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Playing cat and dreaming butterfly – Skepticism of Montaigne and Zhuangzi

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Аннотация

Many scholars refer to Montaigne and Zhuangzi as “skeptics” because of their opinions on ethics, religion and language. Therefore, a detailed study on their philosophical thinking is conducted in terms of the four branches of modern skepticism: ethical skepticism, linguistic skepticism, epistemological skepticism and sensory skepticism. Then, in order to determine whether Montaigne and Zhuangzi treat skepticism as an instrument or belief, the intentions of their writing are explored. Finally, it raises questions on the legibility of comparative study and cross-cultural study and gives justifications.

Ключевые слова: skepticism., philosophy, Comparative literature

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the skeptical thinking of two great writers - the ancient Chinese author, Zhuangzi, and the sixteenth-century philosopher, Michel de Montaigne - and compares them in terms of skepticism. The study also traces the debate on the epistemological basis of skepticism and states the reason and justification. Besides, since the era of structuralism and post-structuralism in the 1960s, scholars tend to question the legitimacy of comparing works from different cultures and eras. This study refutes those doubts and argues that the significance of comparative literature is to prove the universality of human civilizations.

Montaigne and Zhuangzi's fundamental sceptical thinking

Skepticism is a branch of philosophy that doubts knowledge, truth, and sense. It can also mean a skeptical attitude towards assertion or truth. The former is called philosophical skepticism, which originated from the Greek "skepticos," meaning "reflective and thoughtful" (Gove and Merriam-Webster, 1993, p.401). There are four major classifications of philosophical skepticism. Sensory skepticism is skepticism of a particular kind of knowledge derived from the senses. Ethical skepticism is the belief that there are no moral truths. Epistemological skepticism is skepticism about the possibility of knowledge in general. Finally, linguistic skepticism believes that language is inadequate for expressing specific facts about reality (Audi, 2003, p.74). To begin with, Montaigne fiercely criticized the knowledge derived from our senses. He argued that we have no access to physical objects other than through our sensory experiences, which are not physical. Our sensory experiences have no objective description, so our conclusions are not deductive. Therefore, our sense is the only ground we have, but it can be false and uncertain. "The uncertainty of our senses makes everything they produce uncertain" (Montaigne, 2003, p.472). Due to this uncertainty, we cannot even be "sure enough about whether snow is

white" (Montaigne, 2003, p.473). Then he begins to doubt the possibility of our sense like Descartes about whether we see it or not. "Most people often ask, 'How does this happen?' 'What they should say is: 'But does it happen?' (Montaigne, 2003, p.955). Unlike Montaigne's radical doubt, Zhuangzi seldom discusses sense and doubts its possibility and reality. He only uses relativism to show that the knowledge generated by our sense is not a fixed answer. "There is nothing in the world bigger than the tip of an autumn hair, and Mount Tai is tiny" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.19), and he also pointed our limitation of sense by analogy. "The morning mushroom knows nothing of twilight and dawn; the summer cicada knows nothing of spring and autumn" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.30).

In ethical skepticism, both doubt their societies' moral truths and use relativism as the weapon to achieve that. As Ryle puts it, "there can be false coins only where there are coins made of the proper materials by the proper authorities" (Ryle, 1954, p.2). If there is no such proper coin, then there is no consistent false. Montaigne uses examples of different customs in the new continent or primitive society, such as cannibalism, to show that every moral truth of human society is relative and there is no right or wrong. He sums up in a famous sentence, "What am I to make of a virtue that I saw in credit yesterday, that will be discredited tomorrow, and that becomes a crime on the other side of the river? What of a truth bounded by these mountains and is a falsehood to the world that lives beyond?" (Montaigne, 2003, p.531). On the other hand, in the chapter "Discussion on Making Things All Equal," Zhuangzi lists different living habits of Monkey, deer, and fish and concludes: "The way I see it, the rules of benevolence and righteousness and the path of right and wrong are all hopelessly snarled and jumbled. How could I know anything about such discriminations?" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.509). However, both Montaigne and Zhuangzi advocate a specific kind of moral standard which will be in this study.

Montaigne questions reason itself in epistemological skepticism and thus “shake the barriers and last fences of knowledge" (Montaigne, 2003, p.509). He uses many examples to muse on "how free and vague an instrument human reason is" (Montaigne, 2003, p. 955). Moreover, Montaigne also questions whether philosophers extend the scope of the reason so infinitely that "they exercise their judgment even in inanity and nonbeing" (Montaigne, 2003, p.963). Montaigne also asserts that "the knowledge of causes belongs only

to Him who has the guidance of things, not to us who have only the enduring of them" (Montaigne, 2003, p.955). We cannot use reason to prove or disprove the essence of God or our origin. Therefore, Montaigne concluded that "the end and beginning of knowledge are equal in stupidity" (Montaigne, 2003, p.494). Zhuangzi, however, tries to use logic that one thing comes out of another, and one thing depends on another to prove that "heaven and earth are one attribute; the ten thousand things are one horse" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p. 40). "For this reason, whether you point to a little stalk or a great pillar…. The way makes them all into one" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.41).

In this aspect, they have many similar expressions. For instance, Montaigne questions, "why do we not consider the possibility that our thinking, our acting, maybe another sort of dreaming, and our waking as another sort of sleep" (Montaigne, 2003, p.548)? Zhuangzi also doubts whether we know the difference between dreams and reality. "While he is dreaming, he does not know it is a dream, and in his dream, he may even try to interpret a dream. Only after he wakes does he know it was a dream. And someday there will be a great awakening when we know that this all a great dream." However, Zhuangzi believes that he knows the secular world is a dream, while Montaigne thinks we have no access to the actual answer, so we should not abandon the secular life. Harold Bloom summarizes Montaigne's philosophy in one sentence: "when I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me" (Bloom, 1994, p.172)? Confidentially, the most famous parable in Zhuangzi is the dreaming butterfly. Zhuangzi "did not know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt that he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.49). They both questioned our knowledge of other minds. Everything we believe about what is occurring in the inner lives of others seems to be doubtful because of this argument: whatever is observed in their behaviors does not entail anything about their minds. They could be pretending, and we have no way to verify it. However, Montaigne leaves it open while Zhuangzi asserts that "between Chuang Chou and a butterfly, there must be some distinction!" it is a moderate epistemological skepticism: there is something wrong in our mind that prevents us from reaching knowledge, but sages can overcome the difficulty.

As far as linguistic skepticism is concerned, they both regard language as a defective instrument. Montaigne points out the inner

contradiction in the logic of speech. For example, whether the statement "I lie" is a truth or a lie. Montaigne agreed with Pyrrhonian philosophers that general conception could not be expressed in "any manner of language," "for they would need a new language" (Montaigne, 2003, p.476). So he refused to "combine the divine power under the laws of our speech." Zhuangzi's opinion on language is very similar to Montaigne's: "the Great Way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p. 46). Since the truth cannot be spoken, Zhuangzi thinks, "words exist because of meaning; once you have gotten the meaning, you can forget the words" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.302). His opinion follows the Tao Te Ching that "One who knows does not speak; one who speaks does not know." (Laozi, 2001, p.23), But Bo Juyi points out this paradox: "these words, I am told, was spoken by Laozi. If we believe that he was the one who knew, how did he come to write a book of five thousand words?" (Chinese poems, 2005, p.91) Hui Tzu also tells Zhuangzi: "Your words are useless!" However, Zhuangzi answers: "A man has to understand the useless before you can talk to him about the useful" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.299). Then Zhuangzi uses an analogy of digging all the earth around the man then his feet becoming useless to show that language is an instrument to eliminate the moral standard of the secular world.

From scepticism to worldview

After briefly analyzing Montaigne and Zhuangzi's skeptical thinking, it is important to discuss its relation to their worldview, belief, and opinions. Due to space limitations only select some crucial topics could be selected. There was a long-lasting, three-cornered civil war between the Catholic League, the Protestants, and the Royalists in Montaigne's time. Montaigne refused to take a side in any of them. Similarly, Zhuangzi lived in the spring and autumn period (BCE 770- 221), chaotic and full of wars. It was also the time of Hundred Schools of Thoughts when the debate trend was prevalent. Facing thousands of people fighting and dying for their religious beliefs, Montaigne thinks that "the divine never touches human life without upsetting order in which man is most at home" (Montaigne, 2003, p.952). Due to his skepticism of man's ability to achieve truth, he wishes people to be humble and tolerant of others'

beliefs. "Let them appear as probable, not be affirmed" (Montaigne, 2003, p.960). When he lives in a town where the local officers of the Inquisition accused women of being witches and burned them, he remarks that "It is putting a very high price on one's conjectures to have a man roasted alive because of them." (Montaigne, 2003, p. 962) Montaigne also criticizes people's blinded belief in the mainstream that "the best touchstone of truth is the multitude of believers." (Montaigne, 2003, p.957) Similarly, Zhuangzi criticizes ignorant individuals who "sweat and labouring to the end of his days and never seeing his knowing accomplishment, utterly exhausting himself and never knowing where to look for rest" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.38).

Furthermore, because of man's illusory claims to knowledge, Montaigne questions whether we could know about the afterlife, or one step further, we can live after death or not. So, he is doubtful about the eternal beatitude, and we should not "hope to stride further than our legs can reach" because of "our impoverished nature." Moreover, He also questions the Christian doctrine of reward and punishment. "Upon what foundation of their justice can the gods take notice of or reward man after his death and virtuous actions, since it was themselves that put them in the way and mind to do them?" (Montaigne, 2003, p.511). While the "gods" in this sentence are pagan, nothing prevents us from applying these thoughts to the Judeo-Christian God. Therefore, Montaigne's sincerity on religious matters is doubtful. Montaigne's belief in God is similar to Zhuangzi's belief in Dao, albeit Zhuangzi is much more faithful than Montaigne. Zhuangzi's Dao is a natural law, eternal peace, and exalted status. It cannot be found in secular life. Living in a world full of chaos and debates, Zhuangzi criticizes every kind of doctrine and wants to escape from this chaotic world and free himself from the strain imposed by the country and moral standards. He uses skepticism to prove that right and wrong are relative, and the standard of measuring keeps changing, so we can only achieve the status of Dao when we give up the secular life (Liu and Zheng, 1987, p.4). That is why Watson says the central theme of the Zhuangzi might be summed up in a single word: freedom (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.3). As Sartre put it, "What first appears evident is that human reality can detach itself from the world – in questioning, in systematic doubt, in skeptical doubt, in the epoch, etc. -only if by nature it has the possibility of self-detachment." (Sartre, 1956, p.3)

Zhuangzi wants to live like the giant bird P'eng in the chapter "Free and Easy Wandering," freely wandering in the sky.

Therefore, the rule that Zhuangzi uses to measure everything in the world is whether it violates the nature of freedom. Xunzi perfectly concluded that "Zhuangzi was blinded by Nature and was insensible to men" (Xunzi, 1988, p.29). It is why Zhuangzi often criticizes the moral standards of Confucians and Mohists. The hilarious joke in his book is that one day Confucious' best disciple Yan Hui comes to Confucius and says, "I am improving because I have forgotten benevolence and righteousness!" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p. 90) He also objects to every kind of political system and refuses to be the prime minister when the king of Chu invites him. (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.187) On Zhuangzi's account, "political and social institutions serve only to impose suffering on man. This is because the natures of different things are not identical, and each thing has its likings." Therefore, he advocates the status of primitive society, which is similar to Montaigne's opinion that "a thousand little woman in their village have lived a more equable, sweeter and more consistent life than Cicero" (Montaigne, 2003, p.437).

Compared to Zhuangzi's desire to get close to nature, Montaigne thinks that we cannot understand the truth of nature, and it is a vain pursuit to achieve the nature standard of perfection. It is quite a sharp contrast which is very important to understand their different skeptical attitude: negative and positive. Although Montaigne laughs at science's "false and borrowed beauty" (Montaigne, 2003, p.487), he advocates improving science for its practical utility to make man live more comfortably. "The proper task of the scientist is to discover among the "many works of nature" those things that are "suited to the conservation of our health" (Montaigne, 2003, p.745). Why did Montaigne emphasize conserving our health so deeply? It is related to his understanding of nature which is quite different to Zhuangzi. For Montaigne, nature is "the most fixed and universal" (Montaigne, 2003, p.564). The most fixed instinct of animals is to preserve themselves, so the only true natural law is the law of self-preservation. However, Zhuangzi draws an opposite conclusion that we should neglect our physical well-being and treat death as a normal process of nature. He even "pounded on a tub and sang" when his wife dead. His best friend Hui Tzu could not help but say, "this is going too far" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.192).

Influence and significance of Montaigne and Zhuangzi's skepticism

Both Montaigne and Zhuangzi shape the spirit of their cultures and sow the seeds for the future. Montaigne destroyed the spiritual domination of medieval philosophical philosophy, resulting in a philosophical revolution of empiricism in modern times. His criticism of human cognitive abilities and emphasis on rationality is crucial for us to reflect on the renaissance (Lu, 2003, p.81). Pico's famous article "Oration of the Dignity of the Man" was published in 1496, seen as the "Manifesto of the Renaissance." Montaigne's "Apology for Raymond Sebond" was written to refute his hubris. Zhuangzi's skepticism is based on his theory of evolution that all species are naturally evolved through variation in forms and that each form or species is adapted to its place and environment (Hu, 1963, p.39). Like Montaigne, his argument that "Heaven and earth were born when I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me" (Montaigne, 2003, p.43) greatly eliminated anthropocentrism and changed Chinese people's attitude towards nature. Moreover, his story of transforming himself into a butterfly influenced Zhang Zai's argument that "All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions" and Wang Yongming's thought of "benevolence of all things forming one body" (Yan, 2014, p.32). Montaigne's greatest achievement for modern society is that he tries to use skepticism to propagate the modern bourgeois – the isolated individual, wholly caught up in the private pursuit of physical pleasure, unconcerned with politics so long as the government provides him with the security of life and property that constitute the precondition of that pursuit. In order to liberate humanity from tyranny in the name of religion and morality, Montaigne advocates what Pascal regarded as "a shocking indifference to these most serious matters" (Pascal, 1999, p.47) or, in Montaigne's own words, "wandering at nothing" (Montaigne, 2003, p.473). Therefore, the liberty, prosperity, and comfort we enjoy as citizens of a liberal, commercial society are derived from Montaigne and his successors, including Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke, who "put their earthly well-being ahead of pretensions to divinity" (Sedley, 1998, p.48). In contrast, the most valuable significance of Zhuangzi's skepticism is

his transformation and evaluation of secular life. The parable of P'eng and little quail in Free and Easy Wondering shows the difference between "big" and "little," secular and ideal (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.31). The story of Carpenter Shih in "the World of Men" revalued the definition of the useful and useless tree to express the opposition to being a tool and having commercial value. Last but not least, skepticism has its own value. Because Sceptic's demand for absolute justification could not be met, it is a "bloodless victory" in epistemology (Ayer, 1990, p.39). Our reward for taking skepticism so seriously is that we could distinguish the different levels at which our claims to knowledge stand. In this way, we understand the dimensions of our language and so of the world we describe. Moreover, since dogmatists firmly believe something, skepticism becomes the weapon to prevent institutions from persecuting people for believing things that are "known" to be mistaken and wicked (Musgrave, 1993, p.37). Therefore, skepticism helps to restore the peace of the world. As Russell puts it, "the opinion for which people are willing to fight and persecute all belong to one of the three classes which this skepticism condemns" (Russell, 2004, p.63).

Skepticism as an instrument or belief

At this point, every casual reader will start to ask: Is skepticism merely an instrument? There is a long-lasting debate about whether skeptics truly believe what they say and apply it to real life. For example, as Hume puts it, skeptical arguments "admit of no refutation but produce no conviction" (Hume, 2000, p.29). There is no practical purpose at all. In another book, he asserts that "it is certain that no man ever met with any such absurd creature as the complete skeptic" (Hume, 2008, p.73). Russell made up a funny story about the famous ancient Greek skeptic Pyrrho who pays little attention to his comfort or safety. One day Pyrrho saw his teacher Anaxarchus dropping into a hole, but he just walked away without helping him because he thought there was no sufficient ground for thinking he would do any good by pulling him out. Also, Pyrrho could live up to the 80s because his disciples always saved him from danger (Russell, 2004, p.76).

Except for this tradition, some words of Montaigne and Zhuangzi indeed give evidence that they use skepticism as an instrument. Charles Sainte-Beuve suggests that Montaigne's seeming skepticism is "in reality a new form of dogmatism" because he assumes that the universe is unintelligible for human beings, opposite to ancient philosophers' assumption that the universe is intelligible (Sainte-Beuve, 2000, p.28). Though Montaigne disparages presumption as a "malady" and says that "from presumption all sin" (Montaigne, 2003, p.437), he sets a presumption for himself and reached a dogmatic conclusion. Besides, when he says truth must have one fact that we cannot reach, it is contradictory because he holds both skeptical and Catholic beliefs. Zhuangzi, similar to Montaigne, has also been doubted fiercely for his unfavorable attitude to Confucians and Mohists, which is not supposed to have on a skeptic who advocates suspending judgments. Furthermore, when facing skeptical questions, Zhuangzi often holds a backup principle often seen in logicians and draws a dogmatic conclusion. For example, in the famous story "The Joys of Fishes," Hui Shi asks Zhuangzi: "You are not a fish – How do you know what fish enjoy" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p. 189). Second-order skepticism concerns beliefs or knowledge about such beliefs or knowledge (Audi, 2003, p.39). To ask how a statement is known to be true is to ask what grounds there are for accepting it. There is a distinction between asking what grounds there are for accepting a given statement and asking what grounds a particular person has for it (Ayer, 1990, p.12). The latter is a personal experience. However, Zhuangzi's answer is: "You asked me how I know what fish enjoy – so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I knew it by standing here besides the Hao." Zhuangzi uses the surface meaning of the question and treated it as an infallibility claim about knowledge: "if you know you cannot be wrong" (Audi, 2003, p.34). "How do you know" is commonly meant as a challenge to prove that one knows deductively, not as a request to specify a source or a ground of the knowledge. Therefore, simply saying "I know it by standing here beside the Hao" seems very dogmatic.

Therefore, Schwitzgebel concludes that Zhuangzi's skepticism is "therapeutic" and rhetorical, more with the desire to evoke particular reactions in the reader than as an expression of his heartfelt beliefs (Schwitzgebel, 1996, p.41). Moreover, in Limbrick's account, Montaigne's skepticism is reduced to merely an "instrument" to protect the realm of God because he puts it beyond

the range of revealed knowledge with complete certainty and beyond the range of reason's challenge (Limbrick, 1997, p.57). However, many scholars also uphold their belief firmly that Montaigne and Zhuangzi are skeptics. For example, Chad Hansen argues that Zhuangzi is sincere in defending radical skepticism and relativism regarding evaluative judgments. Zhuangzi's opinions on Confucians or politics are natural for him "as it is for birds to sing in trees" (Hansen, 1983, p.72). By this fascinating analogy, Hansen solves this problem, at least from a poetic point of view. Allinson (1989), on the other hand, tries to solve it by categorizing Zhuangzi's relativistic and nonrelativistic statements into two different parts, which echoes Zhuangzi's dichotomy of "unawakened" and "awakened" people (Allison, 2003, p.64). He says that Zhuangzi meant to employ different strategies for different people. However, Zhuangzi became a pragmatist instead of a skeptic in this sense. For Montaigne, scholars often try to prove that his Catholicism is based on his prevalent skepticism. Since the real world is mutable, it is easy for Montaigne to assume that God is immutable and beyond our knowledge. Moreover, as mentioned in the last section, Montaigne did not live in a world where people could freely choose their religious beliefs, so we have sufficient background to suggest that some of his words were written because of political correctness, especially considering his noble social status. Some of his passages in Essays were written for royals; for instance, his most famous essay, "Apology for Raymond Sebond," was written for Margaret of Valois, wife of Henry IV of France (Montaigne, 2003, p.508). This long-lasting debate seems to have no end because each side has sufficient evidence to support them. However, this study tries to give opinion that allows harmoniously between different and even contradictory opinions.

Speaking for Montaigne and Zhuangzi: take their words less seriously

This section tries to defend Montaigne and Zhuangzi through the investigation of their opinions about the relationship between author, book, and reader. It is hard to find anyone in history that discusses

himself so deeply and thoroughly as Montaigne does, not even Aurelius or Goethe. He emphasizes in the Preface that "I am myself the matter of my book" (Montaigne, 2003, p.2). His writing about himself always changes his mind "many times (sometimes I do deliberately), having undertaken as exercise and sport to maintain an opinion contrary to my own, my mind, applying itself and turning in that direction, attaches me to it so firmly that I can no longer find the reason for my former opinion, and I abandon it" (Montaigne, 2003, p.517). Moreover, he is not only the author and material of this book but also is the reader himself. Every time he reads his own words, it seemed to him like "a stranger" (Montaigne, 2003, p.293). He admitted that "I have no more made my book than my book has made me" (Montaigne, 2003, p.517). Therefore, Bloom says Montaigne is the best instance to prove that "the book is the man, the man is the book" (Bloom, 1995, p.271), and I want to make a blasphemous analogy which Montaigne certainly would refuse. The relationship between author, reader, and book for Montaigne is very similar to God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. It is not derived from thin air because Montaigne says, "a book consubstantial with its author," and the word "consubstantial" refers to the Son and the Father's consubstantiality he certainly knew as a Catholic. We can still be sure that a person named Montaigne and a book named Essays, but we cannot separate them apart because the book had become "an integral part of my life" (Montaigne, 2003, p.504). We can even push this analogy further by considering immortality. Montaigne foretells that "everyone recognizes me in the book and my book in me," and there is his "essence" in his book (Montaigne, 2003, p.667). As long as the book exists, Montaigne will still live and achieve a sense of immortality. The Essays become the spokesman of Montaigne after his death, but it does not act thoroughly on behalf of Montaigne because it acquired a degree of autonomy outside the control of its author and became "a separate body" (Hoffman, 2000, p.93). Montaigne is fully aware of it and says, "an able reader often discovers in other men's writings perfections beyond those that the author put in or perceived and lends them richer meanings and aspects" (Montaigne, 2003, p.93). These words echo Gadamer's thinking three hundred years later that "the meaning of a text goes beyond its author" (Gadamer, 1990, p.59).

To the "able readers," Montaigne "opens up" himself and lets them "enjoy it more at their ease and make it more supple and manageable for them" (Montaigne, 2003, p.511). Montaigne did not

want people to label him and debate who he was but wanted them to suspend judgments and enjoy this journey. He even warned that "I would willingly come back from the other world to give the lie to any man who portrayed me other than I was, even if it were to honor me." So maybe these scholars mentioned above want to make the dead come back to life. It is a demanding job to read Montaigne's book that "they need a good swimmer for a reader" so that the depth and weight of his book will not "sink him and drown him" (Montaigne, 2003, p.812). On the other hand, Zhuangzi does not have such a special relationship with his book. Nevertheless, just like Roland Barthes, Zhuangzi did whatever he could to undermine the authority of authorship. The book "Zhuangzi" is not written by a single person, and it takes quite a long time for it to become the one we read today. As a result, there are many discontinuities in thoughts, narratives, and linguistic features. Moreover, he always puts his words in others' mouths, such as Confucius, and more than half of the Inner Chapters are false quotations (Schwitzgebel, 1996, p.32). Besides, there are many words in Zhuangzi that can be understood as metaphors to sneer at scholars and resist fixed interpretations. In the first chapter, "free and easy wandering," Zhuangzi claims that the story of Kun is recorded in a book called the Universal Harmony, which is to poke fun at the philosophers of other schools who cite ancient texts to prove their assertions (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.21). Moreover, there is an implicit comparison here between readers and small birds. Like them, we judge the tale by comparing it with our capacities and find it implausible. Being little creatures in size (or wisdom), we cannot understand great things like the giant bird Peng (or great thinker Zhuangzi). Zhuangzi hopes that we do not take our views too seriously and realize our limited perspectives. He undermines his credibility by telling such a tale and frustrates the reader's own natural inclination to interpret the book as expressing the true opinions of its author. Therefore, Zhuangzi casts doubt on the credibility of all three players in any work of philosophy: reader, author, and author's opponent (Schwitzgebel, 1996, p.29).

Furthermore, in the Wheelwright Pian's story, he sees duke reading a book and asks Duke "whose words are in it," and after knowing these words are from sages who were dead, he concludes that "what you are reading there is nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of the old!" (Zhuangzi, p.152) It tells that explicit rules and statements cannot convey whatever the duke seeks in the book

he is reading. Since the duke's book is words of sages, we may say that if it is the book Zhuangzi, scholars are like the duke vainly seeking Zhuangzi's thinking. Zhuangzi tells us not to take his words seriously in a plainer way at the end of the book. In the final pages, he concludes his language style that "he believed that world was drowned in turbidness and that is was impossible to address it in sober language, so he used 'goblet words' to pour out endless changes, 'repeated words' to give a ring of truth, and 'imputed words' to impart greater breadth" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p.373). He apologies for his exaggerated words and radical opinions, since these are all means to achieve a peaceful state of mind. In short, Montaigne and Zhuangzi try to persuade us not to take them seriously and suspend judgments by different means. Montaigne used the trinity of author, book, and reader and the theory that the meaning of a book is beyond the author's reach. Zhuangzi undermined his authorship because there is no single author at all and told parables to undermine the credibility of his words. For most students, it is the perfect time to draw a conclusion and end this boring topic. However, it is not the end of my argument.

Reflection of my previous arguments

At the beginning of Cervantes's famous novel, Don Quixote of La Mancha read too many books about chivalric romances, and then he got mad and imagined himself as a knight. Similarly, I also read too many books about skepticism and became a skeptic instead. Looking at my previous passage, I start to doubt myself. First, how could I use a concept in modern philosophy to analyze ancient thinking? In Hadot's Philosophy as a Way of Life, he pointed out the difference between our understanding of philosophy in ancient times and the modern world. He says ancient philosophy aims not to construct a system of thinking but to put their thinking into "living praxis" (Hadot, 1995, p.87). As Montaigne lived in the 16th century before Descartes, his skeptical thinking is very different from the concept of philosophical skepticism today, and he had no idea about it. In the first section, when the study uses four categories of philosophical skepticism to study Montaigne and Zhuangzi's skepticism, it seems clear and reasonable, yet it must generate some misunderstanding in this transformation of knowledge. We may break up their thinking and add some modern theories to it. For Zhuangzi, the situation is much trickier. It is popular and reasonable to use modern disciplines to study the ancient Chinese world. However, Qian Mu argued that

all modern disciplines, such as Psychology, Archaeology, and Philosophy, did not exist in ancient China (Qian, 1984, p.81). Moreover, Fu Sinian writes a long letter to Hu Shih in which he says there is no such thing called philosophy in china after Hu Shih published "The An Outline of the History of Chinese Thought" (Wang, 2014, p.93). Moreover, Liang Qichao also says that the word "philosophy" is not suitable to describe Chinese philosophy, and the word "Daoshu" is better, albeit he still used "philosophy" in his title (Liang, 2012, p.88). Therefore, when we use modern disciplines to analyze Zhuangzi's thinking, we overwrite the history, and it results in the "falsehood of inverting meanings" (Wang, 2014, p.39).

Furthermore, how can this study compare two characters from different cultures and historical backgrounds? Montaigne was born in the 16th century, and Zhuangzi lived in the 4th century BCE. They do not know each other. Besides, they are from two completely different cultures that did not have any significant cultural communication until the 17th century. For example, Foucault thinks that Chinese culture is a heterotopia with a different logical system that westerners could not understand (Foucault, 1973, p.182). In China, there is also such kind of expressions. Du Yaquan says China is a civilization of silence, and the West is a civilization of movement (Du, 1985, p23). Therefore, how can this study cross this huge gap and compare Montaigne and Zhuangzi without justifying the reasoning basis? Here is the answer to these doubts. Modern theories and concepts indeed help us see the things that have not been realized in ancient Chinese history and gain a new understanding of them. For example, Fei Xiaotong used the concept of Compassion Fatigue to study Chinese rural society and opened a new page in social science. However, we should also try to rebuild the "real shape" of the ancient world, however difficult it may be. I want to stand at the same level as the ancient people we study (Chen, 1980, p.3). It is similar to Gadamer's concept of "the fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1990, p.88). Besides, the opposite of the Orient and the Occident often serves to understand "self," and this dichotomy is largely invented. As Edward Said argues, "we must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their history, that what they can know is what they have made and extend it to geography" (Said, 1978, p.92). He then concluded that Orient and Occident as both geographical and cultural entities are "man-made." "Therefore, as much as the west itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that

have been given it reality and presence" (Said, 1978, p.92). For example, Montaigne himself used China to show "how ampler and more varied the world is than the ancients, or we understand" (Montaigne, 2003, p.802). They indeed lack historical and cultural connections and have many differences, but "this lack of genetic relations, of mutual influences, stimulates a whole series of practical and theoretical perplexities of great interest" (Guillen, 1993, p.93). Please allow me to end this section with Qian Zhongshu's words: "the mind is similar in the East and West; the philosophy is comparable in the South and North. We should cite books enormously all around the world in order to draw out their inter-relationships" (Qian, 1986, p.1).

CONCLUSION

Zhuangzi once says that "the fish trap exists because of the fish; once you get the fish, you can forget the trap" (Zhuangzi, 1968, p. 302). Similarly, Sextus Empiricus, one of the earliest Pyrrhonian skeptics known to Montaigne, used the metaphor of using a ladder to reach a higher place and kicking it away. Ludwig Wittgenstein uses this metaphor and says that "He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it. He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright" (Wittgenstein and dos Santos, 1994, p.129). This study follows their paths, analyzing Montaigne and Zhuangzi's skeptical thinking and discussing scholars' doubts about their skepticism, and giving answers to these doubts. This study also discussed the moral and epistemological basis for studying the ancient world from a modern perspective and comparing different cultures.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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