ABSTRACT

Zhuang-zi (Between 369-286 B.C) is one of the greatest Taoists in the history of Chinese philosophy. His writings are sparked with wit and reader will be captivated with his inspiring insight and broad vision. However, there are scholars who misinterpret his concepts of “Ziran” (Nature) and “Wuwei” (Non-action) in the Inner chapters. This dissertation aims at refuting these misunderstandings and re-assessing the credibility and significance of Zhuang-zi’s philosophy, particularly his concepts of Ziran and Wuwei.

Zhuang-zi’s concept of “Ziran” is transcendental in nature. By “transcendental”, it means living harmoniously with “Natural world” but not the “Nature”. Zhuang-zi also believes in the natural character of “Dao”. In order to follow the “Dao”, one should not try to do things that may violate the rules of “Natural world”. In other words, one should not be over-doing. This is his principle of “Ziran”. In his view, “Ziran” is the only way to get things done without interfering with individual spiritual freedom.

The concept of “Wuwei” (Non-action) has two aspects: internal meaning and external meaning. Internal meaning deals with the method of overcoming the limitations of fate and enter the state of transcendental freedom of the mind, especially like “XinZhai” (Mind fastening) and “ZuoWang” (sitting and forgetfulness). External meaning has something to do with actions, which allows one to set owns mind to rest and be able to survive a tyranny. In other words, external meaning advocates that one should be carefree and able to adapt oneself to the existing circumstance.
Through comparing the concepts of “Tian” (The heaven), “Ming” (The fate), “De” (The virtue) and “Qi” (The vital energy), we discovered that the relationships between the concepts of “Ziran” and “Wuwei” are mutually interpretative. Both tend to seek the absolute value of unconditioned freedom and peace. By achieving these one is assured to have an easy life without having sophisticated thoughts and materialistic desires.

This research highlights the precious insight of Zhuang-zi, paying close attention to the Seven inner chapters of Zhuang-zi. This research is also made possible with the existence of theses and journals of scholars from the East. Through close study on the text and analytically reading the Inner chapters, this research wishes to reveal the “Real” Zhuang-zi and the true meaning of “Ziran” and “Wuwei”.