Chuang-Tzu

FOR SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

An Analysis of the Inner Chapters

ROBERT E. ALLINSON

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Foreword

Studies of Chuang Tzu in English have reached gratifying standards of quality and quantity. Two recent books by Wu Kuang-ming and an issue of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (13/4) are evidence of this. The present outstanding volume by Robert Allinson builds on those studies and initiates a new direction.

Professor Allinson builds on the earlier work, especially that of Wu, by accepting the interpretation that Chuang Tzu used language metaphorically and elliptically to evoke an existential response, a response that cannot be commanded by direct imperatives or elicited by plain normative description. His new direction for understanding Chuang Tzu is his comprehensive and detailed argument that Chuang Tzu was advocating an ideal of sageliness. Whereas many interpreters have claimed that Chuang Tzu used his metaphorical language to defend a relativism, Allinson shows with convincing mastery that Chuang Tzu had a position, namely, the importance of achieving the ideal of sageliness.

To make his point, Professor Allinson has not only to examine the relevant texts and comment on the other major interpreters. He has also to relate his line of argument to a theory of hermeneutics. In so doing, he brings the discussion of Chuang Tzu into the heart of contemporary Western philosophy. Furthermore, his interpretation of Chuang Tzu makes the sage thoroughly intelligible to a Western audience, not an inscrutable oriental with a perverse use of language but a spiritual philosopher closer to Augustine than to masters of the Zen kōan.

Professor Allinson's book, like his many articles, thus contributes to the growing body of literature that is creating an effective dialogue between Chinese and Western philosophy. Such a dialogue cannot take place on the ground determined by either side. It must be a new creation resulting from a long process of interpretation back and forth. The sophistication of this book demonstrates that the dialogue has worked and that we are in a new era of substantive comparative philosophy.

Some Westerners, lamenting the decline of popular appreciation of the classics of European thought, dismiss comparative philosophy

as constrained to take the worst of both worlds. This is historically shortsighted. Early Christian thought, for instance, was comparative philosophy, combining Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Greek traditions. Early modern philosophy arose from a comparative base of scholasticism and humanistic science. The reality of our own world is that the Western traditions have encountered the Chinese and Indian, and sophistication with regard to any requires sophistication with regard to all. Professor Allinson's book contributes to that sophistication.

Like his earlier papers on Taoism, this book of Allinson's takes Taoist thinking to be a world-philosophy, on a par with that of Plato and Aristotle. His techniques of analysis have come mainly from the styles of thought honed in the Western tradition. But he has subjected those techniques to tutelage from the Taoist texts themselves, sensitizing them to East Asian ways of thinking. The result is a monograph accessible to Western philosophers on their own terms, but sensitive to the inner workings of Chuang Tzu's text and style of thought. This is a model of straightforward philosophical analysis that engages a classic too often thought to be too opaque for critical study.

"Becoming a sage" is a soteriological theme, and it occurs frequently in many kinds of Chinese thought, Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist. Modern Western philosophy, by contrast, rather sharply distinguishes analytical philosophy from soteriological religion, and the roots of that distinction go back to the medieval period when thinkers who were both analytically philosophical and religiously concerned for salvation emphasized a distinction between natural reason (philosophy) and revealed faith (religion). The distinction between reason and faith does not occur in anything like that form in Chinese thinking. As a consequence of this situation, many Western philosophers dismiss Chuang Tzu with the other Chinese philosophers as mere religious thinkers.

Paradoxically, part of the uniqueness of Chuang Tzu is that he, of all people, dismisses the immediacy of both faith and reason. Every commitment is turned around, relativized, and made ironic. Even more than Nietzsche, Chuang Tzu was a secular philosopher, and therefore more telling for our secular age in discussions of the soteriological warrant of sagehood. Allinson points up the demystified and demythologized relevance of Chuang Tzu. In so doing, he also makes a substantial contribution to the philosophy of religion.

It is my very great pleasure to introduce this volume, a treat both of scholarship and imaginative argument.

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Preface

The *Chuang-Tzu* is a treasure trove of philosophic wisdom. At the same time, it is a most obscure work. There is no apparent linear development of philosophical argument. In addition, many of its internal passages seem to be non sequiturs from each other. To make matters worse, it is replete with internal passages which are themselves so obscure that they defy any kind of rational analysis. And the whole of it is cast in such a literary mold that it may discourage the reader from ferreting out any philosophical theme.

In this work, I hope to accomplish at least two ends. First, I have endeavored to set out one major philosophical task with which the work as a whole is concerned: this is the task of self-transformation. Secondly, I have endeavored to show that the disconnectedness of the text and the highly oblique literary form of the text have a systematic correlation with the technical means of accomplishing the goal of self-transformation.

In order to accomplish the goals which I have set out, I have had to devote considerable space to demonstrating that the text is not a relativistic tract. The view that the *Chuang-Tzu* is a work of relativism has, in my opinion, prevented scholars from attempting to penetrate to a core philosophic aim that is present in the text and at the same time has prevented an analysis of the systematic methodology to be found in the text.

All in all, one might say that I have attempted to bring out a hidden logic in the text. To this end, I may be accused by some of logicizing the text. Against this accusation, I will have to allow my arguments to stand by themselves. It is not that I think that the text is simply a systematic strategy for achieving the goals of self-transformation. I think, however, that there is a method in the apparent madness of the text.

What other choices do we have? Some might adopt a middle course and argue that a self-transformation theme exists alongside the relativistic theme; some might argue that one theme is emphasized as the major theme; others might argue that the other is more major. The

problem with this approach is that the two themes—if we wish to argue that the text contains both—are not wholly consonant with each other. In fact, unless we can specify what relation they bear to each other, they contradict each other and cancel each other out. In this case, instead of having two themes, we have none.

The other major option is to refuse to consider any central textual focus and treat the text as an historical collection of different viewpoints, most probably composed by diverse authors, and thus relieving oneself of the responsibility of alleging that either there is any central theme or that whatever themes can be found have to cohere with each other. In this instance, the text becomes valued more as a collection of literary vignettes and philosophical drolleries to be relished as one might savour an historical literary antique for its turn of phrase and its capacity to represent the existing philosophical viewpoints existent at the time of its composition.

It seems to me, that regardless of the fact of multiple composition and brilliant flights of literary invention, that there is a core meaning structure to be found in the text which reveals a direct connection between the relativistic seeming statements and the consistent *nisus* towards self-transformation. Whether or not this is blurred and distorted by the multiple authorship, it seems undeniable that it exists especially within the framework of the genuine, inner chapters. Therefore, I have taken the text as it stands as a philosophical work to be examined in its own right and on its own merits quite apart from the questions of multiple authorship or whether the views represented are ones which can be found in various historical schools of philosophy at the time. By doing this, we can, in fact, discover a *Chuang-Tzu* which exhibits a step by step, coherent argument structure consisting of sophisticated techniques to effect a transformation of consciousness on the part of the reader. It is the purpose of this work to show the unity and the coherence of the inner chapters of the *Chuang-Tzu* are such that it deserves to be examined as a philosophical work and an artistic masterpiece of the first order in which form and content are interwoven thematically just as one finds in Plato's *Symposium*. It is hoped that this work can serve as a contribution to the development of the same systematic study of texts in Chinese philosophy as one is accustomed to find in Western philosophy.

What is more, the techniques of textual interpretation introduced here for the first time can also apply to the art of interpreting and commenting upon Western philosophical texts as well as Chinese ones. Definitions and comparative definitions of myth, legend, archetype, paradox and others introduced here are of relevance for Literary criticism and the study of world literature in general. This book is there-

fore also offered as a work in cross-cultural philosophical and literary hermeneutics which can have value for the general reader in addition to the philosopher and those interested in Chinese philosophy and Chuang Tzu.

practices. It does not imply a supreme being or worship in any prescribed form, nor does it point to the authority of any particular revealed scripture. It is also unlike religious transformation if by religious transformation one has in mind the model of religious conversion. Spiritual transformation does not require a belief in any set of ideas such as a particular manifestation of a deity or a set of doctrines concerning the soul or an afterlife or even a code of ethical practices. In addition, spiritual transformation is unlike conversion because it is not basically a deep-seated emotional experience.

Spiritual transformation is perhaps best likened to a change in one's level of consciousness. It is an experience one undergoes which is transforming of one's personality and one's perspective. One sees in a different way than one saw before the transformation. It is not so much a change in a particular belief or viewpoint as it is a change which takes one beyond all viewpoints. The attitude of one's mind is altered, hence the term spiritual transformation.

How does spiritual transformation relate to or differ from mystical transformation? Spiritual transformation is unlike mystical transformation, because there is no sense of becoming one with the cosmos. One does not lose one's identity in some kind of undifferentiated unification with the all. Such a state in which all distinctions vanish is what Hegel criticized Schelling as endorsing (Schelling's night in which all cows are black). If one means by mystical transformation a state in which all distinctions merge with all others, then the state of spiritual transformation is by no means a state of mystical transformation.

Spiritual transformation is also unlike mystical transformation because there is no special, secret knowledge which one must learn or to which only a special and select group of initiates is privy. The state of spiritual transformation which is the core message of the *Chuang-Tzu* is equally available to all and is not dependent upon either the special understanding of hidden truths or the special practice of certain exercises, techniques of breathing, or meditation.

Spiritual transformation is unlike philosophical explanation, because it is not a deduction from a previously accepted premise. In this sense, because it is not a logical deduction, it may be said not to be an intellectual act. It is noetic, but it is not intellectual. It is perhaps best likened to the experience of sudden insight, the "aha" experience in which we suddenly understand something which we previously could not fathom. In this case, however, the "aha" experience is not an understanding of one particular resistant problem but a sudden understanding of how one's whole thinking process had been misdirected. In philosophical language it is an awakening from one's dogmatic slumbers.

Spiritual transformation is unlike psychological insight because it is at once broader than and inclusive of psychological insight. It shares in common with psychological insight the feeling of freedom from what had been previously burdening one. It differs from psychological insight in that it does not refer to any particular piece of self-knowledge which had been constricting one's vision. Rather, it refers to the mind's freedom from any and all mental blocks. In addition, spiritual transformation differs from psychological insight in that it does not simply remove emotional blocks, which owe their origins to emotional conflicts, but removes an entire mental block, much as a writer might suddenly become free from a writer's block.

A further distinction to be drawn between spiritual transformation and psychological insight is that spiritual transformation is in no way reducible to some observable, empirical process. What occurs in the process of spiritual transformation may have some psycho-physical parallels, but what is relevant here is the validity of the viewpoint that is obtained by the transformation and not the measuring of whatever accompanying brain-wave patterns there may be.

It could be argued that I am interpreting the text of the *Chuang-Tzu* as if it were one lengthy, extended kōan in the literature of Zen. While such an argument is of necessity historically backwards, since Zen (or Ch'an) arises much later in history, there is some justice to the argument that I am interpreting the fragments that make up the *corpus* of the *Chuang-Tzu* as an extended kōan or series of kōans. Since Zen has been argued to be the legitimate heir of Taoism, it would not be surprising to find that certain characteristics of the child were to be found in the genetic make-up of the parent.[2]

The *Chuang-Tzu* is, however, not merely one long, extended kōan (or series of kōans), since it also engages in philosophical argument. In addition, the text as a whole may be taken as a chart of spiritual progress. The literary conceits and linguistic techniques which make up the text of the *Chuang-Tzu* seem systematically and artfully arranged both to indicate the different levels of spiritual development which lie before us and to show which linguistic devices are appropriately applied to these differing and ascending levels. While the *Chuang-Tzu* is, to be sure, a textual kōan, it is at the same time much more.

If we do not choose to approach the literary bones of the text in the manner of a contemporary oracle-literary bone reader, so as to perceive the intricate patterning of wisecracks and complex configurations that demonstrate to us both that the text is a riddle and that the riddle possesses an answer, then what other options for textual interpretation or commentary are open to us? In A. C. Graham's *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: 1981), as with his work as a whole,

e.g., *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Singapore: 1986), we find the text of the *Chuang-Tzu* divided up with respect to possible or probable differing authorship by varying philosophical schools. This approach, in a broad manner of speaking, may be taken as representing a sophisticated extension of an historian of religions' approach to ancient texts.[4] Such an approach, while possessing a strong degree of historical accuracy, makes it difficult if not impossible to analyze the text as a single line of philosophical development which aims at inducing as well as describing different levels of spiritual development.

The problem with the history of religions' approach to a text in A. C. Graham's sophisticated development (which has more in common with comparative religion than with the history of religions narrowly construed) is that one is tempted to look for textual contradictions as representing the viewpoint of differing historical schools, rather than considering the possibility that contradictions are part and parcel of a general, systematic textual theme. The tendency not to come to grips with thematic (rather than comparative) bases for contradictions can even influence one's reading of the inner chapters (which are agreed to be the works of one author), as we will see when we examine Graham's treatment of the butterfly and the Great Sage dream anecdotes.

If several passages from different chapters, or even within the same chapter, contradict each other, then one whose commentary format is fashioned after the history of religions' approach can easily explain away such contradictions as being the result of authorship by different writers. The end-result of such an approach is that we miss an intratextual systematic connectedness in which certain contradictions form part of a series of related strategies.

If we accept the history of religions' approach we not only weaken the possibility of finding an overall textual theme, but moreover we are left with a congeries of assorted sayings which at best possess a certain historical value and a sampling of literary flights which at best satisfy an aesthetic palate. Whatever is left over can be lumped together in the general conceptual wastebasket known as "mysticism" by the reader who is already predisposed in this direction. Such a categorization automatically exempts any refractory passages from conceptual analysis, since they are (*ex hypothesi*) designed only to confuse the reader who does not possess the requisite mystical knowledge to know at once to what they refer; they can be dismissed as a secret language which is understood only by those who have been instructed in the special meaning of the passages. From an historian of religion's standpoint, the statements to be found within the *Chuang-Tzu* either would be penned by different hands or would be of purely antiquarian or

literary value. Whatever statements are left over would make up a private language for certain privileged mystical cognoscenti.

In seeing the text both as a manual to and a description of the process of spiritual transformation, I am assuming that there is a single, major theme that is to be found in the text and that the varying types of statements that one finds in the text all relate in various ways to the development of this theme. Whether or not the text is by a single hand (and it assuredly is not), the point is that the text can be construed and has a history of being construed as a philosophical text which is part of a philosophical tradition. The notion that the text has a single theme is, of course, strongly qualified by the selection of what is considered to be authentic and inauthentic material. The major criterion for authenticity is how close the material comes, both in form and in content, to reflecting and amplifying the major theme that is outlined in the first seven chapters. Thus, it does not matter greatly, in the end, that some of the material has been put together by later disciples of Chuang Chou any more than it matters greatly that all of Aristotle's works are taken from lecture notes by his students. The criterion of authenticity lies more with coherence with the core message of the inner chapters than with anything else.

In a word, our starting and finishing point is the text and not the "real meaning intended by the author." Since we have no access to the intentions of the author (and in any event this would be at best a kind of psychological anthropology), what we do have and what we can work with is the text at hand. The attempt to discover the "real intentions" of the author may be likened to the attempt to employ methods borrowed from the psychologist, the literary biographer and the historian to figure out what Shakespeare "really meant" in Hamlet's soliloquy rather than attending to the written text before us.

If we can discover a major theme that seems to be the over-all thematic governing principle of the text, then our task will be to see how the various portions of the text function so as to communicate the different aspects of this theme. The major objective of the text is to facilitate and to describe spiritual transformation. The accent is equally on what one is transformed *from* and what one is transformed *to*. One is transformed from the mental prison of differing and competing conceptual belief systems, but this does not imply that one is transformed to some kind of skeptical relativism. Rather, the mind is opened so that one can act from a higher level of mentation which, as is argued below in detail, is an epistemologically superior framework.

What I have singled out for special treatment in what is to follow is the unique functioning of literary forms and anecdotal arguments in bringing about the special kind of transformation that then becomes

the object of philosophical understanding and discussion. I would like to add one caveat. In the course of my argument, I have made free use of metaphorical language such as the "right hemisphere of the brain." I would ask the reader to distinguish my use of language from the use of such brain-talk as might appear in the language of cognitive psychologists. In the end, cognitive psychologists might be interested in reducing all mental acts to brain functions, but this is not at all my interest or intention. The aspect of transformation in which I am interested is the purely mental aspect, and this aspect has no physical referent. It may be possible to trace some physical correlate but this would be more of an epiphenomenon than a cause of the mental change. Therefore, that with which the *Chuang-Tzu* is concerned is not that which could be induced by purely physical means, such as stimulating different areas of the brain by implanting electrodes. The purely physicalistic or reductionistic hypothesis assumes that understanding mental concepts plays no special role in the process of transformation. But from a philosophical point of view, one is interested in the superiority of the viewpoint that is obtained after the transformation—a superiority which cannot be attested to by pointing at which neurons have been activated.

In order to persuade the reader to examine the text as a work invoking spiritual transformation, I have had to remove one very restrictive preconception which has proved highly successful in making the text resistant to such an analysis, namely, that when everything is said and done, the bottom line of *Chuang-Tzu* interpretation is that Chuang Tzu is a relativist. If this is the attitude with which one approaches the text, there is a disincentive to burrow beneath the surface material of the text in order to spell out the strategic functioning of the seemingly contradictory bits and pieces that make up the corpus of the *Chuang-Tzu*. If I am successful in convincing the reader that the text is not simply a relativistic *tour de passe passe*, then he or she may be disposed to follow out my plan of how the text works transformatively. My interest has largely been to expose the watch works that lie behind the watch face of the display. Such an exposure is not, to be sure, required in order to tell the time. The work can function as a transformatory work even if one is not aware of the techniques which are being employed to bring about the transformation. However, one must at least be open to the possibility that the text is not a relativistic *divertissement* of relativism before one is ready to allow it to function as a transformative text.

I must also ask the reader to understand that certain technical terms in the *Chuang-Tzu* (just as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) are not always used in the same sense. The Chinese term 'hwa' (化), which is translated as 'transformation,' is used in the *Chuang-Tzu* in some contexts to refer to the worldly transformation of things. However, as I

work known to me, in any language. Its authors included some of the keenest minds the world has known."[5]

In the course of what follows, I hope to offer sufficient logical and textual grounds to convince the reader that the *Chuang-Tzu* is not a relativistic text. With respect to logical grounds, I will argue that Chuang-Tzu cannot extend the relativistic thesis to language without leaving himself without any means of communicating whatsoever. With respect to textual grounds, I will offer both indirect and direct textual evidence to support my claim that the *Chuang-Tzu* is not an exercise in relativism.

I would like to commence my discussion of relativism by focussing on the question of linguistic meaningfulness or meaninglessness. If language is relativistic with regard to meaning, then any word can mean anything at all, which means that all language is infinitely equivocal. Equivocity extended infinitely in all directions is in no way distinct from utter unintelligibility. The existence of some meaning is dependent upon the fixity of the medium of communication. We could not even state the thesis of relativism comprehensibly unless the words we employed possessed some significance. Significance in language is dependent upon some degree of fixity of meaning. In fine, no form of relativism can even be advanced unless language itself is, to some extent, non-relative.

In the famous second chapter of the *Chuang-Tzu*, *"Ch'i Wu Lun,"* "A Discussion on the Equality of Things,"[6] the question of the meaningfulness or the meaninglessness of speech, whether oral or written, is raised in a highly poetic form:

> 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?[7]

The question which is being raised is, is there a difference between speech and the chirping of birds, or is there no difference at all? Simply understood, the analogy would appear to be forcing a choice between all or some language being meaningful and all language being meaningless. All that is required for language to be unlike the chirping of birds is that some language would be meaningful, not that all language would have to be meaningful.

If we presuppose for the moment that the *Chuang-Tzu* is an intelligible text, then on logical grounds there must be a difference between human language and bird chirping or else there would not even be a *Chuang-Tzu*. What after all is the status of the *Chuang-Tzu*? It cannot

be a songbook for birds as it would be completely useless. Chuang Tzu, we have argued, is surely aware that his entire text makes no sense unless words possess significance. The only other option is that Chuang Tzu is sociopathically perverse and has written an entire book to torment us. The same arguments of the richness and the historical importance of the text that applied against assuming that Chuang Tzu was unaware of the inconsistency of the relativistic thesis apply here against assuming that Chuang Tzu was a perversely minded sociopath.[8]

However, in the translation of the same passage which is offered by A. C. Graham, there would seem to be the implication that there is no difference between human speech and the sound of birds:

> Saying is not blowing breath, saying says something; the only trouble is that what it says is *never* fixed. Do we really say something? Or have we never said anything? If you think it different from the twitter of fledglings, is there *proof* of the distinction? Or isn't there proof?[9]

The difference between Watson's version and Graham's version is subtle but important. In Watson's version, the question is raised as to whether or not the meaning of words is fixed. It is not taken for granted that it is not fixed. It is simply stated that *if* it is not fixed, then we may raise the question if words really say something or if they do not. In Graham's version, it is stated outright that the meaning of words is never fixed. What is hypothetical in Watson becomes categorical in Graham. From the categorical non-fixity of language in Graham's version, we are much more easily led to the probable conclusion that language is meaningless. In Watson's version, the conclusion is left more up in the air. In addition, by inserting the word 'proof' in his translation, Graham creates the impression that in order for us to believe that words are meaningful, we would require proof. This would further strengthen us in our skepticism (and/or the belief that Chuang Tzu is provoking us towards adopting a skeptical attitude), because it is more difficult to supply proof than merely to question, as Watson translates. The original Chinese is compatible with either version, so it is impossible to make a decision on strictly philological grounds.[10]

On logical grounds, it is *per impossibile* for the correct interpretation to be that there is no difference between bird sounds and speech or we could not even understand what quandary was being raised in the first place. The very existence of the question as a question and not a string of nonsense syllables presupposes that the question is intelligible. The statement of the question as meaningful or, if you like, the statement of the two options as a meaningful choice, requires that the language of its formulation be significant. This *eo ipso* rules out one of the alternatives as logically possible. If the *Chuang-Tzu* is saying some-

thing else, as Graham's translation and commentary seems to suggest, then Chuang Chou must be speaking absolute nonsense; at the very least, his position is reducible to something as elementary and self-refuting as early Greek sophism.[11]

One could point as a defense of the skeptical thesis, to the passage which refers to the antinomical irresolution of the debates between the Confucians and the Mohists. However, in Watson's rendition, this passage would appear to be a reference to words which are not used substantively, and hence it would support the thesis that words, if used properly, do have a substance to them. In any event, the passage cannot be reduced simply to this historical reference. This traditional style of understanding much of the *Chuang-Tzu* as expounding historically existent philosophical debates has become *de rigueur* in existing commentaries on the *Chuang-Tzu*.[12] But the historical reference is incidental, as the solution posed is unworkable even in its own terms if considered as a mere historical reference. In Chuang Tzu's terms, if all language is relativistic then the attempt to conceive this as a description of the futility of debates between Mohists and Confucians is equally absurd. One cannot understand this as a depiction of the futility of arguments (whether historical or contemporary) unless the language that frames the question is something other than pure nonsense. We may now turn to the remaining section of the chirping of birds passage:

> What does the Way depend upon, that we have true and false? What do words rely upon, that we have right and wrong? How can the Way go away and not exist? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and Mo-ists. What the one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right. But if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity.[13]

If both Confucianists and Mohists are wrong, then speech must be significant in order to make sense out of the term 'wrongly'. If, as Graham argues, the *Chuang-Tzu* is asserting the position that "there is neither right nor wrong," then this is unstatable and incomprehensible; the words 'wrong' and 'right' would lose all of their meaning if words are truly no different from bird sounds.

So far, I have been arguing that there is strong logical proof that language cannot be identical to the chirping of birds. The question remains, can we find textual evidence to support my thesis that Chuang Tzu is saying that speech differs from birds sounds? In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to show that there is both indirect and

direct evidence to suggest that Chuang Tzu intends a difference to be taken between words and wind.

The argument which I will call the argument from indirect textual evidence is based upon the general linguistic formulation of the question. While this argument is not by itself strongly convincing, it bears consideration. The general formulation of the question is rhetorical. A rhetorical question is one which we normally employ when we consider that the answer to our question is obvious and in the affirmative. For example, if I ask, "Am I Robert or not?" I expect that the answer to this question is that obviously I am. From the general formulation of the questions that Chuang Tzu poses, we can assume that he takes the answer to be both obvious and affirmative—that language does possess a meaning.

The argument which I will call the argument from direct textual evidence is stronger than the argument from indirect textual evidence. The strongest piece of direct textual evidence is exactly that, namely, any unqualified assertion of what one claims the author is asserting. The second strongest piece of direct textual evidence is what I call the appeal to general textual coherency. This is the appeal to attend to the beginning and ending phrases in a passage which contains phrases that seemingly contradict the direct textual evidence. The beginning phrases in a passage are taken to reflect the general intention of the author. The ending phrases in a passage are taken to reflect the general conclusion of the author. The test of textual coherency will be satisfied when the beginning and the ending phrases of a passage cohere in meaning with each other. The *Chuang-Tzu* satisfies the test of general textual coherency when it is applied either internally to the passage in question or externally with regard to the previous and subsequent passages to the passage in question. The seeming contradictoriness of phrases which do not cohere with the direct textual evidence or the intention or the conclusion of a passage in the text will be fully explained in later chapters in this volume.

It is not difficult to find a case of direct textual evidence in the case of the chirping of birds. The very first sentence in the passage in question will suffice:

> Words are not just wind.[14]

The second sentence supplies us with another piece of direct textual evidence:

> They have something to say.[15]

In Graham's version, the first two sentences also provide us with two pieces of direct textual evidence:

> Saying is not blowing breath;
> saying says something.[16]

I take it that here we possess two unqualified assertions that language is significant. This is direct textual evidence. It is all the more significant because these two cases of direct textual evidence also qualify as cases of indirect textual evidence and form part of an argument of general textual coherency. With respect to indirect textual evidence, I find it highly significant that within the chirping of the birds section these are the only two sentences that are formulated in the declarative mode. In other words, these are in fact the only two statements that are direct in the sense of being univocal and declarative. All the other sentences in the chirping of birds passage are formulated in the interrogative mode. From a sentence formulated interrogatively we cannot claim to have a univocal understanding of the beliefs held by the utterer of the question. However, from a sentence uttered in a declarative mode we can claim to have a univocal understanding of what the utterer is asserting. The two cases of direct textual evidence also qualify as indirect textual evidence in that their linguistic formulation counts as evidence of their intention.

In addition, these two leading sentences form a part of a general argument of textual coherency. We can read the beginning and the ending of the passage taken together (excepting the middle section):

> Words are not just wind. They have something to say. . . . If we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity.[17]

There is a congruence here between the initial assertion, which we are taking to reflect the general intention of the author, and the last assertion, which we are taking to reflect the conclusion of the author. The conclusion affirms the intention. If words have something to say, then clarity can penetrate to their meaning. (I am for the moment conflating the Mohist-Confucian controversy with the issue of linguistic significance for the sake of the discussion.) This holds true regardless of the particulars of the translation. We may also apply Wing-tsit Chan's translation:

> But if we are to decide on their several affirmations and denials, there is nothing better than to employ the light of reason.[18]

The main point is that the beginning and the end of the passage cohere with each other. If speech is intelligible, then there is some purpose to be gained by relying upon rationality. If words were wind, there would be little point in turning to the light of reason to attempt to resolve whatever controversies seemed to crop up.

guage is different from the chirping of birds, but when he asserted that language is different from wind (or hot air in the contemporary parlance) he took it for granted that we would be able to infer that language was also different from the chirping of birds. I intend to enlarge upon that difference in subsequent chapters. Here I would argue both on logical grounds and on the basis of textual evidence that the thrust of his meaning is that words *are* different from the chirping of birds.

2 *Myths and Monsters: On the Art of Metaphor*

There is much more to be said on the subject of relativism, and it is a topic to which we will return in order to pursue our argument that Chuang Tzu was not a relativist. It is time now, however, to turn to the opposite side of the coin. If Chuang Tzu is not a relativist, then how are we to make sense out of his frequently appearing relativizing statements? Simply put, we can argue that Chuang Tzu is attempting to force the reader to disengage the conceptual or analytic powers of his or her mind. To put it this way, however, is not complete. To make the argument complete we must show how, specifically, the choice of linguistic and literary forms is designed to disengage the conceptual or analytic functions of the mind and at the same time to engage the intuitive or aesthetic functions of the mind. Otherwise, we are left with an irrational leap from the inadequacy of logic to the adequacy of action that is based on something we know not what. In this chapter, I hope to show how Chuang Tzu has selected certain linguistic and literary forms so as to still the analytic function of the mind while awakening the intuitive function. In short, we will be preparing the ground for showing that no non-cognitive logical quantum jump is required in order to go from a standpoint that holds all standpoints to be valueless to a valued standpoint. By understanding the proper function of relativizing statements we will be able to understand how Chuang Tzu can seemingly say that which cannot be said and at the same time can lead us in a certain valued direction. I will argue that certain semantic and literary forms are chosen not simply because they paralyze the analytical or conceptual mental functions, but also because they at the same time empower the intuitive or aesthetic cognitive functions.

Let us return briefly to the passage regarding the chirping of birds. One thing that strikes us very strongly about this passage is its form of placing two logical alternatives next to each other without making it very clear which of the two, if either, is to be preferred. The two logical

options appear to cancel each other out. We have argued in the previous chapter that from both logical and textual standpoints, the two answers given cannot be of equal value. If this is correct, then the question we must now address is, why is it that the issue is posed in this seemingly paradoxical fashion?

What I would like to propose is that in the chirping of birds passage we have a microcosm of the argument structure of the *Chuang-Tzu*. I am using the phrase "argument structure" advisedly. Clearly, this is not a direct form of an argument intending to prove something or another. On the other hand, it is not (I claim) a non-cognitive stream of communication or a purely literary contrivance with no argument design. I use the phrase "argument structure" to call attention to the fact that certain semantic and literary forms are used precisely because they have the power to convince the intuitive or aesthetic dimension of the mind. In this sense, they function as arguments.

In the *Chuang-Tzu*, there is precious little that is stated directly or univocally to be true. I take this to be by design, not by accident. It does not follow that nothing is true or that there is no form of communicating what is taken to be true. All that we can infer logically is that if there is something that is true, what is true cannot be stated directly. Likewise, if there is something that is not true, what is not true cannot be stated directly. This is not because the *Chuang-Tzu* is a mystical text, whatever that means. The overall reason for this use of language is a strategic one. The general objective of the *Chuang-Tzu* is the self-transformation of the reader. In subsequent chapters, I will point to some evidence for this statement. At the moment, we must take it on faith. The mode of self-transformation with which the *Chuang-Tzu* is concerned is that of subjective apprehension; to put it in another way, the alteration of subjective apprehension is the pathway to subjective transformation. If putative truths or falsehoods were simply stated in literal, direct forms, the danger is that these would most likely be apprehended as intellectual claims. An intellectual claim or statement about what is or is not the case would be understood as a form of theoretical knowledge claim, to be tested by the kinds of tests intellectual theories are to be tested by (for example, whether they are consistent with known scientific facts, whether they meet certain empirical tests and so on). Chuang-Tzu does not wish his philosophy to be understood as a purely intellectual theory and thus resorts to linguistic formulations that resist any clear-cut theoretical paraphrase.

It is one thing to say that univocal paraphrases are avoided so as to restrict the dangers of understanding statements on a strictly theoretical plane and another to argue for the choice of the exact forms that are utilized as serving a special type of strategic function. In what

follows, I would like to select out certain linguistic and literary forms in order to display their strategic cognitive functions. As a sample of strategies, I will concentrate on double-headed (both-sided) questions, myths, monsters, and metaphors.

I use the term double-headed to refer to interrogatives that pose opposite alternatives in a rhetorical form. We may refer to the chirping of the birds passage since it is so familiar to us by now.

In the first chapter we discussed the rhetorical form of the question in terms of its indirect mode of taking sides. While this is true enough, the explicit or obvious aspect to the two-sided question is that it is *not* taking sides. Not only is it not taking sides, but by posing both sides as supposedly equally valid possibilities the question allows neither side consideration as a legitimate possibility. If both sides of the question exhaust the logical possibilities and each side is posed as equipossible to the other side, then there seems to be no *logical* answer to the question. I emphasize the term 'logical' because in the first chapter I took great pains to indicate that I considered there to be a definite answer to the question. But by posing the question in the form that it is posed, the logical possibilities of an answer cancel each other out. That there is no logical answer does not mean that there is no answer; it also does not follow that the answer to the question is an *illogical* answer. What does follow is that whatever answer there is to the question will not follow logically from the posing of the question.

What results from the double-headed question is conceptual paralysis. As both sides of the question cancel each other out, there is no answer on the conceptual level, but it does not follow that there is no answer whatsoever. In fact, the form of the question already disposes the mind in one direction. However, at the same time, the conceptual faculty of the mind is frustrated in its endeavor to sort out the answer in a logical form.

What results then is not simply conceptual paralysis. At the same time there is a conceptual paralysis, some other part of the mind is intrigued by the question. What is important about the level of intrigue that is aroused is that it is revelatory of two presuppositions. First, that there is an intrigue or curiosity that is aroused suggests that all of our mental faculties cannot be considered inadequate to the answering of the question that is posed. Second, and closely related to this fact, is that if cognitive intrigue or curiosity is aroused, this suggests that there might exist some dimension of the mind which, if properly aroused, might be able not only to answer the question that is raised, but also to understand why the question is raised in such a paradoxical form.

The double-headed question is, I believe, the most explicit of the four literary forms which I will undertake to analyze in its ability

to address the intuitive mental capacity and at the same time to paralyze the analytic mental capacity. While all four forms have this two-sided function, only the double-headed question performs this function so explicitly.

The two sides to the question may be referred to two separate cognitive functions: the analytic or conceptual function and the intuitive or aesthetic function.[1] If we like, we may think of these two functions as correlated with the current scientific concept that the brain is divided into two hemispheres.[2] That the aesthetic side is cognitively capable (which we will elaborate below) is the reason why we understand something by the double-sided question, although initially we do not quite know what it is that we understand. The side of the question that is negatively posed is the side that addresses the analytic functioning of the mind; the side of the question that is affirmatively posed is the side that addresses the intuitive functioning of the mind. That the entire double-sided question is posed rhetorically and is accompanied by both logical and textual evidence of an affirmative answer is suggestive of the fact that the answer, as a whole, will ultimately be in the affirmative.

The posing of the question on two sides then is the posing of the questions on two levels: the analytic and the aesthetic. The function of the self-negating question is to negate on one level while affirming on another level. The negating function of the question we may refer to as an attempt to disassociate the analytic function. The analytic function is satisfied by a simple negation. However, when the negation is accompanied by an opposite affirmation, the analytic function is paralyzed: it is disassociated. The entire function of the paradoxical interrogative is disassociative on the analytic side, while it is associative on the aesthetic side. The analytic faculty does not know what to do. Its ordinary logical grasp of the question has been rendered impotent. The aesthetic faculty has been simultaneously aroused. It grasps something but it is not able to state what it grasps in words. That the question is poetically framed, in its comparison of language with the chirping of birds, arouses the aesthetic function, which is charmed and attracted by the poetic imagery. One side of the mind is made to feel helpless; the other side of the mind is aroused to action. The total function of the poetically framed paradox is to still one side of the mind while arousing the other.

The comparison of language with the chirping of birds is not an isolated example of poetic paradox. The text of the *Chuang-Tzu* is replete with such examples. My argument is that such linguistic formulations are not semantic accidents. In fact, I believe that they represent an essential component of what I call the argument structure of

ties of the mind at the *beginning*. This does not mean that these critical faculties will remain in suspension throughout the entire reading of the *Chuang-Tzu*: but it is important that they be suspended at the outset of the reading. A very important demand has been placed upon the reader, but this demand also carries with it the implicit promise that if we suspend our analytic judgment, we will be rewarded by being given something which carries with it a higher truth. At the same time, we are instructed in the means of apprehension of this higher truth. We are being told that if we keep our child's mind, we may be able to understand something which we will not be able to understand if we attempt to immediately translate what we are being told into the categories of the critical intellect.

In short, when myth is placed at the beginning of the text, the implicit message is that understanding must take place on a different level than through a customary reliance upon the conceptual intellect. By calling this other dimension of understanding into existence at the very outset of the book, the *Chuang-Tzu* comes out very strongly in favor of the primacy of the aesthetic mode of apprehension.

The use of myth, like the use of other literary devices which we will examine below, is not for the sake of literary indulgence. To pay little attention to the presentation vehicle of the content places us under severe danger of not understanding much of what is to follow. If we brush aside the literary beginnings to "get to the meat of the text" we will never find the meat. Or, if we do, we will have no capacity for recognizing it when we do or for being able to digest it and assimilate its nutritive value.

In nearly all important commentaries on the *Chuang-Tzu*, it has been customary to begin the important discussion of the *Chuang-Tzu* with chapter two. But by so doing we approach the text with one mental hand tied behind our backs. By understanding the significance of beginning where Chuang-Tzu in fact begins, we understand something of crucial importance: we now realize that whatever is to be understood must be understood in a different way than we normally attempt to understand. We are being asked to learn how to cognize preconceptually. While the myth cannot explain how we are to do this, it is plainly an invitation to try. In that which follows, I hope to make it very evident how the engaging of the aesthetic or preconceptual mind is a precondition for the proper understanding of the message of the *Chuang-Tzu*.

By implication, when we begin with the myth we are also being told something else. We are being told that there is a fundamental and inherent connection between our mode of understanding of the *Chuang-Tzu* and the message that is to be gleaned from the *Chuang-Tzu*. By explicitly placing the myth at the beginning, Chuang-Tzu

CHUANG-TZU FOR SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION: An Analysis of the Inner Chapters

Robert E. Allinson

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PROFESSOR ROBERT E. ALLINSON is a member of the Graduate Faculty and the Department of Philosophy at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is editor of *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots.*

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