ABSTRACT

Zhuang-zi (Between 399-295 B.C.) has always fascinated his readers with his inspiring insight and broad vision. However, there are critics who accuse him of advocating a philosophy of frivolity and absolute fatalism. This dissertation aims at refuting these criticisms and re-assessing the credibility and significance of Zhuang-zi’s philosophy, particularly his philosophy of life.

Zhuang-zi’s philosophy of life is transcendental in nature. By “transcendental”, it means going beyond the realm of worldly thoughts and value judgements. Thus, it is different from the Kantian Transcendentalism. Zhuang-zi establishes his philosophy of life with the doctrine that one should be contented with the Destiny. He believes in total submission to all that happens, but rejects the idea that all is pre-determined. This in fact, is one uniqueness in Zhuang-zi’s thought, which allows anyone, through the cultivation of the mind, to overcome the limitations of fate and enter the door of transcendental freedom of the mind. In other words, his goal is absolute spiritual emancipation and peace, to be achieved through knowing the capacity and limitations of one’s own nature, nourishing it and adapting it to the universal process of transformation.

This research highlights the peculiar insight of Zhuang-zi, paying close attention to the book Zhuang-zi, especially the seven inner chapters. Also, this research is made possible with the theses and journals of scholars from both the East and the West. Through close study on the text and comparative study on Zhuang-zi and his contemporaries, the Buddhists and the western philosophers, this research hopes to reveal the “real” Zhuang-zi and his transcendental philosophy of life.