Summary

This thesis discusses Liu Zongzhou’s philosophy of Will from three aspects: “Root of Will” (意根), “Entity of Loneliness” (独体) and “Entity of Sincerity” (诚体). The relationships between these three parts are expressed in two statements, i.e. “Perfecting one’s Body is the basis” (修身为本) and “Keeping one’s Will in the state of Sincerity is the fundamental basis” (诚意为本之本). For an ordinary man, there is a gap between “one’s Body” and “one’s Will” and he needs the “Entity of Loneliness” to act as a bridge. With the presence of the “Entity of Loneliness”, the close relationship between “one’s Body” and “one’s Will” can be expressed by these two statements: 1. “one’s Will” is actually “one’s formless Body” (意为无形之身) and it is actually the “Entity of Loneliness” itself; 2. “one’s Body” is actually “one’s formed Will” (身为有形之意) and it is called “Entity of Sincerity”. However, this relationship can be easily destroyed by the “Root of Insincerity” (妄根) if one does not keep one’s Will in the state of sincerity by “the careful and earnest self reflection in moments of loneliness” (慎独).

The emphasis of Liu Zongzhou’s philosophy of will is on the following three closely related aspects. Firstly, it is for every ordinary man (not only for the scholars). Secondly, it describes more on the natural state of life (not on the ideal state of life). Thirdly, it provides practical guidance on how to search for the “True Self” in one’s soul as well as how to practice one’s knowledge correctly.

To understand Liu Zongzhou’s philosophy of will, one should come to a thorough understanding of the meaning of “one’s Body”. One should neither despise nor indulge “one’s physical Body” (自然之身); similarly, one should neither neglect nor pamper “one’s formless Body” (无形之身), which is the “Entity of Loneliness”. Then, one will be able to find for oneself the “one’s formed Body” (有形之意), which is the “Entity of Sincerity”. If one can really know the meaning of “one’s Body”, then he should be able to find the bridge which closes up the gap between Idealism and Materialism in Western Philosophy, as well as the gap between Wang Yangming’s teaching and Zhu Xi’s teaching in Chinese Philosophy.