By "Peace If Life" Peep "Zhuangzi" with the Thought of the World

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Abstract. Zhuangzi mentioned peace in his own works. Life has multiple meanings here, in addition to the original helplessness, but also contains non-will, agnostic and contingency. Its scope includes helpless life circumstances, the meaning of the king and the minister of human society, and man-made unfair circumstances. The focus of life is how to safety, an emphasized to admit, understand, accept the helplessness of the world, give up the helpless matter of questioning, in order to get their own inner peace. By sorting out the hierarchy of the thoughts related to "life" in Zhuangzi, we find that the theory of "peace is like life" is different from other chapters simply discussing the thought of inaction, but takes the "peace" of the heart as the starting point and maintains the realm of "heaven" and "man".

Keywords: The thought of life; if life; the way of life; peace

1 Introduction

Since ancient times, scholars studying "Zhuangzi" have utilized a variety of methods for interpretation, mainly including: the old commentary approach, the exclusive Zhuangzi approach, the integrated interpretation combining Zhuangzi with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and other multidimensional methods. Researchers employ these interpretation methods to adapt to the development of the times and to meet the needs of their own academic growth. These commentaries, to a large extent, open up the possibility of studying Zhuangzi from multiple perspectives and also enrich the connotation of Zhuangzi itself. Therefore, this paper will adopt a learning-from-others approach to annotate the thought of "peace is like life" in "Zhuangzi," in order to avoid overgeneralization[1].

"Life" is a common and important concept in ancient Chinese religion and philosophy. How to treat life or fate not only reflects deep philosophical thinking on life, nature, society, and even the universe, but also serves as the essence for distinguishing between different thoughts or philosophical schools. In the book "Zhuangzi," the word "life" appears 77 times. As one of the important philosophical concepts, Zhuangzi's "life" undoubtedly has significant philosophical connotations, and the "life" thought of "peace is like life" is an important path to exploring Zhuangzi's philosophy of life. Most

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scholars attribute the purpose of "life" in Zhuangzi to life itself. Although Liu Xiaogeng believed that Zhuangzi's "life" is the theory of "destiny," he also pointed out that Zhuangzi is a destiny theorist and that the starting point and foundation of his philosophy is the conclusion of destiny. The so-called "conclusion of destiny" mainly refers to the fact that good fortune, misfortune, virtue, and worthlessness are predetermined, and people are difficult to change, can only yield[2]. Although "helpless" may seem to imply "objective restriction" and the meaning of "constraint" in a special semantic context, such words may not only express the meaning of "objective restriction" but may also have other meanings. What Zhuangzi called "life" does it have the meaning of fate? Why and how does it relate to the object?

Zhuangzi expresses his thoughts through fables, profound discussions, and daring assertions, and his text covers all aspects of the universe, society, and life, especially the topics of birth and entering the world. It provides effective ways for people to find peace on earth and a pure land for the soul. However, due to Zhuangzi's unique language style and profound ideological conception, as well as the complexity of studying "Zhuangzi," it is often distorted by some people who take a negative stance, avoid it, or simply limit its interpretation within a certain background. Others interpret Zhuangzi from the standpoint of sympathizers. There are many arguments regarding the origin of the school, the source of the text, and its authenticity. In the interpretation of Zhuangzi, scholars usually adopt the classics of the predecessors, sometimes leading to a one-sided view. However, few people reflect on the influence of this tradition on the interpretation of Zhuangzi. Therefore, this paper takes "peace is like life" as a detailed entry point for a thorough interpretation of Zhuangzi's thoughts on life[3].

2 The connotation of Zhuangzis View of Heavenly Destiny

Zhuangzi inherited and developed Laozi's concept of heaven and nature, with a distinct atheistic color. As an important concept in Zhuangzi's view of destiny, "life" must belong to the core concept of nature, thus reflecting its essential attributes of naturality and inevitability. Therefore, Mr. Feng Youlan pointed out in The New History of Chinese Philosophy that the "life" mentioned by Zhuangzi was not the "order of heaven" in the primitive religious sense, but the force encompassing human resources, nature, and society. Zhuangzi believes that the way of nature, and the development and change of all things between heaven and earth, is determined by their internal natural attributes, so it is also powerful and no man can change it. So, in the face of this natural existence and irresistible "life," how should people deal with it? On this point, Zhuangzi gave his own answer, that is, "peace is like life." The World of Earth says:

"Since the heart of the matter, sorrow is not easy to avoid; knowing it cannot be helped, one should accept life and cultivate virtue accordingly."

De Chong Fu goes on to say:

"To accept one's past is to face death without fear; not to accept one's past is to struggle to survive unnecessarily. Knowing that one is helpless but must accept life, one can only cultivate virtue."

Since "life" is the natural attribute of things, and people "cannot help" it, the best way is to accept it and conform to it. This is Zhuangzi's thought on life, that is, as the "Ying Emperor" said, "Be at ease in your heart, harmonious in your desert, following natural things without personal prejudice." Here, "life" is "natural," meaning conforming to the natural properties of things. With a philosophical attitude, one should not complain, insist, or forcibly suppress, restrict, refuse, or change the nature of external objects. And once people enter this realm, they can avoid conflict with external objects. Not only can they achieve what is described in "Zhuangzi · Health Master" — "able to protect oneself, able to be born, able to nourish oneself, able to prolong one's life" — but they can also remain unfatigued, entering the ideal realm of freedom. As De Fu said: "Death, poverty, humility, and disregard for reputation, hunger and thirst, are all changes, the flow of life; day and night pass, and one knows that one cannot regulate the beginning." Cheng Xuanying said: "Following life's changes, their speed is rapid; the flow of metabolism does not cease day and night. One moment before, one moment after, the reverse cycle, though known, cannot be measured. But in the midst of new beginnings, where do the rules end and begin again? Cover or uncover. Only when one accepts change can one be free."

In Zhuangzi's view, the development and change of all things in the world are not determined by external forces but by the nature of things themselves, including life, death, and misfortune. For life, life and death are the biggest issues. How to face life and death is not only related to the quality of individual life but also the key to considering human wisdom. Starting from the epistemology of relativism, Zhuangzi unified all things, death, and life, eliminating the contradiction between them and warning people not to entangle themselves in life and death. In Health Lord, it is written that when an old friend died, Qin Shi mourned only briefly. In the face of others' criticism that he was not a true friend, Qin Shi replied, "It is appropriate to come; the master also accepts it. It is appropriate to go; the master also conforms to it. Sometimes comfortable, sorrow and joy cannot penetrate." That is, in Qin Shi's opinion, life and death are part of life, the nature and necessity of human beings, which should be accepted calmly. Only in this way will one not be affected by the sorrow of death and life, thereby finding one's own peace. Similarly, it is recorded in The Joy that when Zhuangzi's wife died, Zhuangzi did not feel sadness but sang instead. In the face of Huizi's criticism, "She was your lifelong companion, the mother of your children, the elder of your family. Not to cry is bad enough; to sing is even worse," Zhuangzi replied:

"Examine her beginnings, and there was no life. There were no actions without life, and this is invisible. There were no actions without the invisible, and this is the state of non-life. Among the myriad forms of existence, there is change and qi, qi changes into tangible form, form changes into life, and now life changes into death. This is like the cycle of the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter. People and things alike sleep in the vast room of the universe, and I, piercing through the gloom, cry out. Not realizing that crying is not for life, I stop."

In Zhuangzi's eyes, the life and death of people are as natural as the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter[4]. If one takes life as pleasure and death as sorrow, one does not understand life. And as said in Heaven and Earth: "Nature is not easy

to change, life cannot be altered, time cannot be stopped, and the way cannot be reversed." Life is a constant change that humans cannot refuse or resist. In this case, as someone who "knows heaven and knows people," in terms of virtue, one should not struggle or obsess over life and death. Instead, one should be as in Zhuangzi, Autumn Water, "beyond heaven, beyond so destroyed," namely, conforming to nature and heaven.

3 Nature and Characteristics of Life

The predecessors have made significant contributions to our understanding of Zhuangzi's concept of destiny. Mr. Liu Xiaogan developed Mr. Zhang Dainian's viewpoint and proposed that "Zhuangzi's so-called destiny has a hypothetical meaning, which differs from the destiny posited in religious theology." The fable states, "Don't know the end; why not die? Ignore its beginning; if it has life?" This illustrates that life is inexplicable. This perspective has had a profound impact on the author. Zhuangzi's concept of life escaped the characteristics of religious theology. Zhou Qicheng also mentioned his belief that "in Zhuangzi, judgments about life are often speculative in nature, offering an explanation of the natural forces that people could not control or speculate about at that time." The author concurs with this viewpoint. It should be emphasized that the author believes the concept of life in Zhuangzi's thought lacks deterministic meaning, and the so-called "life" is not equivalent to the destiny of fatalists. Mr. Zhang Changxiang mentioned, "Fate is a belief in past limitations and predetermined outcomes, and people cannot be liberated from it. I don't know why; life is also [subject to these limitations]." (Zhuangzi · Dasheng) "People shall not interfere." However, Zhuangzi's "I don't know why" emphasizes the unknown aspect of life regarding its reasons, which does not reflect the deterministic "destiny" often attributed to Zhuangzi's meaning. Based on the contributions of our predecessors, here we attempt to analyze the nature and uniqueness of life as presented in seven texts from Zhuangzi.

(1) Definition of the destiny limit. The definition of life is that people are helpless about life."A man has a great ring, and a life."(*The world*)

(2) The non-will of life. This can be illustrated from two sides. First, life is irrelevant. Life happens like entering the range of the game and has not being shot, this is not due to the poor technology of the game."In the game of the game, the central, the middle, but not the life" (De Chong Fu). Life is also not the result of any private intention."Heaven selfless, selfless, heaven and earth private poor I zai? Seek it but not also. However, at this point, the life is also the husband "(" The Great Master "). Because the root of life is non-will, so life itself is non-will. Second, Zhuangzi regards the operation of life as the replacement of day and night, "Death and life, life, it is the night, and the day" ("The Great Master"). The replacement of day and night is not the will, and the operation of life is not the will[5].

(3) Invisibility of life. The unknowability of life is reflected in the cause of life can not be explored."I do not know why, life is also" ("Dasheng"), for life, its reason is that

people can not explore. The cause of life is like the beginning of day and night replacement, which is not visible."Things change, life also; day and night before, and know not the beginning."(*De charge*)

4. The contingency of your life. In Zhuangzi, destiny is not only for his birth, but also for the accidental situation of tomorrow."Zhuangzi" believes that "swim in the game, the middle, the middle, but not the life", "Zhuangzi" calls whether the man can shoot the central place as life.

To sum up, we can conclude that, for Zhuangzi, the so-called life, first of all, it is unchangeable. This cannot be changed. Zhuangzi does not distinguish whether it is absolutely immutable or a temporary situation that people cannot directly change in the present moment. Secondly, these helpless circumstances are not caused by some sex, that is, not deliberately caused by people or some gods. Thirdly, these changes of circumstances are not predictable by people, and its occurrence is not inevitable, but accidental. Therefore, we can ask again, for Zhuangzi, what is the scope of life with these traits. The figure 1 is the Zhuangzis concept of "destiny".

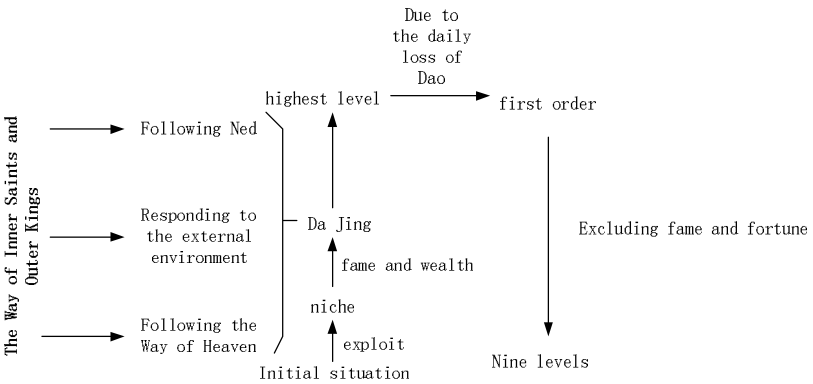

Fig. 1. Zhuangzis concept of "destiny"

4 The Scope of Life

The concept of "life" in Zhuangzi encompasses various aspects. Firstly, helpless life includes situations such as "death and survival, poverty, (humble poverty), dishonor, hunger, and heat," which can be directly categorized within the scope of life circumstances and can be transformed through the concept of "change," or "life" in transformation. Furthermore, within Zhuangzi's texts, we can find that the scope of life also encompasses some elements that cannot be directly categorized but possess the nature of "helplessness" and should thus be considered part of life[6]. The special connotation of this life can be discerned from the phrase "peace if life." The distinction between life as it is and life as perceived lies in treating life as life itself, not merely as an appearance or semblance. Zhuangzi discusses life rather than explicitly stating it because the object

of life is not all life in the general sense. There are two stories in Zhuangzi's texts that involve the concept of peaceful life. Through specific analysis of these stories, we can identify which contents, though not directly categorized as destiny, are regarded as such by Zhuangzi.

Firstly, Zhuangzi expands the scope of destiny to encompass the relationship between the ruler and the minister. In the section titled "The World of Earth," Zhuangzi mentions: "Man has great precepts, one is life; one is righteousness. The love of children is life, not understood in the heart; the minister's righteousness, not serving the king, finds no escape between heaven and earth. It is called the great ring. It is the duty of relatives not to choose but to accept peace, which is filial piety; it is the duty of the minister to be loyal. From the heart, sorrow is not easily borne, knowing it cannot be changed brings peace, which is virtue." "Knowing it cannot be changed but accepting it" refers to the principle of the love of children as life and the righteousness of the minister. Zhuangzi believes that life and righteousness belong to nature, with life originating from heaven and righteousness from humanity. Children's love for their parents is life, innate and natural. Cheng Xuanying notes: "Filial piety is love and respect. This life, stemming from nature, is inherent and thus not explicable." Lu Changgeng notes: "Originating from the inherent nature, it is called life." Regarding the righteousness of the ruler and the minister, Zhuangzi acknowledges it only as a necessity of human relations, without directly pointing out the righteousness of rulers and ministers. "The matter of the ruler, righteousness, has no alternative but to serve the ruler, finding no escape between heaven and earth," emphasizing the inescapable social relations between the ruler and the minister. Cheng Xuanying notes: "Rulers and ministers, it is inevitable. Therefore, loyal ministers serving the ruler, even unto death, is a congruence with nature, not a forced nature." Lu Changgeng notes: "From one's position as a person, it is called righteousness." Although righteousness does not belong to life, due to the helpless nature of righteousness and life, Zhuangzi believes that both should be regarded as life, meaning that the relationship between the ruler and the minister, which does not inherently belong to life, should be classified under the model of life[7-8].

Secondly, Zhuangzi considers artificially unfair situations as part of one's fate. In "De Chong Fu," it is mentioned: "Shen Tu Jia said: 'Those who do not perish do not pretend to survive. Knowing one cannot change one's fate, only virtue remains.' Shen Tujia believes that when there is a chance to defend oneself, many people think they should not break through their limitations; very few who do not defend their faults think they should not save themselves; only a virtuous person can 'know what they can do.'" The text does not suggest that Shen Tujia's situation is fate. Zhuangzi, however, considers it in terms of helplessness. Due to their immutability, to appease the anger arising from these situations and to allow those who feel unfairly treated to cease struggling, Zhuangzi emphasizes that accepting life brings peace, meaning that regardless of whether one receives fair or unfair treatment, virtuous people will regard this situation as fate.

Thus, we can see that Zhuangzi acknowledges that many things do not belong to fate, such as righteousness, the norms of human society, and improper treatment and circumstances. However, whether it is life, righteousness, or encounters, since they are helpless, they should be accepted with peace if considered as life. After understanding

the characteristics and scope of Zhuangzi's concept of life, what we need to ponder is: What is peaceful acceptance of life like? How is it achieved? What psychology does it entail? Does it involve related behavior? Is it an absolute passive acceptance and unconditional surrender to the helpless fate? If not, how should we understand the concept of "acceptance" in Zhuangzi's texts? On all these questions, we will once again delve into a detailed analysis of the texts[9].

5 "An" in the term "Peace Is Like a Life"

In order to comprehend the concept and connotation of "An," the text in "Dechong Fu" is what we need to scrutinize in detail first. To facilitate the discussion in this paper, we will delve into the significance of "An" in the text by employing the method of text structure analysis. Compared to general parallel reading, this approach emphasizes the importance of the concept itself through its pivotal position in the text structure, enabling us to grasp its unique connotation within the context. Here, the author will utilize structural analysis to dissect the concept of "peace" (assuming "An" translates to peace, given the context) in "Dechong Fu."

The book records that Duke Gao Ye was dispatched to the state of Qi as an envoy. He was deeply concerned that failure to accomplish his mission would lead to punishment, posing a "humanitarian dilemma." Consequently, his worries affected his health, causing an imbalance in his Yin and Yang. Ye Gong perceived that, regardless of mission success, he seemed doomed to calamity. He sought Confucius's advice on this matter. In response to Duke Ye's plight, Confucius offered the following guidance:

"The world possesses two great principles: one is life, the other is righteousness. Filial piety towards one's parents embodies life; loyalty to one's ruler embodies righteousness. If righteousness is not in one's heart, one is unsuitable to serve the ruler and cannot escape judgment in heaven and earth. This is known as the great principle. As a husband and relative, one should not choose the place or time for peace (An). One who serves his ruler should not choose the time for peace. Filial piety leads to peace; loyalty engenders peace. Since the heart is the essence of the matter, sorrow is not easily dispelled before one understands that peace, if achieved through virtue, is life itself."

In this text, the word "An" appears three times. The first instance is in the context of "filial piety," emphasizing it. The second and third mentions follow in a hierarchical order, necessitating an understanding of the first two instances to grasp the concept of peace.

The text structure underscores the great principles in life: the order of filial piety towards one's parents and loyalty to one's ruler. The first two mentions of "An" address these two principles, namely, relatives and duties. Hence, the third mention can be seen as a summation and elevation of the response to these principles. To understand these three instances of "An," we must first clarify its object. What does "An Zhi" refer to in the text? Mr. Chen Guying interpreted the first two as referring to parents and rulers, believing that peace means reassuring them. However, whether an individual achieves peace depends on the object of the behavior, not the agent. For instance, whether one reassures their parents hinges on parental recognition. Upon grammatical analysis, we

discern that the objects referred to in the first two instances should be the subjects of the sentences, namely "ruler" and "parents." Therefore, "An" should be understood as serving the ruler and parents, making the object not parents and rulers themselves, but the act of serving them. Thus, whether one achieves peace hinges on one's own attitude. The text also portrays this as the ultimate state of filial piety and loyalty[10].

Furthermore, the text structure reveals that practicing the attitude of peace leads to "filial piety" and "loyalty," contrasting with the earlier principles. Before achieving peace, children's love for their parents and ministers' loyalty to their rulers were passive, not truly held in the heart, an inescapable fact in the vast heaven and earth. Hence, this serves as a constant reminder. However, if love for parents and loyalty to the ruler are achieved through peace, the text asserts that the passive state transforms into an active choice, shifting from something that must be remembered to an ideal state of loyalty and filial piety. The text structure also conveys that achieving peace enables one to attain the highest state of filial piety and loyalty, regardless of circumstances. In essence, whether one achieves peace determines whether life will be a great circle or the realization of an ideal state.

After emphasizing the peak of filial piety and loyalty, the text also proposes that there is another state of virtue capable of achieving a peaceful life. The so-called "since their heart, sorrow is not easily stirred; knowing it cannot be safe if life is disturbed," refers to the cultivation of one's own heart. Whether sad or happy, one should not let emotions affect their heart, understanding the helplessness of the world, and thus accepting all helplessness as part of life. The concept of "An" (contentment) here can be understood through the following aspects:

Firstly, "An" emphasizes "knowing it," which means recognizing and understanding the helplessness of the world. This recognition not only requires people to realize that some situations are unchangeable, but more importantly, it necessitates ceasing meaningless struggles and resistance against helpless circumstances. As Confucius advised Ye, he did not instruct Zi Gao to try to refuse the mission to the state of Qi, nor did he urge Ye to strive with all his might to complete it. Instead, Confucius told Zi Gao to first acknowledge that this task was a fait accompli and inescapable, and thus could only be admitted and accepted.

Secondly, this attitude of contentment also demands that we temporarily set aside questions about helpless matters, including inquiries like "why does this happen?" and "why did it happen to me?" Only then can we view helpless occurrences caused by people or shaped by society as a form of life devoid of will, and refrain from engaging in meaningless resistance and questioning. For instance, Ye Gong had to accept the mission to Qi as fate, rather than a situation he might change, thereby avoiding potential punishment for refusing the task.

Thirdly, "An" urges us not to allow our hearts to undergo emotional fluctuations due to helplessness, leading to excessive sorrow or joy that impacts the body. It requires us to achieve "sorrow and joy are not easily stirred," maintaining inner peace and tranquility regardless of how the world operates. The attack of Yin and Yang experienced by Ye Gong after receiving the task demonstrates the harm one may inflict upon oneself due to internal happiness or anger. Therefore, maintaining inner stability and emotional equilibrium is also a crucial aspect of "An."

Finally, this attitude of "An" enables us to deal with the real world in the most appropriate manner. With "An," we can attain the optimal state of filial piety and serve as a loyal minister. Ye Gong could remain safe, perform the task exceptionally well, and shed emotional constraints, achieving a state where "actions are performed without thinking of the body, how leisurely and joyful life is, and how evil death seems! The master's work proceeds smoothly!" Responding appropriately to reality is also an integral part of this attitude.

In summary, we observe that Zhuangzi's concept of "An" is not passive acceptance or weak resignation. The connotation of this concept is rich and profound. It should be noted that this attitude towards life is not unique to Zhuangzi's text. In "Dasheng," we encounter a narrative consistent with the above analysis. The article mentions Luliang, where "at the beginning of the thirty years," even fish and turtles could not swim freely. Confucius saw a man swimming in it and mistakenly thought he intended to commit suicide. However, when Confucius saw him singing in the pond with flowing hair, he inquired if he was "dancing in the water."

Confucius asked the man, saying, "I perceived you as a spirit, but upon examining you, I found you to be a man. Excuse me, the water-dweller, do you say 'dance'?" The man replied, "I have no way to avoid death. I began in the beginning, grew in nature, and entered into life. Together we sink, and together we rise, following the flow of the water and not for personal gain. This is what I do." Confucius asked, "What do you mean by 'beginning, nature, and life?'" The man explained, "I was born in the grave and settled with the grave; thus, I grow in water and am content with water. I do not know why, but this is life."

From the man's account, we glean an indirect understanding of the relationship between "An" and life. He argued that swimming in dangerous waters, sinking with the whirlpool, and emerging with the turbulent water was nothing special. All he did was "begin in the beginning, grow in nature, and enter into life." In this narrative, the importance of life is not merely the culmination of one's achievements but also a summation of the three concepts of reason, nature, and life. When Confucius inquired further about the meaning of this statement, the man elaborated on these three concepts: "I was born in the grave and settled there; thus, I am content with nature." This interpretation underscores the concept of peace emphasized in the text, and the achievement of life is inseparable from the peace of reason and nature. Specifically, for Zhuangzi, if one can be content with the beginning and development of their own life, their personal life will be fulfilled. When individuals do not seek to understand why each situation in their life is as it is and instead accept all such circumstances, "not knowing why," then their personal cultivation can be deemed complete. The aspect of life cannot be separated from the peace of reason and nature, and as long as they can be content with their own reason and growth, they can be satisfied with their own life, accepting it without questions, not knowing, and being content. More importantly, in this attitude of contentment with their own reason, nature, and life, individuals can find comfort in seemingly difficult environments, moving freely through the ups and downs of the whirlpool and torrent. This is also the state of peace and life that can be achieved, consistent with the idea expressed in the story in "Dechong House."

In conclusion, we find that Zhuangzi emphasizes an attitude that first requires recognizing and accepting helpless situations in life, and also necessitates ceasing meaningless resistance, struggle, and questioning of fate. More importantly, regardless of how fate changes, we should be content with reality, maintain inner peace and calm, and not allow external circumstances to disturb our inner tranquility or let excessive sorrow and joy affect our inner cultivation. The figure 2 is the Ideological System.

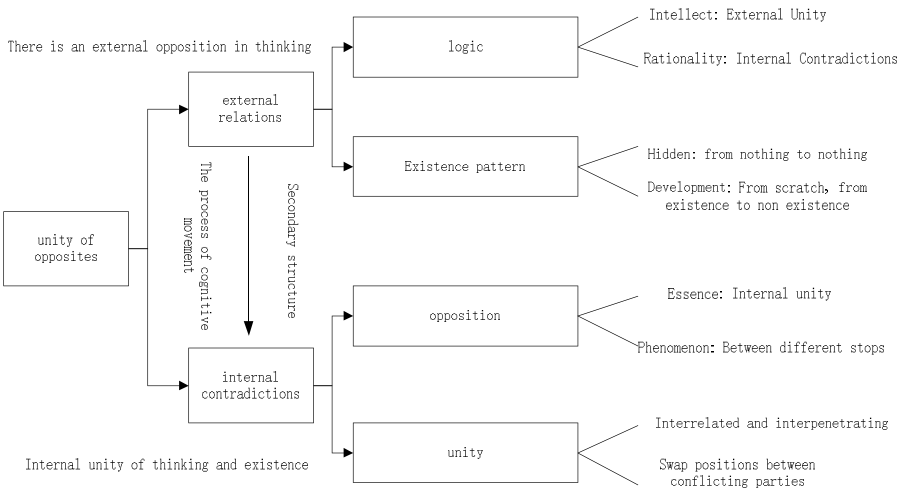

Fig. 2. Ideological System

6 Conclusion

Firstly, when we confront facts with what Zhuangzi refers to as a nonchalant attitude, then the life we strive for, even if unchangeable, does not possess negative significance. After all, an unchangeable situation holds no particular meaning for life; it is neutral, neither a boon nor a burden. It shifts like day and night, merely existing as a given circumstance.

Secondly, the serenity advocated by Zhuangzi enables us to adopt a positive stance towards the world. This serenity differs from passive, unconditional acceptance; rather, it is an active attitude. This active attitude allows us to voluntarily relinquish meaningless resistance that might even harm ourselves, because in Zhuangzi's view, such resistance can lead to exhaustion and may impair our physical well-being. This active choice of serenity also halts inner struggles and questioning, thereby enabling us to focus on nurturing our own hearts and finding inner peace when confronted with helpless situations.

Lastly, in Zhuangzi's opinion, this serene attitude is the most fitting approach to dealing with the reality of helpless situations. This is because only by treating life as an ordinary state of affairs can one handle it with excess; as Confucius suggested, only by being serene can one approach tasks with genuine effort. Similarly, serene filial piety

is the ultimate expression of love for one's parents; only through serenity, rather than helpless obedience, can one embody the ideal of loyalty in serving one's ruler.

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