* but not in the corresponding passages that Guo was commenting on. For example, *Zhuangzi* seldom uses the term “nature (*xing* 性)” in Inner Chapters, and the term is absent in the last chapter, which is supposed to be a summarization of intellectual history in Warring States period. Nevertheless, Guo constantly borrows this term to explain how everything works. In this way, when readers perceive Guo’s usage of “nature” in various paragraphs in the *Commentary*, they are led to believe that these paragraphs are inter-related and they are all about “nature”. For example, when commenting on *Xiaoyaoyou*, Guo defines that enormous birds and small birds have their own nature to fit in (Guo 1961: 5), and when a creature acts according to its nature, then, there is nothing to be ashamed of or to be overpraised. (Guo 1961: 9) Here at the very first paragraph of the first chapter, Guo seems to suggest that, in *Zhuangzi*’s metaphors, the properties of creatures described are actually their “nature”, and this suggestion is consistent throughout the whole *Commentary*. In *Xiaoyaoyou*, *Zhuangzi* does not explicitly mention “nature”, but Guo tries to convince readers that *Zhuangzi* is implicitly discussing something similar—if not completely equals to — things’ nature. Here Guo’s usage of “nature” is not necessarily a mistake, but it seems to set up a presupposition that when *Zhuangzi* brings up something’s feature, it is not just any random feature, but the thing’s nature that it should conform to. But *Zhuangzi* at most leaves it open whether the features mentioned should be regarded as things’ nature and whether nature should play a normative role. For example, in the oxen and horses example mentioned in 2.3, though it is common that oxen and horses are tamed and pierced, *Zhuangzi* does not regard this to be their “nature” or suggest that it is acceptable to treat these animals in this way. But we can see from Guo’s comment that he guides readers to consider oxen and horses’ features with the focus on their relationship with human and their roles in the world. By asking whether human beings can live without “using” oxen and horses, readers are

invited to justify the existing relationship between them and affirm their roles thereby.

This method of Guo imperceptibly shapes our understanding of the *Zhuangzi*. Quite a number of scholars introduce the *Zhuangzi* by highlighting key concepts or “propositions” of the *Zhuangzi* and discuss different passages of the *Zhuangzi* by referring to them<sup>63</sup>. Sometimes, scholars spontaneously use terms that Guo comes up with to articulate the *Zhuangzi*. For instance, Xu holds that although Zhuangzi never uses the term “nature (*xing* 性)”, when he mentions “virtue (*de* 德)” in the *Zhuangzi*, he refers to “nature”. So for Zhuangzi, “nature” and “virtue” have the same reference. (Xu 1969: 369) A similar approach is to fit the *Zhuangzi* into some philosophical categories such as “skepticism”, “relativism” or “perspectivism”. For example, Raphals<sup>64</sup> and Kjellberg<sup>65</sup> discuss about the *Zhuangzi* on his “being skeptical”; Ivanhoe discusses the debate of whether or not Zhuangzi was a “relativist” (Ivanhoe 1996: 196-214); Connolly introduces “perspectivism as a way to knowing in the *Zhuangzi*” (Connolly 2011: 487-505).

Being such an important reference, the *Commentary* does not successfully perform the function of literature in terms of its rhetoric effects. In 1.3, I have discussed the rhetoric effects of the *Zhuangzi*, namely to arouse readers’ imagination and to soothe their resistance to an alien or controversial idea. In the *Commentary*, when Guo reduces the usage of metaphorical language, his words are not as imaginative as those metaphorical discourses in the *Zhuangzi*. For Guo, this may not be problematic, as for him, it is more important for readers to understand the meaning than to appreciate the imagination conveyed by language. However, this approach apparently contradicts to Zhuangzi’s view towards language, because as mentioned in

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<sup>63</sup> Chen suggests that “Heaven and human uniting as one (*tianrenheyi*, 天人合一)” in the *Zhuangzi* is a unique “proposition” in ancient Chinese philosophy. (Chen 1992: 168)

<sup>64</sup> See *Skeptical Strategies in the Zhuangzi and Theaetetus*. (Raphals 1996: 26-30)

<sup>65</sup> See *Sextus Empiricus, Zhuangzi and Xunzi on ‘Why Be Skeptical?’* (Kjellberg 1996: 1-25)

1.4, Zhuangzi disagrees with the obsession to find the “final vocabularies” and that he does not even claim that his own words are “final answers”. But here when Guo restricts readers’ imagination by providing them with relatively determined interpretations; he does not invite readers to explore more about Zhuangzi’s ideas in a vivid way. When Billeter comments on his diverse translation of the term *dao*, he suggests that Zhuangzi never intends to direct this term to only one fixed concept. Instead, Zhuangzi uses *dao* flexibly, and he never attempts to unify those various usages of this term. (Billeter 2011: 23) The existence of many linguistic devices in the *Zhuangzi* reflects its resistance to be constrained by concepts whose meaning remains stable across different contexts. We can even say that, for Zhuangzi, literature and philosophy is one: there is no rigid distinction between serious and parodic, logical and paradoxical, as well as rational and spontaneous. Guo’s approach, on the contrary, reduces lively metaphors and experiences to logical or intuitive relationships among key concepts. Judging from contemporary academic standard, it is more philosophical, thus it sounds more authoritative. Together with Guo’s being the first known editor, the *Commentary* can be regarded as the first step to philosophize<sup>66</sup> the *Zhuangzi*.

## (2). Systematizing the *Zhuangzi*

As Guo uses various key concepts to categorize the *Zhuangzi*, eventually he leads readers to view the *Zhuangzi* in a relatively well-organized way, with different stories and discourses referring to a narrow cluster of logically related abstractions. Readers are then led to see the *Zhuangzi* as a systematic treatise about some clearly articulated themes. Those who read the original texts carefully and take its intellectual climate and social environment into account may be able to find out that Guo is not faithful to Zhuangzi’s

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<sup>66</sup> By saying “philosophize”, I mean that Guo reconstructs the *Zhuangzi* into a systematic philosophy with a few core concepts and a clear theme, which is the blending of studying (or learning) of sagehood and spontaneity.

intended meaning, at least not to the corresponding textual meaning that Guo comments on.<sup>67</sup> For example, as mentioned in 2.2, Ziporyn and Tang have found that Guo's meaning deviates from Zhuangzi's original meaning. However, even if readers may be aware that the content of Guo's interpretation is not faithful to the *Zhuangzi*, they may still be imperceptibly influenced to borrow the form of Guo's method. For example, Mou uses Guo's and Xiang Xiu's terms to refer back to Zhuangzi's ideas. He uses terms such as “*ming* 冥” to articulate Zhuangzi's “wandering” while these terms are generated from Guo's work, not directly quoted from Zhuangzi's original texts. (Mou 1962: 91)

Guo demonstrates a method of interpretation by which a commentator can impose her own view while appearing innocent, as the commentator can choose which parts of the original text can be merged, twisted or neglected. As a result, Guo does not only appropriate Zhuangzi for his own philosophical view, but also initiate a tradition of reconstructing the *Zhuangzi* in order to understand it within commentators' own framework. The fact that most of us simply take the Inner-Outer-Miscellaneous distinction for granted already reflects Guo's influence. A dominant way of interpreting the *Zhuangzi* is finding out its implicit “system”. For example, Liu regards the *Zhuangzi* as a philosophical system with various perspectives, and these perspectives can be viewed as an organic unity, so the *Zhuangzi*'s system is relatively mature. (Liu 1988: 200) Even the *Zhuangzi*'s language is regarded to have a “model”, for example Allinson's interpretation of Zhuangzi's metaphors is criticized by Chong as being influenced by “a certain metaphorical model”, and this model is “not the metaphorical milieu that

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<sup>67</sup> Even as for Chen who argues that Guo is faithful to the *Zhuangzi*'s original meaning, he admits that Guo is not faithful to the textual meaning of the corresponding original texts he is commenting on. Chen justifies Guo's deviation from Zhuangzi's intended meaning by claiming that if we examine the *Commentary* as a whole, for example, if one relates Guo's interpretation to other passages of the original texts, not just to the one Guo is commenting on, she may find that the comments are not that alien to the original texts. (Chen 2014: 380) This, however, depends on how one attains a holistic understanding of the original text in the first place.

sustains Zhuangzi” (Chong 2006: 381). While the systematizing approach might be common and appropriate for reading other classics, it faces great difficulty for reading the *Zhuangzi*, as it fails to preserve the indeterminacy in Zhuangzi’s philosophical views. For Zhuangzi, a systematic discourse is a target of doubt, because we cannot guarantee that our categories and distinctions can be fixed once and for all.

The method of using key concepts as cornerstones and systematizing a text is reviewed recently. Liu comes to believe that it is problematic to use certain frameworks to analyze Chinese Philosophy, especially in Daoism that criticizes the very practice of labeling. Scholars may sometimes think that Chinese philosophy does not make any sense, but it is because that the various layers of meaning are not to be simply labeled. (Liu 2006: 36-38) Liu takes the interpretation of the *Laozi* to demonstrate the inadequacy of analyzing Chinese philosophy with a framework of western philosophy. However, even within the Chinese tradition, Guo’s approach of commenting on the *Zhuangzi* may generate a number of problems as discussed so far. The use of key concepts as cornerstones can generate debates that do not benefit our understanding of the *Zhuangzi*, because the key concepts themselves wait to be interpreted as much as what they are used to interpret. If we wish to resolve disagreements of interpretations, we should commit to evidence matters in the textual analysis of a text by focusing on textual analysis about the original one, and only minimally to the present concerns and conceptions of ourselves. (Shun 2009: 458-460)

### 3. Anti-scholastic Method

The Wei-Jin era is often regarded as being rebellious against scholarship in Han Dynasty. The scholastic method, namely to read classics with the basis of textual and philological analysis, is what Wei-Jin thinkers want to bypass. A prominent figure in Han Dynasty is Dong Zhongshu, who is an iconic scholar that defines the most significant features of intellectual history of Han Dynasty. (Xu 1975 vol.2 : 178) Before Dong, scholars have already based

their works on an inheritance of pre-Qin works. However, Xu holds that their interpretation is so faithful that it seems that they do not develop many unique or pioneering insights from reading the pre-Qin texts, and it is even difficult to highlight any significant features or properties in their arguments. Dong's work, on the contrary, succeeds in generating a philosophical framework that is unique to his time, namely to use "heaven (*tian* 天)" as the most significant connection of all. (Xu 1975 vol.2: 93, 178) Precision of philological analysis is also a significant basis of Dong's work, and he fits the analysis in his framework of philosophy of "heaven". One of the significant features of Dong's work, according to Xu, is that he inherits and develops the idea of "rectification of names" (*zhengming* 正名). This idea has already existed in pre-Qin, as for example, Confucian insists that when articulating history and literature, one should strive for a precise textual and propriety-proper analysis. And in Han Dynasty, scholars follow this approach to analyze words in precise details, to mull over the meaning of each word, phrase and sentence in order to articulate the authors' intended meaning behind (Xu 1975 vol.2 : 208), which is the practice of seeking "important meaning of subtle words" (*weiyandayi* 微言大義).

Before Guo, scholars such as Wang Bi, Ji Kang have followed a trend of "understanding the meaning and forgetting about the words" (*deyiwangyan* 得意忘言), namely when they examine texts, the philological analysis is not necessarily important once readers have acquired the textual meaning according to its contexts and usage. This goes against the "important meaning of subtle words" mentioned above and downplays the need for one to follow the authority of tradition or imperial teachings. It constitutes to the lifestyle of Wei-Jin thinkers in general: they do not need to seek to establish a formal school or curriculum, and they do not need to consult orthodox commentaries of texts. When Guo comments on the *Zhuangzi*, he argues that he demonstrates a method of "lodging an outside meaning in language" (*jiyanchuyi* 寄言出意), which is similar to "understanding the meaning and

forgetting about the words” in terms of how the methods work even though they may have different emphasis and reasons behind. (Tang 1999: 91-93) His method echoes to the “distinction of names and patterns” of Wei-Jin Profound Studies, which is quite different from the tradition of Han Dynasty. “Patterns” (*li* 理) of sage’s teachings are supposed to be grasped not by philology or the observation of nature according to heaven’s imperative, but by intuition and logical analysis. In pre-Qin and Han Dynasty, *li* is not that significant for scholars to discuss, at least it is not as attention-drawing as *dao*. Even when it shows up, it does not carry the mystic, intuitive tone as in Wei-Jin period. Generally, things’ nature/pattern in Wei-Jin Profound Studies is relatively abstract as it does not specifically refer to something’s patterns. It is pure in the sense of not being tainted by clumsy use of language, including textual analysis.

There is another dimension in which Wei-Jin period is different from Han Dynasty. Note that Dong’s application of rectification of names also emphasizes the connection between a name and the power it gains under heaven as well. As he conclusively highlights that “heaven” is the core and highest of all, his system is easily connected to a ruling system in which the power is unified to the ruler. Whether or not it is Dong’s intention to use his thoughts to promote the ruling system, his philosophy is constantly believed to be a tool for despotic power that is endorsed by the authority. (Xu 1975 vol.2: 177-179) Later on, when the Empire collapses, the systematic Imperial Confucianism is cast into doubt and Wei-Jin thinkers no longer value Confucianism over Taoism as Dong suggests. Instead, they pay more attention back to the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* (Xu 1992: 20-21), since they talk about ways for people to transcend mundane or even corrupted politics. Instead of struggling to decide which one to choose from Confucianism and Taoism, Guo Xiang and Xiang Xiu hold that these two schools are equal, as Confucianism is Taoism, and that teaching of names (which represents Confucianism) and the self-so (which represents Taoism) should be

combined. They seem to suggest that it is not self-contradictory to act in accordance of the core ideas of these two schools, because we can treasure our life associated to the society as Confucians suggest, while maintaining an inner peace as Taoists suggest. (Xu 1992: 28-29) Guo does not live a recluse life. Instead, he works in office, pursues fame and power (Tang 1999: 2). For Guo, as mentioned in 2.2, balancing the practices of these two schools is his ideal approach of doing philosophy, and he also attempts to maintain this method when interpreting the *Zhuangzi*. Whether or not he succeeds in doing so in the *Commentary* will be further discussed in 3.5. Here, it is reasonable to judge that generally, Guo follows the interpretive tradition of his time.

#### 4. The Balance of “the Teaching of Names (*mingjiao* 名教)” and “the Self-so (*ziran* 自然)”

As mentioned in 2.2 and 3.3, “the teaching of names” is about the order and rituals of society and it is associated with Confucianism, while “the self-so” is the state of spontaneity associated with the *Zhuangzi*. Guo strives for balancing these two not only because he does not want to value the self-so over Confucianism too much, as he prefers to promote a spirit that is not too carefree and boundless, especially not boundless enough to include anything “non-exist” such as an origin of all things. Guo’s move involves two aspects: first, in terms of style he articulates the *Zhuangzi* by decoding the metaphors and removing *Zhuangzi*’s self-contradictions. Second, in terms of content he mitigates the criticism towards Confucian moral codes and exemplars, renders them to be merely traces (*ji* 跡). He also emphasizes that sages’ engaging in social affairs is spontaneous just like swimming or walking. We have already seen from his interpretation of sages that “sage” is only a name for those who get their nature,<sup>68</sup> and that even when they are involved in the society, they can still find their inner peace. (Guo 1961: 28) As mentioned in 2.3,

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<sup>68</sup> See 2.3 (Guo 1961: 22).

according to Guo, “that which gives rise to trace” (*suoyiji* 所以跡) is “nature” (*xing* 性). As mentioned in 3.2.1, when Guo articulates “nature” by addressing that it exists within someone, and that whatever someone’s nature is, conforming to nature gives one peace and preserves one’s spontaneity, even if that “nature” is apparently imposed by human rituals and practices (such as taming oxen and horses).

Wang argues that Guo’s approach such as justifying that things act within their role of nature is acceptable, which may potentially lead to the result that we should simply accept the existence and development of things in reality, regardless of the fact that some of them are inherently cruel and unacceptable. (Wang 2007: 160) The practice that some animals can be used by humans because of their nature can be extended to justify that some humans can be used by others because of their nature too. This is problematic not because it sounds immoral (after all, Zhuangzi and Guo are often regarded as speaking amorally), but because it takes away the liberating aspect of spontaneity. In the “dying fish in dried-up springs” metaphor I mentioned in 1.2, one reading is that the fish are supposed to forget each other in the ocean rather than helping each other. While this is not the only possible reading and it does not forbid using others *per se*, it nevertheless suggests that crossing over others is a sign of degeneration. Guo’s view does not seem to favor this reading.

Chen argues against Wang’s idea by addressing that when introducing the term “role of nature”, Guo does not intend to promote inequality by classifying different people in regarding to their role of nature. Instead, Guo simply intends to suggest that everyone has her own gift and nature, and she should cling to them. If everyone is aware of her own gift and stick to it, the society can be relatively equal and well-functioned. (Chen 2014: 359) Both of Wang’s and Chen’s inference of Guo’s intention seem to be two petals of the same flower that represent different perspectives of Guo’s philosophical view, but if we examine their textual evidence, it is obvious that we can find more strong evidence to support Wang’s view rather than Chen’s. As elaborated in

2.3, in the *Commentary*, Guo has stated that it is oxen's and horses' destiny to be pierced, and this true-self lies within their role of nature. (Guo 1961: 591)

Here, apparently, Guo does not refer the "role of nature" as one's "gift" that she would be satisfied with and develop as a free choice as Chen suggests. Rather, it fits in Wang's criticism of Guo, namely justifying inequality by naming it "the role of nature". Chen raises another example as supporting evidence, which is Guo's classification of monarch and his officials, suggesting that someone is born to be qualified to be the monarch and some are bound to be officials subject to his domination. And Chen claims that this example shows how Guo promotes the equality of society. (Chen 2014: 359) However, in my view, the "monarch and officials" example actually supports Wang's view that Guo justifies inequality with role of nature, and this is not something put forward by Zhuangzi. This is because it implies that people can be classified not according to contextual needs and requirements, but their own nature. So here, the textual evidence Chen provides fails to support his defense for Guo. In fact, there is plenty of textual evidence in the *Commentary* showing that when Guo tries to articulate "role of nature", he inevitably classifies people or other living creatures, and this is simply the method that Zhuangzi would avoid, for it would restrict our vision by making us observe everything within a certain scope or limited perspectives, and it fails to help us embrace the ever-transformation and free spirit of everything that Zhuangzi promotes.

Guo could justify this reading by arguing that this is Zhuangzi's idea of "equalizing all things": if all things are equal, then there is no fundamental difference between an officer and a peasant, or a ritualized person and a non-ritualized one. Under this view, all Confucian practices do not stand in contrast to spontaneity, because they can all be carried out spontaneously, hence their equality. The *Commentary* can then claim that the teaching of names is self-so all the way. However, there is another possibility of interpreting the idea of "equalizing all things". Although Zhuangzi sometimes

seems to be judgmental to different practices, this is balanced by his recognition that his words are not final vocabularies. His arguing for or against a particular position is always accompanied by a possibility of playfulness or mockery. In this way, readers are not presented directly with a view that says all things are equal, but their identification with any position (i.e. any tendency of inequality) is compensated by the attitude of detachment from the possibility just mentioned. Chong considers Zhuangzi's goblet words (which for him are metaphors) as helping one to empty her heart-mind by taking a particular distinction (good/bad, right/wrong, true/false, etc.) and through an outpouring of paradoxes and infinite regresses (Chong 2016: 109-110). Chong holds that in this way, Zhuangzi can say something when it is possible that he says nothing (as he takes paradoxes similar to "this sentence is false"). As a result, readers can choose to agree or disagree with Zhuangzi, and Zhuangzi empties their mind by not addressing a fixed perspective. In this sense they are active when reading. Therefore, one cannot claim that Zhuangzi's occasional judgmental tone can be done away as one focuses on equalizing all things, because the tone empowers readers to extract meaning from the original texts by themselves across different contexts. When Guo tries to balance the teaching of names and self-so within a framework that he constructs for interpreting the *Zhuangzi*, he passes over this transforming effect. Besides, the move of systematizing the *Zhuangzi* may already give an advantage to the side of "the teaching of names". The idea that a text represents an order and contains a blueprint for assigning roles of things in the world is deeply Confucian.

When Guo is balancing, he has to sift out some features of both sides in order to reconcile them. It is acceptable if he chooses to omit something less important, however, in changing the style of presentation he also deviates from Zhuangzi's spirit of being carefree and critical. This may look like a slight altering but it may greatly reduce the transforming effect on engaging readers. In this sense, he unexpectedly distances readers from reading the

original text spontaneously. Reading the *Commentary*, therefore, does not give readers the same experience, even if there is significant overlapping in the content.

### Conclusion

In my thesis, I compare Zhuangzi's view of metaphor to that of the *Commentary*, as well as analyze why the *Commentary* holds a different view from Zhuangzi, and how the difference shapes our understanding of the original text.

Zhuangzi uses *yuyan* for its rhetoric power, to make readers perceive ideas in a vivid way, and to empower them with freedom of imagination. It also helps Zhuangzi to play through different positions without arousing too much agitation from readers. It expresses Zhuangzi's philosophical view and preserves indeterminacy, such that Zhuangzi can present his own idea without asserting that he gives the last word. The use of *yuyan* also echoes a main theme in pre-Qin thought: that metaphorical thinking constitutes human understanding, in particular when one wants to learn unfamiliar abstract concepts.

*Yuyan* also helps readers to detach from the obsession of classifying everything into fixed categories. In reading the *Zhuangzi*, although readers are provided with hints and the structural constraints of metaphors, it is hard to decode and fix their meaning, and there are always rooms for new interpretations.

One may state an objection to Zhuangzi's metaphorical approach and my emphasis on indeterminacy, namely that these cause confusion and eventually create a gap between the original text and all of its commentaries. Camp has pointed out that a drawback of people raising metaphorical discourses as examples to support the theories she wishes to articulate, that is, as there are countless metaphors and they are in different kinds, with some being common and familiar while others are cryptic, raising the risk that the different parties

will simply talk past one another. (Camp 2008: 4-5) People may choose the sort of metaphors that fit their theories and omit the others, not just because they tend to select metaphors that are suitable to be evidence to support their own theories, but also because it is hardly possible to discuss all possible sorts of metaphors when people can constantly compose new kind of metaphors. New metaphors may be used as counter-examples to refute existing theories, and it is controversial whether readers' imagination provoked by the metaphor distorts the original message. While not advocating a particular theory of metaphors, I do not deny that the emphasis on indeterminacy and using metaphors contains risk of understanding. However, it is precisely the detachment from ordinary discourses can let us reflect on its boundaries and its value compared to more fluctuated discourses. A metaphor is like a flower, and different interpretations are like different petals. Although they may seem to be contradictory, they may be generated from the same flower. The *Zhuangzi* is like a garden with many beautiful flowers, and people constantly pick up petals of different flowers, but nobody is capable to have the knowledge of the whole picture of the garden.

The *Commentary* uses more direct language to decode the *Zhuangzi* and claim to get the real meaning of the original text. Guo also introduces a new method to interpret the *Zhuangzi*, one that is inspired by his era, namely "distinction of names and analysis of patterns". When this is supposed to replace the scholastic method in Han Dynasty by intuition and more abstract logical analysis, Guo also introduces new concepts that deviate from *Zhuangzi*'s intended meaning in order to pursue his philosophical agenda. His philosophical view is different from *Zhuangzi*'s, not only because he does not highlight the role of metaphor in human cognition, but also because he strives to provide a systematic philosophy that balances different schools, and subsequently focuses on self-sufficiency of things.

The *Commentary*'s attempt to "reconstruct" the *Zhuangzi* systematically with highlighting key concepts, and to grasp *Zhuangzi*'s general spirits and

impression instead of caring too much about philological analysis, has shaped people's understanding of the *Zhuangzi*. Not only those who are in favor of Guo's interpretation, but also some of those who oppose to Guo's interpretive styles share his methods and adopt their attitude towards interpretation accordingly. Nevertheless, it might be useful to be aware of Guo's interpretation and his method when reading the *Zhuangzi*, not because we must reject a "wrong" interpretation in order to get a "right" one, but because our understanding can be deepened if we can stand in guard against unwarranted assumptions. These assumptions influence not only our understanding of the *Zhuangzi*, but also its social impact and relationship between other schools. It is in the spirit of the *Zhuangzi* to allow different interpretations, yet it is also in the spirit of the *Zhuangzi* that we do not take for granted even the authority established by its first commentator.

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