

Cripples and Sages in the *Zhuangzi*: Contextualizing the Narratives

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Mrzáci a mudrci v diele Zhuangzi: kontextualizácia naratívoov

Resumé Napriek tomu, že text *Zhuangzi* má charakter skladačky a nie koherentného textu, štúdia analyzuje kapitoly 5 a 6 tohto diela ako presne štruktúrované texty. Štúdia kontextualizuje jednotlivé časti textu v rámci týchto kapitol a ukazuje, že isté diskrepancie textu možno vysvetliť kontextom danej kapitoly.

Abstract Despite the composite nature of the *Zhuangzi*, this paper reads chapters 5 and 6 of the *Zhuangzi* as well-structured pieces of text. It contextualizes the individual units of the text into the chapters and demonstrates that certain discrepancies in the text can be explained by the chapter context.

Keywords China, Literature, pre-Qin (before 211 BCE) · *Zhuangzi* (ca 5th–3rd c. BCE; TR 2nd c. BCE), Themes and Motives

The *Zhuangzi* has traditionally been placed into the category of Master texts (*zi* 子).¹ The Master texts have been identified with their authors² which, in turn, creates the image of coherence across the text. This practice is, however, in contrast with the content of these texts. The texts themselves usually do not

1 Labelled as 'philosophical' texts in modern times.

2 This practice is first attested in the History of Former Han Dynasty (*Hanshu* 漢書) chapter »Yiwenzhi« 藝文志 (*Hanshu* 30).

create the image of coherence or homogeneity. Very often, they look more like collections of texts of variable length, ranging from short paragraphs to chapters. The sequence of paragraphs within chapters and chapters within books typically does not reveal any apparent pattern. The Master texts as wholes, and their individual chapters as well, often look like random collection of sayings, short narratives, dialogues, or expositions, only loosely tied thematically.³ This combination—unstructured texts (at least seemingly), which are read as authorial texts—often results in a selective reading that picks up isolated sections of the text and puts them together as ‘building blocks’ of a philosophy constructed as the import of the text by the scholar.⁴ The *Zhuangzi* is a typical text prone to this kind of approach and it is the aim of this paper to problematize it and offer an alternative reading strategy to selected parts of the text.

The scholars who problematize the author-oriented approach to the *Zhuangzi* are rather few and their approaches differ widely.⁵ Among these, the paper by

- 3 This is definitely valid for the books (Master texts as wholes). As for the coherence of individual chapters, there are, of course, differences among the texts. A typical chapter from the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (ca 3rd c. BCE) is more coherent than a typical chapter from the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語, ca 3rd–2nd c. BCE). Moreover, as several recent publications have shown, a careful analysis can construct a meaningful structure even for a text (usually of the size of a chapter, *pian* 篇) that look like random mess in an uninformed reading. See Dirk Meyer, »Truth Claim with no Claim to Truth: Text and Performance of the “Qiushui” Chapter of the Zhuangzi«, in *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*, ed. by Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 297–340; Wim De Reu, »A Ragbag of Odds and Ends? Argument Structure and Philosophical Coherence in Zhuangzi 26«, *ibid.*, 243–296.
- 4 Matthias Richter points out this problem in a recent article: »Systematizing accounts of ancient Chinese philosophers tend to be constructed by relating representative extracts from the texts attributed to these philosophers to each other as building blocks of a consistent philosophy.« See Matthias Richter, »Handling a Double-Edged Sword: Controlling Rhetorics in Early China«, *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 68,4 (2014), 1026.
- 5 For example, Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, »Zhuangzi tanyuan—cong weiwu zhuyi de Zhuang Zhou dao weixin zhuyi de houqi Zhuang xue« 莊子探源——從唯物主義的莊周到唯心主義的後期莊學 [About the Sources of *Zhuangzi*—From the Materialist Zhuang Zhou to the Later Idealist Zhou Studies], *Zhexue yanjiu* 哲學研究 2/1961, 23–39; Wang Baoxuan 王葆琰, *Lao Zhuang xue xintan* 老莊學新探 [New Inquiries about Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2002), 214–225; Jean François Billeter, *Études sur le Tchouang-tseu* (Paris: Éditions Allia, 2008), 259–266; David Chai, *Early Zhuangzi Commentaries: On the Sounds and Meanings of the Inner Chapters* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2008), 15–18.

Esther Klein⁶ suggests the focus on individual sections of the text, but not as ‘building blocks’ of a coherent philosophy ascribed to an author. The ‘building block’ approach to the *Zhuangzi* is the target of two recent articles by Dirk Meyer and Wim De Reu.⁷ These authors analyse individual chapters of the *Zhuangzi* (chapter 17 in Meyer’s article and chapter 26 in the article by De Reu). In both these articles the chapters are construed as structured wholes and the individual sections of the chapter are read in the context of the structure. This re-contextualization has a profound impact on the meaning of many of the sections. Such a reinterpretation of the text, however, does not make the sections ‘building blocks’ of a philosophy newly constructed from the *Zhuangzi* as a whole. Instead, it carefully establishes meaning of the sections within the actual context (the chapter) the sections are undeniably a part of.

There are many textual features shared across the text of the *Zhuangzi* (and many of them across other texts too)—shared vocabulary and terminology, literary *topoi*, narrative structures and topics, ideas. Naturally, these shared features form the basis of most attempts to read the *Zhuangzi* as a whole or wholes (as a philosophical work or works). In this paper, however, I would like to argue that these shared features *do not construct the meaning of the text directly*. Instead, I take them as a repertoire of literary devices available to the text’s authors, who used them to *form arguments*. ‘Argument’ is understood in this paper as a ‘device of persuasion’, ‘a pattern that generates argumentative force’.⁸ That means, above all, that any term, metaphor, narrative, dialogue, or other type of expression formulated by the text must be adequately understood within its textual context (individual chapters and textual units⁹ within the chapters). Only when this is done, attempts at linking passages across the text are eventually possible.

6 Esther Klein, »Were there “Inner Chapters” in the Warring States? A New Examination of the Evidence about the *Zhuangzi*«, *T’oung Pao* 96 (2010), 299–369.

7 Meyer, »Truth Claim with no Claim to Truth«, 297–340; Wim De Reu, »A Ragbag of Odds and Ends?«, in *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*, 243–296.

8 This understanding of ‘argument’ was developed by the editors of *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*; see Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer, »Introduction: Literary Forms of Argument in Early China«, *ibid.*, 1–36.

9 By ‘textual unit’, I refer to parts of the *Zhuangzi* that can be identified as textual wholes by internal criteria (continuous narrative or dialogue, continuous exposition on a given topic, short sections linked together by formal means, like the simple ‘therefore’ *gu* 故 etc.) Of course, in some cases setting the boundary between units can be controversial.

In this paper, this approach to the *Zhuangzi* is tested on the way the pair of terms ‘heaven’ (*tian* 天)¹⁰ and ‘man’ (*ren* 人), as they appear in chapters 5 and 6 of the *Zhuangzi*. The dichotomy of ‘heaven’ and ‘man’ has been regarded as one of crucial ideas forming the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. The word ‘heaven’ (*tian*) is often used in the *Zhuangzi* in the sense of the sum of cosmic cycles and processes, as opposed to human society with its institutions, norms and values. According to the text (in all instances¹¹), ‘heaven’ is to be adopted by human beings, so that the humans may fulfil his or her natural potential and live better (or more effectively, in some instances) than within the confines of human society. ‘Heaven’ is thus viewed as the alternative setting of human life with an (implied) alternative set of values.

Angus Charles Graham’s (1919–1991) analysis of the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’ in his *Disputers of the Tao* can be taken as an illustrative example of taking the dichotomy as a philosophical concept with fixed meaning.¹² Graham notices the prevalent priority of ‘heaven’ over ‘man’ in the *Zhuangzi* and starts the discussion with the question: »Am I then on the Way only when as a man I dissolve and let Heaven act through me?«¹³ After discussing a number of *Zhuangzi* passages on the topic, Graham arrives at the following conclusion:

There cannot for Zhuangzi be any ultimate discontinuity between the spontaneous and the thinking person. At the centre of himself the sage is spontaneous, belongs wholly to Heaven, does not yet make any distinction between benefit and harm, self and other, even Heaven and man. [...] At the periphery he is a thinking man, finding means to the goals towards which Heaven moves him, and collecting the information towards which he is moved to respond. On this periphery he does make distinctions, although only as provisional and relative [...] and deliberately pursues what he likes and avoids what he dislikes.¹⁴

10 The meaning of the word *tian* 天 ranges between ‘heaven’ as the deity or cosmic power and ‘nature’ as the sum of natural cycles and processes. In the *Zhuangzi* it very often means the latter, especially in passages that are subject to our analysis below (sections where *tian* is opposed to *ren* ‘man’). However, I still decided to translate *tian* as ‘heaven’ (‘heavenly’, ‘heaven-like’ etc.) in all instances, because I find the translation ‘nature’ strangely ambiguous, among other reasons because ‘nature’ is the standard translation for *xing* 性—which also appears frequently in the *Zhuangzi*.

11 There is one possible exception in *Zhuangzi* 23.

12 A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (Chicago, IL; La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1989), 195–199.

13 *Ibid.*, 196.

14 *Ibid.*, 197.

The main problem with this interpretation is the fact it conforms only to *some* of the ‘heaven—man’ sections and not the others. Compare these sections that will be analysed below:

有人之形，無人之情。有人之形，故群於人；無人之情，故是非不得於身。眇乎小哉！所以屬於人也。警乎大哉！獨成其天。

[The sage] has the form of man but not the natural inclinations of man. Since he has the form of man, he is grouped together with other men. Since he does not have the natural inclinations of man, right and wrong cannot get at him. Puny and small, he belongs among other men. Massive and great, depending on nothing he perfects his heaven.¹⁵

其一與天為徒；其不一與人為徒。天與人不相勝也，是之謂真人。

In what he treated without discrimination, he followed the heaven. In what he did not treat without discrimination, he followed the men. When heaven and man do not overcome each other, that is called the True Man.¹⁶

In these two sections, the relation between ‘heaven’ and ‘man’ is obviously treated differently. In the first section, the perfected human being relies on ‘heaven’ alone, while in the second section a harmony between both is called for. Instead of explaining away this difference, I propose to approach the ‘heaven—man’ dichotomy and the above passages not as ‘building blocks’ of a unified concept of the sage, but as arguments serving specific purpose in their immediate textual context. Putting it one step further, I would even suggest that the dichotomy may not be a (philosophical) concept which the text *is about* at all. It may serve as an argument to persuade the reader *about something else*. If that is the case, then the incongruity between the specific concretizations of the dichotomy does not disrupt the coherence of the text, if read properly.

In the following, I present a thorough analysis of the chapter 5, in which one of the above sections appears. It is argued the chapter is consistent in meaning and structured. The meaning is construed as embedded in the structure. In the proposed reading, the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’ is not viewed as a concept directly formulating an idea or philosophy advocated by the text. Instead, it is read as an argument set in the chapter’s structure and used to formulate a meaning,

15 *Zhuangzi* 5, in *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 [Collected Interpretations of *Zhuangzi*], ed. by Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 217; transl. based on Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1970), 75—adapted.

16 *Zhuangzi* 6, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 234–235; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 79–80—adapted.

which is finally the actual purpose of the chapter. After this analysis, an analysis of a part of chapter 6 is presented, where the other above-quoted section appears. It is argued that the discrepancy between these two sections can be explained by the context of the two chapters. In both cases, the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’ serves a specific purpose within its immediate context.

It is well possible to read them as arguments serving different purposes. It is concluded that the diversity of purpose can account for variable concretizations of the dichotomy pointed out above.

Chapter 5 of the Zhuangzi

In chapter 5 we find the following section featuring the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’:

故聖人有所遊，而知為孽，約為膠，德為接，工為商。聖人不謀，惡用知？不斲，惡用膠？無喪，惡用德？不貨，惡用商？四者，天鬻也。天鬻者，天食也。既受食於天，又惡用人？有人之形，无人之情。有人之形，故群於人；无人之情，故是非不得於身。眇乎小哉！所以屬於人也。警乎大哉！獨成其天。

So the sage has his wanderings. For him, knowledge is an offshoot, agreements are glue, favours are a patching up, and skill is a peddler. The sage plans no schemes, so what use has he for knowledge? He does no carving, so what use has he for glue? He suffers no loss, so what use has he for favours? He sells no goods, so what use has he for peddling? These four are called heavenly gruel. Heavenly gruel is the food of heaven, what use does he have for men? He has the form of man but not the natural inclinations of man. Since he has the form of man, he is grouped together with other men. Since he does not have the natural inclinations of man, right and wrong cannot get at him. Puny and small, he belongs among other men. Massive and great, depending on nothing he perfects his heaven.¹⁷

This section is taken out of context. Read in isolation, however, it still makes sense, which may be summarized as follows:

In this section we find an account of the Sage’s (*sbengren* 聖人) actions and his attitude towards the world. It stresses the key feature attributed to many model personalities (various masters and perfect persons) across the whole *Zhuangzi*: human beings are viewed as pertaining to both the human (*ren*) world and the world of nature (‘heaven’, *tian*), while the human world and its norms,

17 *Zhuangzi* 5, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 217; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 75—adapted.

values etc. is debased. 'Heaven', in contrast, is introduced as the realm where human beings can find their true freedom and realize their true potential. In this case, the dichotomy 'heaven—man' is made explicit and the text formulates a specific mode of the dichotomy.

In the first part of the section, four terms are discussed—two of them are concerned with the potential of human beings with regard to the world (knowledge and skill), the other two are important components of human social relations (agreements and favours). The section states that the sage has no use for these components of social life and consequently has no use for other men in general. Instead, the term 'heaven' is introduced, in the form of the peculiar expression 'heavenly gruel' (*tianzhou* 天鬻), which is said to feed the sage instead of anything the sage could obtain from interacting with human society. In the latter part of the section, the relation between 'man' and 'heaven' in the personality of the sage is discussed explicitly. Both meet in the person of the sage but their presence in him is explained in terms of 'form/body' (*xing* 形—the human part) and 'natural inclinations' (*qing* 情—the heavenly part). Having the form of a human being, the sage is still grouped with other men. Lacking the natural human inclinations, the sage is free from establishing values like 'right' and 'wrong' in any situation he encounters and is thus (probably, but not explicitly here) free of all kinds of attachments to the social world. The last sentence makes clear that the human part of the sage is 'puny and small', while 'heaven' represents the 'massive and great' in him. In this section, it is obvious that the 'man' in the sage is considered unimportant (his human body seems to be merely a remnant of being human), while 'heaven' actually forms the personality of the sage. No balance between 'man' and 'heaven' is sought in this section. The section describes the perfect person of the sage, who—due to 'perfecting his heaven'—attains complete detachment from the human world, except for his bodily form.

Taken in isolation, this section can be read as a direct statement on the characteristics of the sage and perhaps compared with other similar sections in the *Zhuangzi* and thus serve as a building block of a Zhuang Zhou's 莊周 'philosophy of the sage' (or philosophy of self-cultivation, cosmology etc.). In the following, however, I will analyse the textual context of the section, as it is set within the chapter 5. I will argue that if read in the context, it is plausible to understand the section as an *argument* (and not straightforward statement), aimed at persuading the reader to accept certain ideas advocated by the chapter 5 as a whole. The section is read as a device conveying ideas not expressed in the section itself and the link between the section and these ideas is found in the

content and structure of the chapter. It will be shown, finally, that the dichotomy of ‘heaven’ and ‘man’ in its specific concretization in this unit is an important component of the chapter’s argument structure.

The chapter 5 consists of six textual units. These units are clearly demarcated as consistent dialogues with beginning and end, except the unit 5 (where the section quoted above belongs). The unit of chapter 5 is composed of 3 separable sections, which, however, are linked together by simple formal features—*gu* 故 (‘therefore’) introduces sections 2 and 3, construing them as the explanations of the previous sections.

The first five textual units are famous for presenting very unusual characters – crippled persons who, contrary to common expectations,¹⁸ are construed as wise and socially successful people. This powerful imagery of chapter 5 is not entirely homogenous. The units 1 and 4 are similar in content and structure. The crippled person is discussed in a dialogue in both sections (one of the discussants is Confucius in both cases) and presented as an advisor to a ruler. The crippled person, despite his deformation, irresistibly attracts the surrounding society, without actually doing anything special. The units 2 and 3 also feature crippled persons as the main topic of the dialogue. There is a difference from the units 1 and 4, however: Here the crippled persons, although still presented as wise men (in contrast to their outward appearance), do not have the social function; they are private persons, disciples of their teachers, wise and competent but without the powerful impact on the society. Units 5 and 6 present more complicated cases and they will be discussed below.

I believe this chapter represents a consistent text that conveys a specific message using various arguments. At the first glance, the major import of the chapter lies in stressing the importance of the ‘inner true self’, as compared to the outward appearance, rendered here negligible. The imagery of ‘wise and competent cripples’ can itself be understood as an argument¹⁹—it clearly evokes the idea of precedence of the inner over the outer. In the dialogues we find several terms and metaphors (mostly in pairs) dealing conceptually with the problem that the image of the competent cripples provokes: oneness and diversity, inner and outer, the heart-mind and the senses, concentration on one’s own self and disregard for the rest of the world. All these concepts and

18 The social significance of mutilation in early Chinese society is examined in Albert Galvany, »Debates on Mutilation. Bodily Preservation and Ideology in Early China«, *Asiatische Studien* 64,1 (2009), 67–91.

19 In the sense formulated above, argument as a ‘device of persuasion’.

metaphors form a distinctive image of a perfect man: a perfect personality inside, which is lacking any traces of the perfection in its bodily shape, which may be entirely imperfect.²⁰ All the dialogues in section 1-4 seem to point to one single idea—the outside is nothing; it is only the inside that matters. The reliance on outer manifestations (visible forms, fixed concepts etc.) is wrong, and getting rid of it is called ‘shaking off one’s fetters’²¹.

Among the terms used to argue for the special vision of the relation between inner qualities and outward appearance, the most consistent and most telling concept used in these dialogues is the dichotomy of charismatic power or virtue (*de* 德) and the body (*xing* 形). The use of *de* in the chapter makes explicit the common view of correspondence between the inner quality of human being (*de*) and the outward appearance (*xing*), against which the chapter takes a stand. In the unit 2, Zichan, the famous first minister of the state of Zheng, cannot stand being seen together with a mutilated man, certain Shentu Jia, with whom he shares the teacher. Shentu Jia 申屠嘉 (d 155 BCE) points out that this attitude goes against their Master’s teaching and Zichan 子產 (i.e. Gongsun Qiao 公孫僑, d 522 BCE) replies: »Once you look like this and you still think you can be better than Yao! Think carefully of your *de*, is it not enough to make you reflect on yourself?« Zichan clearly deems the virtue and outward shape to be identical or at least implying each other. The dialogue about another crippled person, Uglyface Tuo, found in the section 4, ends with the following Confucius’ words: »It must be that his talents are complete [*cai quan* 才全], though his charismatic power takes no form [*de bu xing zhe ye* 德不形者也].« Obviously, in the eyes of Confucius, who represents the common view of the problem, the virtue *should* take a proper shape. It is extraordinary if it does not—and these extraordinary cases are described in this chapter of the *Zhuangzi*.

20 In the first section, a disciple of Confucius asks his Master about it: »Is there indeed a wordless teaching, or a mind which is whole though there is no [corresponding] body? [*wuxing er xin cheng zhe* 無形而心成者].«

21 Cf. section 3 with the famous final accusation of Confucius—»Heaven has punished him«. In this section, even after he finally acknowledged the worthiness of the cripple, Confucius praises him, but adds: »And how much more someone, whose virtue [*de* 德] is still intact!« (Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 78). By these words Confucius proves that he can think of *de* only as something that is manifested equally inside and outside, contrary to the message of the chapter. After that, Confucius is accused by the crippled person and Lao Dan, who engage in the dialogue, of being unable to ‘shake off his fetters’ because having been ‘punished by heaven’.

The contrast of inner perfection and mutilated body, the main topic of the chapter 5 of the *Zhuangzi*, has another interesting aspect pinpointed by several scholars.²² The basic idea of the chapter 5—the dominance of the inside over the outside, virtue over the bodily form—is highly ironic and subversive in the social context of early China. It is eminently anti-ritualistic (and anti-Confucian), by which it undermines the fundamental values of early Chinese society. This ironic and subversive tone is underscored by the presence of Confucius and Zichan as the negative (or at least inferior) characters appearing in the first four textual units of chapter 5. Moreover, in the unit 4 we find the following parable, approaching the subversive dimension of the chapter from the opposite side: »Confucius said: “I once went on a mission to Chu, and as I was going along, I saw some little pigs nursing at the body of their dead mother. After a while, they gave a start and all ran away and left her, because they could no longer see their likeness in her, they could no longer see their kind in her. In loving their mother, they loved not her body but that which moved her body.”«²³ This short parable is complementary to the crippled person imagery in chapter 5. While the crippled persons are full of inner power but lacking corresponding form, the dead pig-mother is exactly the opposite – full shape with nothing inside. Both, however, contradict the idea of perfect virtue in perfect body, shared by the common imagery of the period as well as by Confucianism, targeted in the chapter.

The message of the first four sections of chapter 5 can be summarized as follows: The text argues that it is the inner state of human being that matters, while the outward appearance is negligible, there is no correspondence between inside and outside of a human being. A cripple can have charismatic power (*de*) so powerful that the whole world gathers around him—like a true sage. This rendering of the relation between the inner and the outer is provocative and subversive in the context of both early Chinese social reality and Confucian idealism. The presence of eminent political and cultural figures (Zichan, Confucius) in the dialogues underscores the subversive nature of the text.

22 See Hans-Georg Moeller, »Paradoxes of Health and Power in the *Zhuangzi*«, in *New Visions of the Zhuangzi*, ed. by Livia Kohn (St. Petersburg: Three Pines Press, 2015), 70–81; Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Ethics in Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mengzi and Wang Yangming* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 187–188.

23 *Zhuangzi* 5, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 209; transl. based Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 73—adapted.

Let us now get back to the unit 5, partial quotation of which opened this part of the present paper. The unit can be divided into 3 sections and in full reads as follows:

1) 闔跂支離菑說衛靈公，靈公說之。而視其人，其脰肩肩。甕大癩說齊桓公，桓公說之；而視全人，其脰肩肩。

Mr. Lame-Hunchback-No-Lips was persuading Duke Ling of Wei and the duke was so pleased with him that when he looked at other men, he thought their necks looked too lean and skinny. Mr. Pitcher-Sized-Wen talked to Duke Huan of Qi, and Duke Huan was so pleased with him that when he looked at normal men he thought their necks looked too lean and skinny.

2) 故德有所長而形有所忘，人不忘其所忘而忘其所不忘，此謂誠忘。

Therefore, [their] virtue had something standing out and [their] body had something for which it was overlooked. If people do not overlook what can be overlooked and overlook what cannot be overlooked – that can be called true overlooking.

3) 故聖人有所遊，而知為孽，約為膠，德為接，工為商。聖人不謀，惡用知？不斲，惡用膠？無喪，惡用德？不貨，惡用商？四者，天鬻也。天鬻者，天食也。既受食於天，又惡用人？有人之形，无人之情。有人之形，故群於人；无人之情，故是非不得於身。眇乎小哉！所以屬於人也。警乎大哉！獨成其天。

Therefore, the sage has his wanderings. For him, knowledge is an offshoot, agreements are glue, favours are a patching up, and skill is a peddler. The sage plans no schemes, so what use has he for knowledge? He does no carving, so what use has he for glue? He suffers no loss, so what use has he for favours? He sells no goods, so what use has he for peddling? These four are called heavenly gruel. Heavenly gruel is the food of heaven, what use does he have for men? He has the form of man but not the natural inclinations of man. Since he has the form of man, he is grouped together with other men. Since he does not have the natural inclinations of man, right and wrong cannot get at him. Puny and small, he belongs among other men. Massive and great, depending on nothing he perfects his heaven.²⁴

The first two sections of this textual unit are similar in topic and the course of exposition to the units analysed above. In the first section, two short and similar parallel statements are made about crippled persons who, nevertheless, impressed famous dukes by their persuasive skills (and probably their whole personalities). As a consequence, the dukes both came to overlook (forget) the two crippled persons' bodily deficiency, to the point of getting accustomed to it and taking it as a norm. The second section, beginning with 'therefore' (*gu* 故),

24 *Zhuangzi* 5, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 217; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 75—adapted.

explains the previous statements. Like in the previous textual units, it formulates the dichotomy of body (*xing*) and virtue (*de*), making thus explicit why the two cripples were valued—their virtue was so conspicuous that overshadowed their defects that otherwise could hardly be overlooked. The image of virtue without corresponding shape is formulated here again.

Immediately after this section, another ‘therefore’ (*gu*) marks the beginning of the section about the sage with human form but without human natural inclinations. The section 3 introduces a new set of ideas not present in the previous sections (or only hinted upon in the section 1)—the image of the sage, who is not crippled; on the contrary, he seems to transcend the state of human being by getting rid of human inclinations, though he still has the human form, obviously intact. Opposed to the social world, he belongs to ‘heaven’, which is marked by the disregard for social values—the »right and wrong cannot get at him«. At the first glance, the section is fully meaningful in itself. It could be read as a ‘definition’ of the sage and his attitude towards the world. However, the *Zhuangzi* usually says many different things on similar topics and the concept of the sage (the perfected person) is no exception.²⁵ I prefer to approach the section differently: Why is the sage described in this way in this section (unlike other sections)? Can the immediate context of the section (and of the whole chapter) shed any light on it?

The most obvious way the ‘sage section’ is contextualized into the chapter is the fact that the dichotomy of ‘heaven’ and ‘man’ is clearly paralleled to the distinction of virtue and body in the previous section (and the preceding textual units in the whole chapter). The sage’s being a man is as insignificant to him as is the mutilated body for the crippled persons. It is of no consequence to his true nature as well as to his functioning in the world (of which we learn nothing in this section, except it has nothing to do with the social reality).

The image of the sage in this textual unit has specific features, different from the images of the perfected persons elsewhere in the *Zhuangzi*. Here the sage is depicted as transcending the social world with no bonds to it (except the fact that he still has the human body). The image of the sage is based on the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’, which is specified analogously: it is only ‘heaven’ that matters, while the ‘man’ is completely debased. I believe it is crucial to note that this image of the sage and the concretization of the ‘heaven—man’ dichotomy in the third section correspond to and support the point of those sections dealing with the crippled persons: the inner true self is all that matters, while the

25 See the analysis of chapter 6 below in this article.

outward appearance is negligible. Both the ‘cripple’ and ‘sage’ sections are constructed *such that they make the same argument*. And it must be noted that in the ‘sage section’, it is the specific concretization of the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’ that does the trick (the sage has no use for ‘man’ and “depending on nothing perfects his ‘heaven’”).

I can see still another structural link between the ‘sage section’ and those parts dealing with crippled persons. The close parallel between the cripples (no form—perfect *de*) and the sage (human form debased—perfect *de* and transcendent features) suggests that these two types of figures form a pair with a distinct meaning. The parallel drawn between the cripple and the sage suggests that actually both act along the same lines. Both can act in the paradoxical way suggested by the chapter by making the one-sided stress on the inner perfection. They do not act according to some established models or forms they would emulate. Instead, they rely on their (purely inner, invisible) virtue and act according to that. The cripple »cannot even tell apart the functions of eyes and ears, and lets the heart go roaming [...]. As for the other things, he looks into that in which they are one, and does not see what each of them has lost; he regards losing his own foot as he would shaking off mud«. Or, in unit 3, Lao Dan, in the discussion with one-footed Shushan, says about Confucius: »Why not just make him recognize death and life as one thing and the acceptable and unacceptable as one string?« In the same vein, the sage, »since he does not have the natural inclinations of man, right and wrong cannot get at him [*shi fei bu de yu shen* 是非不得於身].« Relying on the inner virtue (instead of any visible form that could be emulated) is, after all, the only thing that conceptually links the cripple and the sage. The only direct manifestation of the virtue outward is the state of not preferring one thing over another, not resorting to fixed evaluations, not attaching values like right and wrong—*shi* and *fei*. These attitudes can be understood as the only ‘materialization’ of the true inner virtue, which is still—of course—without a fixed form.

I believe the centrality of the ‘not preferring one thing over another’ idea in chapter 5 is finally corroborated by the last, sixth textual unit. This is the only unit in chapter 5 not dealing with crippled persons at all. It contains the dialogue between Zhuangzi and Huizi 惠子 (i.e. Hui Shi 惠施, ca 380–305 BCE) about the problem of »people not having feelings/natural inclinations [*qing* 情].« There is no formal link between this unit and the previous one. However, there is a clear conceptual link: The sage in unit 5 »does not have the natural inclinations of man« and the discussion in unit 6 circles around the question whether it is possible at all for a man not to have (human) natural inclinations. During the

dialogue, Zhuangzi explains: »When I talk about having no natural inclinations, I mean that a man does not allow likes or dislikes to get in and do him harm. He just lets things be the way they are and does not try to help life along.« After a final objection by Huizi, Zhuang concludes the dialogue: »The Way gave him a face; Heaven gave him a form. He does not let likes or dislikes get in and do him harm. 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’!«

I believe it is plausible to read the final unit as a conclusion of the whole chapter, which highlights its principal idea. Indeed, ‘not differentiating’, ‘not preferring’ etc. is the only specific principle positively characterizing perfect action in this chapter.

The chapter’s meaning is structured around the parallel imagery of crippled person and sage. The meaning construction of the chapter can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Both the images of cripple and sage are arguments themselves. The ‘competent cripple’ by its very nature argues for the basic idea of the chapter (being perfect inside vs. nothing corresponding outside). The image of the sage is functioning in the same manner, by the specific concretization of the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’. It forms a specific image of the sage, who ‘depending on nothing perfects his heaven’ and his human form is disregarded as something negligible.
- 2) Both these images subvert the established social order (epitomized by Confucius in several sections of the chapter). Taken together, the subversive power is still intensified: the cripples function as advisers to rulers, while the sage transcends the social world and pays no attention to it (note that this is still a specific *interpretation* of the image of sage, conceptualized by the specific rendering of the heaven-man dichotomy). It must be noted that on this level of meaning construction, neither the cripple nor the sage represent models that should be emulated.²⁶ These images serve as literary devices used to subvert the established social order (or the Confucian ideal order).

26 This idea was developed by Hans-Georg Moeller (»Paradoxes of Health and Power in the *Zhuangzi*«, 79): »If one accepts an interpretation of the various characters in *Zhuangzi* 5 as parodies of Confucian ideals, one does not have to look at them as straightforward models of spiritual cultivation, but can reinterpret them as carnivalistic subversions of the Confucian insistence on matching social constructs with sincere commitment in them.«

- 3) In the final step, I argue that the images of the cripple and the sage in chapter 5 are not models to be emulated at all. They are not models of perfect personality attainable by human beings (by followers of Master Zhuang, or any reader). They are only arguments, i.e. ‘devices of persuasion’. The model to be emulated is the mode of action both the cripple and the sage are engaged in—relying on one’s inner virtue with no regard to fixed forms, and not differentiating between things, not preferring one thing over another. This mode of action results from the perfect inner virtue and everybody can follow it (it is not necessary to become crippled or to become the transcendent sage). The images of the cripple and the sage I take as extreme forms of being human, showing that the sagely action is attainable to everyone, even the cripple.
- 4) One more final note. It seems possible to argue that the act of reading of the chapter 5 itself follows the same principles outlined above. It seems natural to any reader to take the images of the cripple and the sage at face value during the first reading. These images are constructed as a sort of quasi-models (in many early Chinese text the image of perfect personality most likely serves as a model to emulate). It is only natural that the reader may understand the cripple and the sage as straightforward models at first. The text, however, invites the reader to understand that this too is relying on fixed models, condemned in the chapter.

So, as my final conclusion, the implied reading of this text seems to require the understanding that one must rely on one’s inner virtue and not the fixed forms—otherwise he fails not only to live properly but to understand the text as well.

Chapter 6 of the Zhuangzi

The chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi* forms an interesting counterpart to chapter 5. Although it is—as far as I can discern—less clearly structured than chapter 5, it is, nevertheless, possible to divide the chapter into two parts similar to the division of chapter 5. The first four textual units are dealing with the perfect personality and action of the sage, using the dichotomy ‘heaven—man’ as the principal framework defining the sage’s actions. Most of the rest of the chapter (seven units) contains narratives on non-sage persons, some of which are crippled. There is a leitmotif in the chapter, again similar to chapter 5: not differentiating between things, not preferring one thing over another as the principal means to perfecting one’s actions and living properly, repeatedly referred to as ‘forgetting’

or ‘overlooking’ (*wang* 忘) all distinctions in sensory perception and intellectual attachment to the world. In the following exposition, I will argue that despite these similarities, the shared vocabulary and imagery is actually employed to make different arguments and different points.

The first unit of chapter 6 deals with the perfect person (called here ‘True Man’, *zhenren* 真人) and the discussion is framed by the ‘heaven—man’ dichotomy. Although the unit is quite long, I will quote most of it, divided into three parts (referred to as A, B, C). The units begin with the section introducing the image of True Man:

Zhuangzi 6A:

知天之所為，知人之所為者，至矣。知天之所為者，天而生也；知人之所為者，以其知之所知，以養其知之所不知，終其天年而不中道夭者，是知之盛也。雖然，有患。夫知有所待而後當，其所待者特未定也。庸詎知吾所謂天之非人乎？所謂人之非天乎？且有真人，而後有真知。

Knowing both what the heaven does and what the man does is the utmost. He who knows what heaven does lives ‘heavenly’.^[27] He who knows what man does, by the knowledge of what he knows helps out the knowledge of what he does not know. He lives out the years allotted by heaven^[28] and does not die prematurely—this is the perfection of knowledge [of what the man does]. However, there is still a difficulty. Knowledge always depends on something before it can be applicable, and that which it depends on is never fixed. How can I know that what I call heaven is not really man? How can I know that what I call man is not really heaven? First there must be a True Man and only then there can be a true knowledge.²⁹

The section introduces the topic ‘heaven—man’ as a problem of differentiating one from the other. The action of ‘heaven’ is described tautologically—who understands ‘heaven’ lives ‘heavenly’. The ‘man’s’ action is depicted more clearly—the most perfect human action has the result of fulfilling the natural span of life (*tiannian*). As this contradicts the descriptions of the sagely action that follow (which includes not preferring life over death), it is safe to assume that ‘living heavenly’ must refer to ‘not preferring one thing over the other’ as it was analysed above. At the end of the section True Man is mentioned as the only arbiter of the problem if something is of ‘heaven’, or of ‘man’. The rest of the unit consists of several successive descriptions of the True Man:

27 I. e. naturally, without deliberate planning etc.

28 *Tiannian* 天年, i. e. the natural number of years, avoiding premature death.

29 *Zhuangzi* 6, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 224–226; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 77—adapted.

Zhuangzi 6B:

何謂真人？古之真人，不逆寡，不雄成，不謨士。若然者，過而弗悔，當而不自得也。若然者，登高不慄，入水不濡，入火不熱。是知之能登假於道者也若此。古之真人，其寢不夢，其覺无憂，其食不甘，其息深深。真人之息以踵，眾人之息以喉。屈服者，其嗑言若哇。其耆欲深者，其天機淺。古之真人，不知說生，不知惡死；其出不訢，其入不距；儻然而往，儻然而來而已矣。不忘其所始，不求其所終；受而喜之，忘而復之。是之謂不以心捐道，不以人助天。是之謂真人。

What do I mean by the True Man? The True Man of ancient times did not rebel against want, did not grow proud in plenty, and did not plan his affairs. A man like this could commit an error and not regret it, could meet with success and not make a show. A man like this could climb the high places and not be frightened, could enter the water and not get wet, could enter the fire and not get burned. His knowledge was able to climb all the way up to the Way like this.

The True Man of ancient times slept without dreaming and woke without care; he ate without savouring and his breath came from deep inside. The True Man breathes with his heels; the mass of men breathe with their throats. Crushed and bound down, they gasp out their words as though they were retching. Their passions and desires are deep, their heavenly mechanism is shallow.

The True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death. He emerged without delight; he went back in without a fuss. He came briskly, he went briskly, and that was all. He did not forget where he began; he did not try to find out where he would end. He received something and took pleasure in it; he forgot about it and handed it back again. This is what I call not using the mind to repel the Way [*dao* 道], not using man to assist heaven [*tian*]. This is what I call the True Man.³⁰

This section summarizes many characteristics of the perfected person we find in many other chapters of the *Zhuangzi*. In the first part of the section, the True Man is described as indifferent to the things that normally elicit likes and dislikes in men and impervious to harm from water, fire, or heights. These are common descriptions of the perfect person in the *Zhuangzi*. In the second part, hints at specific self-cultivation techniques are added (the True Man breathes with his heels) and the term ‘heaven’ is first introduced. The ‘mass of men’ (*zhongren* 眾人) not only breathe shallowly, everything they do is shallow. As the text puts it, their ‘heavenly mechanism is shallow’ (*qi tianji jian* 其天機淺). The

30 *Zhuangzi* 6, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 226–229; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 77–78—adapted.

expression *tianji* ('heavenly mechanism'³¹) occurs several times in the *Zhuangzi* and it refers to the 'heavenly' (natural) source of power every human has inside and can have work through him/her, opposed to human scheming and planning. The third part further specifies that the True Man does not show a preference for life over death and accepts both as they are encountered. Overlooking even the difference between life and death can be taken as the peak of the attitude of 'not preferring one thing over the other'. The unit thus repeats the basic idea of chapter 5, which is further confirmed by the reference to 'heaven' and 'man' at the end of the section: »This is what I call not using the mind to repel the Way, not using man to assist heaven. This is what I call the True Man.« *Dao* is contrasted to the human 'mind' (*xin*), heaven to 'man' (*ren*). What is human must not be used to 'assist' heaven—heaven is the true source of the True Man's perfected action. So far, the picture is not different from chapter 5. The perfect man must rely on what is 'heavenly' in him (the 'heavenly mechanism') and not on human deliberate thinking (planning and scheming). 'Heaven' seems to be given precedence over 'man'. However, the final part of this textual unit introduces a new set of ideas that change the picture substantially:

Zhuangzi 6C:

〔古之真人：〕若然者，其心志，其容寂，其顙顙，淒然似秋，燠然似春，喜怒通四時，與物有宜，而莫知其極。故聖人之用兵也，亡國而不失人心；利澤施於萬物，不為愛人。〔……〕

〔古之真人〕以刑為體，以禮為翼，以知為時，以德為循。以刑為體者，綽乎其殺也；以禮為翼者，所以行於世也；以知為時者，不得已於事也；以德為循者，言其與有足者至於丘也，而人真以為勤行者也。故其好之也一，其弗好之也一。其一也一，其不一也一。其一與天為徒；其不一與人為徒。天與人不相勝也，是之謂真人。

[The True Man of ancient times:] His mind was concentrated, his face was calm, his forehead was broad. He was chilly like autumn, warm like spring, his joy and anger pervaded the four seasons and were appropriate with regard to all things. No one knew his limits. Therefore, when the sage calls out the troops, he may overthrow nations but he will not lose the hearts of the people. His bounty enriches ten thousand ages, but it is not that he cares for men. [...]

[The True Man of ancient times] regarded punishments as the body, rites as the wings, intellectual capacity as what is timely, virtue as acting according to situation. Because he regarded punishments as the body, he was benign in his killing. Because he regarded rites as the wings, he got along with the world. Because he regarded

31 Or 'heavenly engine', 'natural engine'—it is the unconscious mover within a living being.

intellectual capacity as what is timely, there were things that he could not keep from doing. He regarded virtue as acting according to situation—that means he gets to the top of the hill together with someone who has legs; and yet people really believe that he worked hard to get there. What he liked he treated without discrimination. What he did not like he also treated without discrimination. What he treated without discrimination, he treated without discrimination. What he did not treat without discrimination, he [nevertheless] treated without discrimination [too]. In what he treated without discrimination, he followed the heaven. In what he did not treat without discrimination, he followed the men. When heaven and man do not overcome each other, that is called the True Man.³²

The last part of the section C should immediately attract the reader's attention. It deals with the relation between 'heaven' and 'man' like section B (or one of the units from chapter 5 analysed above) but reaches a different conclusion. Here, the conclusion does not prefer 'heaven' to 'man'. On the contrary, it explicitly states that a state of balance is required, in which »heaven and man do not overcome each other«. Apparently both are regarded as equally important constituents of the perfect person; only together can they form perfection. There seems to be a contradiction in the unit: Section B prefers 'heaven' over 'man' (»not using man to assist heaven«), while section C requires balance between both realms.

I believe that we can explain the apparent contradiction by the proper contextualization of the dichotomy 'heaven—man', like above in chapter 5. I suggest we read the unit as a structured text with sections B and C as the key opposition that forms the structure (section A only opens the discussion). I regard the sections B and C as a structure in the following sense:

The section B deals with the perfect person's 'not preferring' attitude, which is referred to as 'heaven'. The perfect person is able to fully act in 'heavenly' manner, »not using man to assist heaven«. In other words, absolutely no deliberate thinking is applied by the True Man in all his activities. As a result (in the view of the text), his actions are perfect, perfectly attuned to the natural processes in his environment, to the point of the sage's not getting burned by fire, not getting drowned in water etc. The natural processes are 'heavenly' too, this is why guiding one's actions by 'heaven' is more effective than deliberate thinking. In the section (just like in the whole chapter 5) the focus is entirely on the perfect person's psychology (based on the 'not preferring' attitude). As far as

32 *Zhuangzi* 6, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 234–235; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 79–80—adapted.

the perfect person's psychology is concerned, 'heaven' must be preferred over 'man', because 'heaven' is introduced as the guiding principle of the perfect person's attitude towards the world.

In section C, apart from the stress on 'not preferring' attitude towards the world, another idea is added—that of the sage's actions' visible impact on the social world. It is repeatedly stressed that the sage actually acts in the social world, though still in 'not preferring' manner. His actions are presented as provoked by the given situation, and not as a result of deliberate planning. Without deliberation, the sage's emotions are »appropriate with regard to all things«, the sage can »call out the troops, he may overthrow nations but he will not lose the hearts of the people«, »his bounty enriches ten thousand ages, but it is not that he cares for men.«

In the last part of section C, four terms are mentioned that in early Chinese thought represent the standard tools for ordering human society: punishments, rites, intellectual capacity, and virtue. These terms are downplayed, as can be expected in the *Zhuangzi*: »He regarded punishments as the body, rites as the wings, intellectual capacity as what is timely, virtue as acting according to situation.«³³ The downplaying is not as radical as in many other parts of the *Zhuangzi*—the terms are not rejected, just reinterpreted. This is further elaborated in the following sentences. In this section, it is made clear that the True Man actually becomes engaged in the world and its social norms and institutions (although the text may not be entirely clear in some details): The way the True Man treats the punishments leads to his being »benign in his killing«;³⁴ his treatment of the rites leads to his being able to »get along with the world«; he regards intellectual capacity as what is timely,³⁵ which results in his having things that »he could not keep from doing«; he regards virtue as acting according to the situation, which means, as the text puts it, »he gets to the top of the hill together with someone who has legs—and yet people really believe that he worked hard to get there«.³⁶

33 Usually, in the *Zhuangzi* everything belonging to the realm of 'man' is downplayed, as opposed to the realm of 'heaven'.

34 Because he follows the penal law and does not kill arbitrarily?

35 In my reading—he does not plan or scheme, but is able to discern the opportune moment for effective action.

36 Because he got there by supernatural means and only by coincidence he was accompanied by a normal walker (to whom he adapted his pace)?

In my reading of the section, these statements all refer to a very specific mode of perfect action—the True Man accepts the world as it is and ‘designs’ his actions according to the situation at hand, including the relevant social institutions, norms and values.³⁷ This specifies how ‘heaven’ and ‘man’ are interconnected in the person of the True Man (their »not overcoming each other«). Observed from the outside, he engages in the world like other human beings; inside, however, he retains the attitude of disengagement;³⁸ he is not emotionally attached to anything he is doing. The stillness inside is the perfect virtue that brings about the perfect action manifested outwards, which means perfect handling of the conventional social reality. The perfect man—observed from the outside—acts in accord with social norms and physical laws like any other man (the ‘man’ part). Inside, however, he is still and empty, emotionally detached from anything he is doing and has (possibly) certain supernatural abilities, like walking without effort (the ‘heaven’ part, which is invisible from the outside).

When we read sections B and C in the context of each other (at this point, in the context of their textual unit), it becomes plausible to read them as complementary opposites describing the True Man and his actions in opposite but interrelated ways. Section B focuses on the psychology of the sage—the adjustment of his mind (‘not preferring’ attitude) necessary to act and live properly. Conceptually, the ‘heaven—man’ dichotomy is used as the major device to describe the psychology of the sage. As we already saw in the analysis of chapter 5 and here again, the dichotomy is specified, so that it forms a ‘device of persu-

37 The sage regards »punishments as the body«—he takes it as the terrain that is simply there and naturally shapes any action in the social world; »rites as the wings«—he takes the rites as a convenient means to act in the social world; he regards »intellectual capacity as what is timely«, »virtue as acting according to situation«—the sage does not plan or scheme anything, he only makes use of every opportunity.

38 Cf. the last part of this section: »What he treated without discrimination, he treated without discrimination. What he did not treat without discrimination, he [nevertheless] treated without discrimination [too]. In what he treated without discrimination, he followed the heaven. In what he did not treat without discrimination, he followed the men.« This passage is not easy, but in my opinion understandable in the sense just explained: The True Man is ‘man’ in what he treats with discrimination (like every other man). However, even that is not discriminating (from different points of view—of the heaven, of his still inner mind). Thus, he only *seems* to be discriminating; in fact (the reality of his inner state of mind), however, he treats everything without discrimination (acts according to situation, and not according to his own plans).

asion' aimed at the desired point—in the psychology of the perfect person, 'heaven' must be given precedence over 'man'.

At first glance, section C seems to contradict section B, because it puts the relation between 'heaven' and 'man' differently, as a balance between both realms. However, as the above analysis of the section has shown, it is again plausible to take this specification of the dichotomy not as a direct statement, but as an argument supporting the main idea of the section. In section C, the perfect person is viewed from the outside, the stress is laid on the visible aspects of the sagely actions in the social world. As it turns out, although the sage has no preferences with respect to the social world, nevertheless, he still follows the present social reality and responds to it in his actions. The True Man is not rendered as a transcendent being independent on the social world completely. Instead, he still lives and acts within the social world, just with no preferences and deliberate thinking. His actions are guided solely by what the situation at hand demands, including such mundane realities like raising troops or rewarding subordinates.

Consequently, the specific interpretation of the 'heaven—man' dichotomy at the end of section C needs no longer be read as a contradiction to section B. It becomes plausible to read it as a literary device used to make a specific argument. In section C, the relation of 'heaven' and 'man' in the actions of the sage is focused upon, that is why the potential of the dichotomy is used to this end. Viewed from outside, from the point of view of the sage's impact on the social world, it becomes clear that »heaven and man must not overcome each other«, both are needed if the sage is to act properly.

If we turn our attention to the rest of the chapter 6, we find many units concerned with non-sage persons, some of which are crippled, like in chapter 5. I believe chapter 6 is less well structured than chapter 5 and I will attempt no structural analysis of the chapter as a whole. It should be noted, however, that the distinction between the views from inside (psychology of the sage) and outside (social functioning of the sage) informs most of the units on non-sage persons as well. Let us take the unit dealing with crippled persons as an example. In the first section of the unit, four friends enthusiastically endorse the idea of 'not preferring one thing over another':

子祀、子輿、子犁、子來四人相與語曰：孰能以無為首，以生為脊，以死為尻，孰知生死存亡之一體者，吾與之友矣。四人相視而笑，莫逆於心，遂相與為友。

Zisi, Ziyu, Zili, and Zilai were all four talking together. »Who can look upon nonbeing as his head, on life as his back, and on death as his buttocks?« they said.

»Who knows that life and death, existence and annihilation, are all a single body? I

will be his friend!« The four men looked at each other and smiled. There was no disagreement in their hearts and so the four of them became friends.³⁹

The narrative follows with the event of a crippling disease that befell one of the friends, Ziyu:

俄而子輿有病，子祀往問之。曰：偉哉！夫造物者，將以予為此拘拘也！曲僂發背，上有五管，頤隱於齊，肩高於頂，句贅指天。陰陽之氣有沴，其心閒而無事，跣足而鑑於井，曰：嗟乎！夫造物者，又將以予為此拘拘也！子祀曰：汝惡之乎？曰：亡，予何惡！浸假而化予之左臂以為雞，予因以求時夜；浸假而化予之右臂以為彈，予因以求鴉炙；浸假而化予之尻以為輪，以神為馬，予因以乘之，豈更駕哉！且夫得者時也，失者順也，安時而處順，哀樂不能入也。

All at once Ziyu fell ill. Zisi went to ask how he was.

»Amazing«, said Ziyu. »The creator is making me all crooked like this! My back sticks up like a hunchback and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my pigtail points at the sky. It must be some dislocation of the yin and yang!« Yet he seemed calm at heart and unconcerned. Dragging himself haltingly to the well, he looked at his reflection and said, »My, my! So the creator is making me all crooked like this!«

»Do you resent it?« asked Zisi.

»Why, what would I resent? If the process continues, perhaps in time he will transform my left arm into a rooster. In that case I will keep watch on the night. Or perhaps in time he will transform my right arm into a crossbow pellet and I will shoot down an owl for roasting. Or perhaps in time he will transform my buttocks into cartwheels. Then, with my spirit of a horse, I will climb up and go for a ride. What need will I ever have for a carriage again? I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you.«⁴⁰

First, it should be noted that just like in all previous texts analysed in this article, 'not preferring one thing over another' remains the principal idea regarding human psychology. The non-sage persons in this section act along exactly the same guidelines as the sages in the previous sections. They do not differentiate between things and events, no matter how terrible consequences they bring about. All life twists are equally welcomed, including death itself. The only difference from the sages lies in the fact that the non-sage persons are depicted as left at the mercy of unpredictable transformations (though the transfor-

39 *Zhuangzi* 6, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 217; transl. based on Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 83–84—adapted.

40 *Zhuangzi* 6, in *Zhuangzi jishi*, 217; transl. based on *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 84—adapted.

mations are welcomed). The perfect persons, on the contrary, are typically described as impervious to the outer world (fire cannot burn them etc.)

When we compare the image of a crippled person in this section and in chapter 5, we immediately see that the image is used for a different purpose. In chapter 5, it is used to stress the ‘perfect inside—mutilated outside’ concept. Here, it highlights the ‘not preferring’ concept itself (any state or process is equally good, including a crippling disease). It should be noted, however, that the ‘not preferring’ psychology is here—just like in the first unit in chapter 6—simultaneously observed from the outside. In other words, on the inside there is the ‘not preferring’ attitude towards the world. On the outside, however, this attitude clashes with the world with terrifying consequences. While the sage, sharing the same psychological setting, functions perfectly in the world (though without deliberation), the non-sage is subjected to the transformations of the world and lacks any privileged position among other things and beings.

In a sum, both the ‘sage’ and ‘non-sage’ units⁴¹ contained in chapter 6 share the same pattern, just like the sage parts and non-sage parts in chapter 5. In both chapters, however, the imagery of the sage and the non-sage (crippled person) is used differently.

Conclusion

The analysis of chapters 5 and 6 of the *Zhuangzi* presented in this paper has argued that concepts and narratives shared by these two chapters (imagery of sage and crippled person, the dichotomy between ‘heaven’ and ‘man’) do not convey a unified, fixed meaning. There is no unified ‘concept of the sage’ or unified idea of the relation between ‘heaven’ and ‘man’ in the *Zhuangzi*, not even in these two chapters. The ways these terms, ideas, or narratives are used are often incompatible.

The reading strategy proposed in this paper approaches these terms, ideas and narratives not as fixed concepts but as literary devices used to formulate *various ideas*. The immediate context of any section of the *Zhuangzi* (that is, a textual unit or a whole chapter in which the section appears) is seen as vital to the proposed reading. It is the context that provides the clues to understand the

41 In the other units concerning the non-sage persons in chapter 6, there are dying persons (instead of crippled ones) playing the main role. The dying persons display the same attitude—they welcome death as any other transformation.

specific use of a given term or narrative. The terms and narratives are read as literary devices and not ideas in their own right. Read in this way, the seeming incongruities can be explained: Incongruous views of the 'sage', for example, are interpreted as putting forth ideas that themselves, finally, may not be incongruous, as we have seen in our analysis of chapters 5 and 6. The accounts of sages and crippled persons in these two chapters are mutually incompatible, when read in isolation. When contextualized into the chapter in which they occur, however, their nature as literary devices shows up, and the reader's attention is directed to the meaning these devices mediate, and not to the devices themselves. The chapters 5 and 6 are read as making different arguments within a shared framework, which is, finally, not incongruous (at least as far as these two chapters are concerned). The actions of a sage or a crippled person are viewed once from the point of view of the persons' psychology, once from the point of view of their impact on the social world. Thus, they can be depicted as totally detached from the world in one section, and entangled with the world (in a sense) in another. These opposite statements are parts of different arguments—that is why they differ.

However, these opposite statements are still formulated within a shared framework (based on the 'not preferring' attitude). 'Not preferring' (in chapters 5 and 6, not in the whole *Zhuangzi*) can be interpreted as a general framework forming a field of possible meanings that are realized in various arguments in the text. This general framework, however, cannot be identified with the import of the text (the 'philosophy' of the *Zhuangzi* or whatever we call it). This paper argues that in order to read the text properly (I believe the proposed reading strategy is implied by the text, it is the reading invited by the nature of the text), the reader must identify the arguments made in the textual units or chapters and thus read the individual terms, ideas etc. in their immediate context. In this paper, the immediate context (textual unit, chapter) is viewed as vital in establishing the meaning of the text, as opposed to reading the text as a repository of isolated fragments.

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