Chapter 4. Real, Imaginary, or Fictive? Philosophical Dialogues in an Early Daoist Text and Its Pictorial Version*

Mingjian Xiang


This chapter explores a critical yet still unanswered question in fictive interaction research, namely, the relationship between factivity, fictivity and fiction, through examining conversational imagery in a foundational Daoist text, Zhuangzi and its comic book rendition. The Zhuangzi text is the first Chinese text to use imagined dialogues between real and fictional characters to present the philosopher’s views. The philosopher thereby fictively talks to himself through these characters in a kind of ventriloquism (Cooren 2010, 2012), the reader becoming a bystander of this fictive conversation. Hence, readers understand the moral of the narrative through reality, fiction and fictivity. I hope to show that factivity, fictivity and fiction constitute a continuum and may appear embedded into one another in a network.

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[...] once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, “and what is the use of a book”, thought Alice “without pictures or conversations?”

(Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, [1865] 1998)

1. Introduction

Fictive interaction, ontologically conceptualized as an entirely mental or conceptual phenomenon, is characterized as being neither factual nor fictitious (Pascual 2002, 2014; Pascual and Sandler this volume). Indeed, fictivity as originally conceptualized by Talmy ([1996] 2000) and subsequently adopted by Pascual (2002, 2014), seems to be entangled between factivity and fiction. One critical issue in fictive interaction research –and in research on fictivity more generally– remains unaddressed. This can be spelt out into two interrelated questions: i) is the distinction between factivity, fictivity and fiction as obvious as it is assumed to be?, and ii) can we have cases where there is overlapping amongst themselves or embedding of one into another? To answer these two questions, this chapter analyzes the philosophical dialogues in an early Daoist text, Zhuangzi (4th
century B.C.) and its pictorial version, *Zhuangzi Speaks* (Tsai [1986] 2013). As the putative author of the text bearing the same name, Zhuangzi (c. 369–c. 286 B.C.) is perhaps the greatest of the early Daoist thinkers and embodies the third phase of the development of early Daoism (Fung [1948] 1997, p. 104). The *Zhuangzi* text, as one of the two most popular Daoist texts in the Chinese tradition (Roth 2008), presents the philosopher’s original insights into human nature and the universe, which have been regarded as analogous to those of the Dutch philosopher Spinoza (Fung 1964, p. 5). In terms of writing style, the *Zhuangzi* text is primarily conversational (Lu 1998, p. 253), resembling that of Plato, as in his famous *Dialogues* (Fung 1964, p. 5).

Zhuangzi’s writings, as the grand historian Sima Qian (145-90? B. C.) summarizes in his biography of the philosopher, are “for the most part

1 The *Zhuangzi* text, according to Fung ([1948] 1997), is not the work of a single author and there exists no consensus on the authorship of the ‘Outer Chapters’ and ‘Miscellaneous Chapters’ (for a most recent comprehensive overview, see Liu 2015). This notwithstanding, we can be almost certain that all the later authors intended the text to be read as authentically written by the historical Zhuangzi himself (for additional linguistic evidence in favor of this proposition in the text, see Xiang and Pascual forth.). Since the authorship issue is not a focus of this chapter, and since it should not affect the conceptualization of the dialogues, I will not distinguish the different (variously named groups of) authors.
allegorical” (Fung 1983, p. 221). Most allegories in the Zhuangzi text are presented in the form of dialogues, which amount to seventy percent of the approximate total count of 80,000 Chinese characters of the entire text (Huang 2013, pp. 58-59). The discourse characters of these dialogues can be actual historical or contemporary figures, as well as entirely fictitious characters, deities or non-verbal individuals and entities such as animals, plants and even abstract concepts. Critically, these non-genuine dialogues are not set up for their own sake, for entertainment or embellishment purposes. Rather, they constitute a rhetorical strategy, modeled by the frame of intersubjective face-to-face communication, and are aimed to “unfold differing perspectives, make assertions, and explore multiple dimensions of an issue” (Lu 1998, p. 253).

Different from their occasional use in other pre-Qin texts by authors such as the “Second Sage” of Confucianism Mencius (372-289 B.C.) and the greatest Legalist philosopher Han Feizi (c. 280 – 233 B.C.), the allegories of Zhuangzi have the following four distinct features: i) they are the rule rather than the exception, ii) they are not restricted by reality, iii)

2 Allegory, however, is only a makeshift translation of the original term “yu yan” (寓言, literally ‘lodged words’), which also designates a genre of Chinese didactic fables that “probably do not qualify as allegory in a Western sense” (Hartmann 1986, p. 946). Despite its insufficiency, I still use “allegory” as an umbrella term to cover all the possibly different classifications of the dialogues (e.g. fables, parables, anecdotes) in the Zhuangzi text in terms of discourse genre.
they are charged with emotion, and iv) they are invariably witty (Mair 1986, p. 23). The allegorical dialogues in the *Zhuangzi* text allow the philosopher to “assume a dozen different roles, to be solemn or quizzical, rhapsodic or paradoxical by turns, to speak in the voice of a madman or a millipede, a long-winded sea god or a ruminative skull” (Watson 1983, p. xi). Thus, the philosopher’s voice can be ‘heard’ in the voice of all the characters (Zhang [1948] 2007; Ye [1979] 2004; Wang 2013); he is like the puppeteer or ventriloquist (Cooren, 2010, 2012) behind all the allegories. This observation is resonated by Tsai Chih Chung ([1986] 2013) in his critically acclaimed comic book *Zhuangzi Speaks*, in which the invisible “superspeaker” (cf. Blondell 2002) Zhuangzi is often foregrounded in the first and last panels of the comic strips with extra details not explicitly mentioned but creatively added by the cartoonist.

In this chapter, I draw on a combination of the theory of conceptual integration or ‘blending’ (Fauconnier and Turner, 1994, 1998, 2002; Pagán Cánovas and Turner, this volume) and Pascual’s (2002, 2006a, 2014) idea of fictive interaction. I examine representative non-genuine dialogues of different types in the original text and their corresponding visual representation in the comic book. I aim to show how the philosopher Zhuangzi juxtaposes reality, fictivity and fiction in the non-genuine dialogues, and how he makes use of these dialogues to convince subsequent readers of his philosophical thoughts through elaborate interactional networks.
### 2. Data

In the following analysis, I restrict my discussion to prototypical dialogues in the *Zhuangzi* text, that is, dialogues between two or more characters with at least two conversation turns. Altogether, I identified 147 instances of ‘prototypical dialogues’ out of 192 allegories\(^3\) Ye Chengyi ([1979] 2004, pp. 5–80) identified in the *Zhuangzi* text.

The version of the original *Zhuangzi* text used here comes from *Zhuangzi yinde* (‘A Concordance to Chuang Tzu’), complied by the Harvard-Yenching Institute (1956), which reproduces the recension of the text in the most comprehensively annotated *Collected Commentaries on Zhuangzi* (Guo [1894] 2013). The English version I used for reference is translated by Burton Watson ([1968] 2013) and is regarded as one of the best English renditions of the text, “eclips[ing] all others for many years” (Classe 2000, p. 1515).

The two-volume bilingual comic book rendition *Zhuangzi Speaks* (Tsai [1986] 2013) contains 156 comic strips, among which the first one

\(^3\) Researchers have not reached a consensus on the total number of allegories in the *Zhuangzi* text. For instance, Chen Puqing ([1983] 1996) only counted 181 allegories, which mostly overlapped with Ye Chengyi’s ([1979] 2004) identification, but failed to include several important allegorical non-genuine dialogues in the text. Moreover, Chen ([1983] 1996, pp. 38-41) only provided a list of the titles he came up with for the allegories he identified without any further elaboration. Consequently, in the present study I follow Ye’s more comprehensive identification of allegories.
provides background information about the historical Zhuangzi and the quintessence of his philosophy, while the rest visually represent pieces of discourse from the *Zhuangzi* text. These discourse fragments can be selections from monologic argumentative essays and short dialogues between discourse characters. Moreover, the pictorical representation of the text in the comic strips is highly selective: instead of depicting all the details of the scenario described in the text, the cartoonist only presents what in his mind is conducive to expressing the philosopher’s views.

3. Analysis

In the *Zhuangzi* text we have different kinds of non-genuine dialogues enacted by (i) realistic imagery (4.1) and (ii) entirely fantastic imagery (4.2). The non-genuine dialogues prototypically comprise one or more turns between two story characters. The ultimate philosophical message of these dialogues is usually presented for the benefit of the subsequent readers of the text by one of the discourse characters. Occasionally, some dialogues can involve a third discourse participant, who makes relevant conclusive comments on the previous conversation turns by the other two interlocutors,

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4 The text represented in the comic strips is retold in Mandarin Chinese by the cartoonist himself and translated into English by Brian Bruya. The original classical Chinese text of these dialogues can be found in the appendix of the comic book (Tsai [1986] 2013, pp. 222-250).
which then constitute the very moral that the philosopher intends to convey to the reader. Furthermore, there can still be a few instances of dialogues involving even more discourse participants taking turns to talk or dialogues whose philosophical messages are left unspecified.

In the allegories, Zhuangzi employs two modes of speech, that is, *yu yan* (‘imputed words’) and *chong yan* (‘repeated words’) either separately or in combination (Ye [1979] 2004, pp. 5-80). According to the philosopher himself, imputed words “that make up nine-tenths of it [the text] are like persons brought in from outside for the purpose of exposition”, while repeated words “that make up seven-tenths of it [the text] are intended to put an end to argument. They can do this because they are the words of the elders” (Watson [1968] 2013, p. 234). To put it more bluntly, the writer speaks through and/or quotes from other story characters in the allegories to

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5 Coined by Zhuangzi and first used in the title of Chapter 27, the term “yu yan” in the original sense refers to a particular literary device employed by the philosopher in his writing and has been rendered differently into “imputed words” (Watson [1968] 2013), “dwelling words” (Wu 1988), “metaphor” (Mair 1994), and “fable” (Wang 1999), to cite but a few examples. In this chapter, I adopt Burton Watson’s translation of the term.

6 There is still another mode of speech called *zhi yan* (卮言, ‘goblet words’), which, as Burton Watson notes, are “words that are like a goblet that tips when full and rights itself when empty, that is, that adapt to and follow along with the fluctuating nature of the world and thus achieve a state of harmony” ([1968] 2013, p. 234). “Goblet words”, according to Ye Chengyi’s ([1979] 2004) analysis, are not used in the allegories. Consequently, I will not deal with this particular mode of speech in the analysis below.
present his philosophical views for the benefit of subsequent readers. In terms of blending, the story characters in the allegories are all blended with the philosopher. Moreover, quoted individuals are always blended with their quotees, whose words are produced by them and hence often blended with their own viewpoints. Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of the interaction between the writer and reader underlying the non-genuine dialogues in the *Zhuangzi* text.

**Figure 1.** Writer-reader interaction in the *Zhuangzi* text
As can be seen in the above integration network diagram, we first have the Here-and-Now Space, where the Writer Space, the Reader Space and the conversational roles in the Conversation Frame are projected into the writer-reader blend. In the blend, the writer is conceptualized as directly speaking to the reader (Herman 1999; Fauconnier and Turner 2002). In the embedded Current Discourse Space (Langacker 2001, 2008, 2013), we have the writer and reader jointly attending to the story enacted by discourse characters in the Story-viewpoint Space (Dancygier 2012). Since the discourse participants in the Story-viewpoint Space speak in the voice of the writer (Zhang [1948] 2007; Ye [1979] 2004; Wang 2013), and since the reader will mentally simulate the dialogues while reading (Bergen 2005, 7).

7. Instead of following the notational convention of using dotted lines to indicate projections into the fictive interaction blend, I only use thick lines with arrow in the integration network diagrams. The main reason for breaking this convention in blending literature is to avoid overlapping lines in the diagram, which could be confusing and difficult to understand. Additionally, I omit diagramming the conceptual blending process involved in the construction of the writer-reader blend in the following integration networks to avoid repetition. Thanks to Alan Cienki for suggesting this to me.

8. The possible different authors of the text and the subsequent readers along the centuries become massively compressed into one single fictive writer and one single fictive reader in the Writer Space and the Reader Space.

9. The ‘Current Discourse Space’ is defined as “the mental space comprising those elements and relations construed as being shared by the speaker and hearer as a basis for communication at a given moment in the flow of discourse” (Langacker 2001, p. 144).
2012), the discourse characters are blended with both the writer and the reader. In the blended space, the writer talks to himself in the disguise of other discourse participants; the reader becomes the bystander (Goffman 1963, pp. 88-99) of the ongoing fictitious conversation.

3.1. Non-genuine dialogues between realistic imagery

Of all the 147 non-genuine dialogues in the Zhuangzi text, there are 135 instances enacted between human interlocutors, who are either real or fictitious. Among the real characters, some are historical figures, for instance, the enlightened kings Yao and Shun and senior philosophers such as Laozi and Confucius; the others are contemporaries of Zhuangzi, for instance his friend Hui Shi. Among the fictitious figures, some are just not in the historical records while others are easy to recognize as being entirely made-up by the names the writer gave them, like Mr. Lame-Hunchback-No-Lips and Mr. Pitcher-Sized-Wen (Watson [1968] 2013, p. 40). Consider first a short piece of discourse involving Confucius:

(1) [……] 仲尼恐其广己而造大也，爱己而造衰也，曰：“回！无受天损易，无受人益难。无始而非卒也，人与天一也。夫今之歌者其谁乎？”[……] 何谓无受人益难？” 仲尼曰：“始用四达，爵禄并至而不穷，物之所利，乃非己也，吾命有在外者也。君子不为盗，贤人不为窃。吾若取之，何哉？故曰：鸟莫知于鷄鶏，目之所不

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宜处，不给视，虽落其实，弃之而走。其畏人也，而袭诸人间，社稷存焉尔。” […] (53/20/52–59)\(^{10}\)

[ […] Confucius, fearful that Yan Hui’s respect for him was too great, that his love for him was too tender, said to him, “Hui! It is easy to be indifferent to the afflictions of Heaven but hard to be indifferent to the benefits of man. No beginning but has its end, and man and Heaven are one. Who is it, then, who sings this song now?” […] “And what do you mean when you say that it is hard to be indifferent to the benefits of man?” Confucius replied, “A man sets out on a career, and soon he is advancing in all four directions at once. Titles and stipends come raining down on him without end, but these are merely material profits and have nothing to do with the man himself. As for me, my fate lies elsewhere. A gentleman will not pilfer, a worthy man will not steal. What business would I have, then, trying to acquire such things? So it is said, There is no bird wiser than the swallow. If its eyes do not light on a suitable spot, it will not give a second look. If it happens to drop the food it had in its beak, it will let it go and fly on its way. It is wary of men, and yet it lives among them, finding its protection along with men in the village altars of the soil and grain.” […] ] (Watson [1968] 2013, pp. 163-164).

The above piece of discourse is enacted between real historical figures Confucius and Yan Hui, who are reconstructed in a new and imagined context (Lu 1998, p. 255). In the Zhuangzi text, Confucius

\(^{10}\) While citing examples from the classical Chinese original, I follow the Yenching convention by indicating the page, chapter, and line number(s) from left to right (Harvard-Yenching Institute 1956, pp. v–vi). The discourse fragments relevant to the analysis are indicated with emphasis marks (.) in the classical Chinese original, while their corresponding English translations are generally italicized (unless otherwise specified).
“sometimes preaches conventional Confucian morality, while at other times he speaks in the words of a true Daoist sage” (Watson [1968] 2013, p. xxviii). The image of Confucius in this allegorical dialogue belongs to the latter case. Since Confucius has a very different philosophy from Zhuangzi, he is presented not as having become a Daoist in a Fiction Space, but as a rhetorical strategy to convey Zhuangzi’s views. More specifically, Confucius in his speech to Yan Hui puts forward four Daoist propositions (underlined), while Yan Hui produces four genuine questions to inquire about the philosophical implicatures of these propositions, which Confucius answers in subsequent conversation turns. In the above cited question-answer sequence, Confucius also produces a rhetorical question in his reponse to Yan Hui’s inquiry. Despite the fact that the discourse characters Confucius and Yan Hui do inhabit a Reality Space, the above piece of discourse is no quote from an actual conversation between these two historical figures, as the dialogue could never have happened (Lu 1981, p. 364). Hence, the dialogue is fictitious, which means the genuine questions by Yan Hui are also fictitious. This example constitutes an instance of Zhuangzi’s combined use of the two modes of speech, yu yan (‘imputed words’) and chong yan (‘repeated words’) (Ye [1979] 2004, p. 43). Instead of presenting his views in his own voice (as he does in the monologic argumentative episodes), the philosopher has Yan Hui ask these questions - as information-seeking ones- to Confucius and quotes Confucius’ answers as the actual philosophical message of the dialogue. In this sense, the cited
fictitious question by Yan Hui is further used fictively as expository question. Indeed, a parallel can be drawn between the fictive use of the genuine question in Yan Hui’s speech and expository questions in monologic argumentative episodes in the *Zhuangzi* text in terms of both syntactic structure and discursive function (cf. Xiang and Pascual forth.). Thus viewed, the above non-genuine dialogue also exhibits fictivity.

In the comic book representation of the above piece of discourse (see Comic Strip 1. “Swallows Nest in the Eaves” in the Appendix), the pictorial images of the philosopher Zhuangzi in the first and last panels are blended with particular aspects in the story. In the first panel the philosopher is dressed in the same robe as Confucius and there is a swallow standing on his left index figure, much resembling the pictorial image of Confucius in the 4th closed panel. In the last panel the philosopher, sitting there with eyes

\[\text{————}\]

11 By way of illustration, compare the expository question used in the following monologic discourse fragment (Xiang and Pascual forth.):

何謂真人？古之真人，不逆寡，不雄成，不謀士。若然者，過而弗悔，
当而不自得也。[……] (15/6/4-5)

[“What do I mean by a 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. […]”] (Watson [1968] 2013, p. 42)

The expository question cited above has exactly the same skeletal formal structure as the question in Yan Hui’s speech and both functions to present the philosopher’s arguments.
closed and mouth open, presents the intended philosophical message ascribed to Confucius in the original text in a speech bubble through an information-seeking question, whose answer can be found in Confucius’ speech in the comic strip. Moreover, there are two swallows in the last panel: one seems to be preparing for landing in front of the philosopher and the other flying away from him. Since the swallow originally comes from Confucius’ response to Yan Hui, the philosopher is blended with part of the philosophical message of this allegory. The blended identities in the first and last panels further confirm that the dialogue is constructed by the philosopher to present his actual views. This is the case even though the characters come from a Reality Space, and the dialogue takes place in a Fiction Space. Figure 1 presents the integration network of the interaction between the writer and reader underlying this piece of discourse:
In Figure 2, we have Confucius and Yan Hui conversing in the Story-Viewpoint Space (Dancygier 2012). Since the philosophical message is presented by Confucius, we have the blended identity of Confucius as Zhuangzi. This is the output of the conceptual integration of two input spaces, namely, the Confucius space and the Zhuangzi space. In the blend, we have Confucius’ speech and Zhuangzi’s ideas fused together. Thus, Confucius becomes the spokesman of Zhuangzi. In fact, Yan Hui is also a blended identity with Zhuangzi. In the blended space, the philosopher talks through other discourse characters; while the reader becomes the bystander.
(Goffman 1963, pp. 88-99) of this fictitious conversation on the philosopher’s view. The dashed-line squares mark the juxtaposition of reality, fiction and fictivity in the above dialogue. The same also applies to the integration networks in the following figures.

Next I consider a non-genuine dialogue also involving Confucius, which embeds another dialogue:

(2) 孔子问子桑雽曰:"[……] 吾犯此数患, 亲交益疏, 徒友益散, 何与?"
子桑雽曰:"子独不闻假人之亡与? 林回弃千金之璧, 负赤子而趋。"
或曰:'[……] 弃千金之璧, 负赤子而趋, 何也?'
林回曰:'彼以利合, 此以天属也。'
子曰:'夫以利合者, 追穷祸患相弃也; 以天属者, 追穷祸患相收也。夫相收之与相弃亦远矣。'[……]孔子曰:"敬闻命矣!"
[……]。 (53/20/37–43)

[Confucius said to Master Sanghu, "[...] so many calamities have I encountered. My kinfolk and associates drift further and further away; my friends and followers one after the other take leave. Why is this?"
Master Sanghu said, "Have you never heard about Lin Hui, the man who fled from Jia? He threw away his jade disk worth a thousand measures of gold, strapped his little baby on his back, and hurried off. Someone said to him, ' [...] Why, then, throw away a jade disk worth a thousand measures of gold and hurry off with a little baby on your back?' "Lin Hui replied, 'The jade disk and I were joined by profit, but the child and I were brought together by Heaven. When pressed by misfortune and danger, things joined by profit will cast one another aside; but when pressed by misfortune and danger, things brought together by Heaven will cling to one another. To cling to one another and to cast one another aside are far apart indeed! ' [...]" Confucius said, "I will do my best to honor your instructions!" [...] (Watson [1968] 2013, p. 161)
In the above piece of discourse, the great philosopher Confucius, Zhuangzi’s senior, is presented as a humble scholar seeking advice from Master Sanghu, who enlightens him by telling a story about a man named Lin Hui. As in example (1), Confucius comes from a Reality Space. Indeed, the presentation of Confucius as a humble scholar in the above dialogue is consistent with the historical Confucius. However, his embracing of Daoist teachings, which are fundamentally different from his own philosophy of life, is constructed (Lu 1998, p. 254). Master Sanghu, Confucius’ interlocutor, according to Chen Guying (2007, p. 228), is a fictitious character. Since the interlocutors are either reconstructed or entirely fictitious, the above dialogue is fictitious. The philosopher Zhuangzi again uses the two literary devices, “imputed words” and “repeated words” in this dialogue (Ye [1979] 2004, p. 42). Zhuangzi here speaks through other discourse characters and quotes from Master Sanghu, Confucius’ senior in the Fiction Space to terminate any possible further argumentations. In his reply to Confucius’ inquiry, Master Sanghu produces a rhetorical question, which will elicit a mental response in Confucius’ mind; meanwhile, this question is also used as an expository question, which is presented as a means to organize discourse, more specifically, to introduce a new topic into the ongoing discourse.

Instead of giving Confucius advice directly, Master Sanghu chooses to use the “imputed words” by having the story character Lin Hui speak for
him. Despite the fact that the story character Lin Hui, a refugee from the state of Jia, may inhabit a Reality Space (Wang 2007, p. 743), the dialogue between him and the anonymous character is still fictitious. In the embedded story, the anonymous character is presented as posing a genuine information-seeking question to Lin Hui, which the latter answers subsequently. This question-answer exchange constitutes the gist of the embedded story, which is the very message that Master Sanghu wants to convey to Confucius; more importantly, it also presents Zhuangzi’s actual philosophical message of the non-genuine dialogue. Thus analyzed, both the non-genuine dialogue and the embedded story are simultaneously fictitious and fictive.

In the visual representation of the dialogue between the story characters (see Comic Strip 2. “Lin Hui Forsakes a Fortune” in the Appendix), the philosopher Zhuangzi in the first panel is depicted as wearing a fanciful hat and opening a treasure casket, which metonymically refer to the fortune that Lin Hui possesses in Master Sanghu’s story. In the last panel Zhuangzi is holding the jade disk from the story and the essence of Lin Hui’s speech in the original text is now ascribed to Zhuangzi, who thereby provides the moral of the story in a speech bubble. The pictorial images of the philosopher in the first and last panels suggest that he is blended with the character Lin Hui in the embedded story. In this piece of dialogue, the philosopher Zhuangzi speaks through the fictitious character Master Sanghu, who in turn speaks through a possibly real character, Lin
Hui, through whom Zhuangzi passes on his philosophical ideas to the reader. Figure 3 presents a blending analysis of the above piece of discourse:

**Figure 3.** Lin Hui as spokesman of Zhuangzi

In the integration network in Figure 3, we have the blended identities of the discourse participants first with Master Sanghu and then with
Zhuangzi, who is the puppeteer behind this non-genuine dialogue constructed as a rhetorical device to present his own views. In the blended space, the philosopher assumes two interlocutor roles (Confucius and Master Sanghu) in the fictitious conversation; while Master Sanghu also takes different roles as conversational partners in the embedded story; the reader, also blended with Confucius through mental simulation (Bergen 2005, 2012), becomes a bystander of both the fictitious conversation and the embedded story. The blending analysis of the non-genuine dialogues between humans reveals how the writer manages to expound on his philosophical thoughts by assuming different conversational roles from the frame of ordinary face-to-face interaction. In the following section I analyze another two non-genuine dialogues between nonhuman story characters.

3.2. Non-genuine dialogues between fantastic imageries

The personified characters in this type of non-genuine dialogues in the *Zhuangzi* text can be deities (2 instances) or personified nonverbal entities such as animals, plants and other nonhuman entities (5 instances) as well as abstract concepts (5 instances). Consider first the following short piece of dialogue between Penumbra and Shadow:

(3) 罔两问景曰：“曩子行，今子止，曩子坐，今子起，何其无特操与？”景曰：“吾有待而然者邪？吾所待又有待而然者邪？吾待蛇蠏，蜩翼邪？恶识所以然？恶识所以不然？” (7/2/92–94)
[Penumbra said to Shadow, “A little while ago you were walking, and now you’re standing still; a little while ago you were sitting, and now you’re standing up. Why this lack of independent action?” Shadow said, “Do I have to wait for something before I can be like this? Does what I wait for also have to wait for something before it can be like this? Am I waiting for the scales of a snake or the wings of a cicada? How do I know why it is so? How do I know why it isn’t so?”]

In (3), the personified characters Penumbra and Shadow are talking. Since Penumbra and Shadow in Reality Space are inanimate entities and cannot talk, the conversation between these two discourse characters takes place in a Fiction Space. In the dialogue, Penumbra is presented as producing a factual information-seeking question to Shadow, who in turn answers this question with a succession of rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions are fictive, as they are non-information-seeking, the answers being presupposed in the immediate context. Given the dialogue is fictitious, these fictive questions are also fictitious. The above dialogue instantiates Zhuangzi’s use of “imputed words” (Ye [1979] 2004, p. 8). The philosopher Zhuangzi speaks through Penumbra and Shadow to present his actual philosophical messages. Thus, the genuine question by Penumbra is also used fictively as expository question. Therefore, the above fictitious dialogue also displays fictivity.

In the pictorial representation of the dialogue, (see Comic Strip 3. “Dialogue with a Shadow” in the Appendix), we have the philosopher
Zhuangzi turning his head backwards and observing the ongoing conversation between his own shadow and the shadow’s shadow (Penumbra) in the first panel; in the last panel, we have the philosopher Zhuangzi’s shadow expressing the moral of the story to him in a speech bubble. The pictorial images in the first and last panels clearly demonstrate the use of “imputed words” in the above dialogue, as the shadow and penumbra are specified as the philosopher’s, while in the original text they have generic references. Figure 4 presents a blending analysis of the above piece of discourse:

Figure 4. Talking shadows
In this integration network, we first have a particular instance of blending, that is, personification, which involves the conceptual integration of the Human Space and the Inanimate Entity Space (Turner 2002, 2014), in this case the Shadow Space. In the blended space, the writer blends himself with the discourse participants, while readers become bystanders of this fictitious conversation.

Finally, we examine an instance of non-genuine dialogues between abstract concepts with Daoist philosophical implications. Consider:

(4) [……] Grand Purity, having received these various answers, went and questioned No-Beginning, saying, “If this is how it is, then between No-End’s declaration that he doesn’t understand and No-Action’s declaration that he does, which is right and which is wrong?” No-Beginning said, “Not to understand is profound; to understand is shallow. Not to understand is to be on the inside; to understand is to be on the outside.” Thereupon Grand Purity gazed up and sighed, saying, “Not to understand is to understand! To understand is not to understand! Who understands the understanding that does not
understand?" No-Beginning said, “The Way cannot be heard; heard, it is not the Way. The Way cannot be seen; seen, it is not the Way. The Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way. That which gives form to the formed is itself formless—can you understand that? There is no name that fits the Way” No-Beginning continued, “He who, when asked about the Way, gives an answer does not understand the Way; and he who asked about the Way has not really heard the Way explained. The Way is not to be asked about, and even if it is asked about, there can be no answer. To ask about what cannot be asked about is to ask for the sky. To answer what cannot be answered is to try to split hairs. [...]” (Watson [1968] 2013, pp. 184-185)

In the above piece of dialogue, the personified abstract concepts Grand Purity and No-Beginning\textsuperscript{12} are talking. This dialogue is fictitious as these two abstract concepts, made up by the philosopher himself and appearing in the Zhuangzi text for the first time, cannot talk in a Reality Space. In the fictitious dialogue, Grand Purity is presented as producing two genuine information-seeking questions to No-Beginning; in his reply, No-Beginning produces one expository question. Since the dialogue is fictitious, the expository question is also fictitious. Instead of speaking of these two concepts in his own voice, the philosopher chooses to have them engage in a philosophical debate to present his argument. Hence, this dialogue is

\textsuperscript{12} In the comic strip, the name of the discourse character “无始” is translated by Brian Bruya as “Beginningless”. To be consistent in the analysis, I follow Burton Watson’s literal translation of the original as “No-Beginning”.

another example of the Zhuangzi’s use of “imputed speech” (Ye [1979] 2004, p. 52). In this sense, the two genuine questions by Grand Purity are also fictively used as expository questions. As a result, the fictitious dialogue between abstract concepts is also fictive.

In the pictorial representation of the cited dialogue in the comic strip (see page 2 of Comic Strip 4. “The Dao Transcends Knowledge” in the Appendix), we have in the first panel the philosopher sitting on a cushion with a gourd lying to his left, the way Non-Beginning is depicted in the comic strip. This suggests that the philosopher is blended with the pictorial image of No-Beginning; in the last panel the philosopher Zhuangzi carries a gourd on his back with his palms put together and presents the philosophical message in a speech bubble with a satisfied face, as if he has been enlightened and attained Dao, just like the penultimate pictorial image of Grand Purity in the comic strip. This means that the philosopher and Grand Purity are also blended. The blended identities of the philosopher and discourse characters in the first and last panels suggest that Zhuangzi speaks through other discourse characters in this dialogue. Figure 4 presents the interaction between the writer and the reader behind the above piece of discourse:
The integration network in Figure 5 is the most complex among all the diagrams presented in this chapter. The construction of this diagram proceeds step by step. We first have a negation blending of a Counterfactual Space and a Reality (or Belief) Space (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) to produce the negative or missing concept, No-Beginning. Then this negative concept together with the abstract concept Grand Purity in the Concept Space is blended with the Human Space to yield personified concepts (cf.

**Figure 5.** Talking concepts
Turner 2002, 2014), which can now engage in a fictitious conversation in the Story-Viewpoint Space. In the blended space, the writer is blended with the discourse participants: Grand Purity and No-Beginning. This can be seen clearly from the visual representation of the philosopher blended with both characters respectively in the first and last panels. The readers become bystanders of the fictitious conversation.

4. Summary and conclusions

In this chapter I analyzed two different types of allegorical dialogues enacted between either realistic or entirely fantastic imageries in the Zhuangzi text. The exchanges presented are always fictitious and the conversational structures of some of the non-genuine dialogues can be extremely complex, as in example (2). In these dialogues, the philosopher has the fictional characters -or actual ones, in a fictional scenario- talk for him in a kind of ventriloquism (Cooren 2010, 2012) in order to teach readers about his philosophical views. With Zhuangzi, these seemingly anecdotal dialogues are “no longer an appendage to the argument but the argument itself” (Watson 1983, p. x). This is made especially explicit in the first and last panels of the comic strips in the two-volume comic book rendition (Tsai [1986] 2013), where the philosopher is often pictorially blended with a particular aspect of the scenario described in the story. Furthermore, the first and last panels are largely open and pictorially
separated from the visual representation of the fictitious dialogue. This suggests that the cartoonist is well aware that all the allegorical dialogues constitute a rhetorical strategy to present the philosopher’s views and that he probably has a folk understanding of the possible distinction between fictivity and fiction.

The discourse characters in the examples discussed above, i.e. historical characters in example (1), historical character and fictitious character in (2), personified characters in (3) and entirely fictitious characters in (4), instantiate a cline from reality to fiction. Despite the fact that some interlocutors in the dialogues do inhabit a Past Reality space as in examples (1) and (2), these dialogues are still fictitious, as they never happened (Lu 1981, p. 364). Given the purpose of constructing these dialogues is to present his philosophical ideas, the writer thus is involved in fictive interaction with potential readers. In this sense, these dialogues are both fictitious and fictive; readers understand the moral of the narrative through reality, fiction and fictivity. Therefore, I claim that the distinction between reality, fiction and fictivity is not clear-cut as it is assumed to be and that fiction can be embedded within fictivity.

I propose to view the blended spaces represented in the above diagrams as instances of fictive interaction blends at the discourse level (Pascual 2002, 2014; Pascual & Sandler this volume). Different from the conventional writer-reader blend, where the writer is conceptualized as speaking directly to the reader (Herman 1999; Fauconnier and Turner 2002),
the writer as analyzed in this chapter is engaged in talking to himself, while the reader becomes a Bystander of this fictive conversation. This often involves the writer splitting himself into two or even multiple selves, each self blended with a discourse participant and taking turns to talk in the conversation. Fictive interaction blends, as shown by studies in various languages and discourse genres (see overview in Pascual 2014; Pascual and Sandler this volume), constitute a successful communicative strategy. A case in point is the classic “Debate with Kant” example, in which a contemporary American philosopher presents his philosophical views as opposed to Kant’s through an imagined debate between the two philosophers (see Pagán Cánovas and Turner, this volume). According to Brandt (2008, 2013), fictive interaction blends appear to be a standard argumentative structure in Western philosophical texts, as also instantiated in Plato’s Dialogues (Kahn 1996; Wang 2013; Blondell 2002). My analysis in this chapter seems to suggest that the same also holds true for classical, highly influential texts in the Eastern philosophical tradition, which have survived many centuries.

In this chapter I applied Conceptual Blending Theory to study another contextualized ancient Chinese philosophical text, namely, Zhuangzi (cf. Slingerland 2005). Since its inception, Conceptual Blending Theory has been primarily used to account for grammatical constructions, as well as isolated expressions, sentences and short pieces of poorly contextualized discourse. The latest developments in the theory, however,
have shown that it is not only possible but also inspiring and fruitful to apply the theory to large strings of situated spoken and written discourse (e.g. Oakley 1998; Coulson and Oakley 2006; Dancygier 2006, 2012; Hart 2007; Cienki 2008; Oakley and Hougaard 2008; Schneider and Hartner 2012). With the unfolding of discourse, the process of conceptual blending becomes more sophisticated. This is certainly true in conceptual blending at the textual level (Slingerland 2005; Hartner and Schneider 2012), especially in cartoons. The fictive interaction blends that I analyzed in this chapter are multi-scope blends in the sense that they result from a dynamic step-by-step multi-scope blending operation over several input spaces and intermediate blends (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, p. 279). The blending process first involves the development of new innovative frames, which can (but not necessarily always will) become conventionalized intermediate blends. Then, the intermediate blend is run to produce an emergent structure in the fictive interaction blend with the information recruited from other input spaces (cf. Fauconnier and Turner 2002, p. 300), namely, the Story-viewpoint Spaces. The products of multi-scope blending are multi-scope blends, which can be either conventionalized and familiar or novel and temporary in working memory. In this sense, the fictive interaction blends in the Zhuangzi text can be categorized as novel and temporary multi-scope blends. The dynamic process of multi-scope blending can be applied recursively, in other words, we can build blends upon blends (Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Turner 2002, 2010, 2014). The Story-viewpoint Space, for
instance, can itself be a blend or a blend upon blend depending on the ontological properties of the discourse participants.

The large number of dialogues found in the *Zhuangzi* text, as is also the case in Plato’s *Dialogues* (Blondell 2002) and other ancient texts discussed in Goldhill (2008), confirms that these ancient formal texts are conversationally structured. The typical conversationalized structures in ancient written texts may have to do with their orality features, since these texts emerged in a predominant oral culture and were meant to be read aloud or even performed and commented on in a community (Bowery 2007). Indeed, as Ong ([1982] 2002, pp. 8–9) argues, writing could never dispense orality and from the very beginning of its emergence, writing did not reduce orality but rather enhanced it along the way. One particularly prominent evidence that can substantiate Ong’s argument is the massive “oral residues” or oral traces we can find at various levels in ancient written texts; these are not confined to heavy patterning and communal fixed formulas (Ong [1982] 2002), but also include interactional structures (Xiang and Pascual forth.). This characteristic feature of ancient texts seems to suggest that conversationalization, namely “the modeling of [...] discourse upon the discursive practices of ordinary life, ‘conversational’ practices in a broad sense” (Fairclough 1994: 235), is more fundamental than what has been claimed. It is thus certainly not restricted to modern institutional discourse (Fairclough 1994; Vis 2011; Vis, et al. 2012) or spoken informal speech by the contemporary youth (Streeck 2002). The ubiquitous conversational
structures in both ancient and contemporary discourse emerge from our intrinsically conversational mind as interacting social beings immersed in an audio-visual culture (Brandt 2013; Pascual 2014).

References


Appendix

Comic Strip 1. ‘Swallows Nest in the Eaves’ (Tsai [1986] 2013, p. 83)
Comic Strip 2. ‘Lin Hui Forsakes a Fortune’ (Tsai [1986] 2013, p. 82)
仍是不明白，
再问无始看看。
I still don't understand.
I'll ask Beginningless.

無知不知道，無为知道，
那么究竟谁是谁非呢？
Inexhaustible didn't know, 
but Non-Action did.
What do you think?

無始
Beginningless

知道的人浅，不知道的人深啊！
The one who knows is 
shallow, and the one who 
doesn't is profound.

開始
Beginningless

原來難是不可用耳去听，不可用眼去看，
不可用嘴去说。
道是超越感官的知识啊！
Oh, so the Dao can't be heard with 
the ears, seen with the eyes or spoken 
with the mouth. The Dao is beyond 
sensory knowledge.

道无可问，问了无可回答。本 
来无可问的却要去问，这是 
空洞的问；本来无可回答的却 
要强来回答，这是没有内容的。
The Dao cannot be asked about; 
if it is asked about, there is no 
answer. To force a question when 
it can't be asked is a hollow 
question. To force an answer when 
there is no answer is meaningless.