Chapter I

Introduction

We are presently living in an “era of dialogue and heightened awareness of the other.”¹

In this age of dialoguing with the other, it is exciting to discover that various dialogues have taken place between the mediaeval Christian thought of St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) and other heterogeneous voices beyond the Christian tradition.² Apparently, the present interactive dialogue in this Ph.D. thesis has been inspired by such an unprecedented surge of interest. As a comparative study between two metaphysical concepts, the current dissertation is entitled “A Comparative Study between St. Thomas Aquinas’s Concept of Ipsum Esse Subsistens [or IES] and the Concept of Qi (氣) in the Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters [or the Guanzi Si Pian]”.³ In this introduction, the author will first describe briefly his motivation and justification of writing the thesis. Then, he will present the methodology, as well as the argumentation structure of this discourse.

1. The Ultimate Reality and Meaning (URAM) of Writing this Thesis

Accordingly, ‘ultimate reality’ is a reality “that to which the human mind [ultimately] reduces and relates everything and that which does not [ultimately]

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² Cf. Ibid., pp. viii ff. In this book, dialogue is conducted between Aquinas and reformation theology, Eastern Orthodox theology, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, analytic philosophy and atheism, etc.
³ Henceforth, Ipsum Esse Subsistens is abbreviated as IES. At the same time, the Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters is also identified as the Guanzi Si Pian. The Four Daoist Chapters are Nei Ye (內業), Xin Shu Shang (心術上), Xin Shu Xia (心術下), and Bai Xin (白心). As regards Nei Ye (內業), the translated English version can be found in W. Allyn Rickett, Guanzi: Political, economic, and philosophical essays from early China. A study and translation by W. Allyn Rickett, Vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 39-55. Hereafter, this work is simply abbreviated as Guanzi. On the other hand, the original Chinese version of Nei Ye (內業) can be found in謝浩範,朱迎平譯注: 《管子(下)》, 臺北市: 臺灣古籍, 2000, 頁 841-853. Simultaneously, Xin Shu Shang (心術上) is found in Guanzi, Vol. 2, pp. 71-81; and 謝浩範,朱迎平譯注: 《管子 (上)》, 臺北市: 臺灣古籍, 2000, 頁 687-703. As for Xin Shu Xia (心術下), it is in Guanzi, Vol. 2, pp. 58-64; and 謝浩範,朱迎平譯注: 《管子 (下)》, 頁 705-712. Finally, Bai Xin (白心) is seen in Guanzi, Vol. 2, pp. 85-97; and 謝浩範,朱迎平譯注: 《管子 (上)》, 頁 715-731.
⁴ Throughout this thesis, ultimate reality and meaning is abbreviated as URAM.
reduce and relate to anything else.” 5 At the same time, ‘ultimate meaning’ appears to be a supreme value “for which someone would sacrifice everything and which one would not lose for anything.” 6 To apply, one may say that the URAM which motivates the author to embark on this project is twofold. The first motivation is his deep concern as a committed Christian --- amid the unfolding of the twenty-first century --- towards the modern or postmodern confusion over the URAM of God. 7

In fact, many people in their personal search for URAMs in life are facing a post-Christian, rationalistic, materialistic, pluralistic and self-serving world. 8 Oftentimes, they are filled with a capricious perplexity in the conception of God. 9 For example, there are atheists still proclaiming God’s death, still disclaiming God as an empty or illusive concept nowhere to be found. Besides, there are New Agers tending to identify themselves (individually) or the planet earth as a god (or goddess). At the same time, while some view God as “Hitler’s accomplice” 10, others are inclined toward a do-it-yourself concept of God. The latter would say: “All religions are being made up. What does it matter? I don’t care if you’re worshipping this god or that goddess.” Apparently, “we have to decide whether the word ‘God’ has any meaning for us today”. 11

It is of paramount importance, therefore, that an exalted and vitalized notion of God be formed above all in our mind. 12 Stanislaus J. Grabowski elaborates: “The vitality, earnestness and depth of one’s religion follow the type of image of God that is conceived and entertained in the soul. If the concept of God is beclouded one-sided or even distorted it will have as its counterpart a more or less uncertain one-sided and distorted kind of religion”. 13 Thus, an unambiguous direction or inspiration for obtaining a sound, relevant concept of God is immensely needed.

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5 This definition of ‘ultimate reality’ is found in the Statement of Vision and Purpose of Ultimate Reality and Meaning in: Ultimate Reality and Meaning, vol. 27, no. 1, March 2004, p. 84.
6 Ibid.
9 Cf. 谷寒松:《天主論.上帝觀：天地人合一》修訂第三版,台北市:光啟文化事業, 2002 頁 xv。
13 Ibid.
The second motivation which decisively motivates the author to take on the study is his conviction inspired by Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), as seen below, that St. Thomas’s concept of Ipsum Esse Subsistens is a truly awesome URAM. If properly interpreted or re-interpreted, the author believes that IES or Subsistent Being Itself could become an incredibly relevant concept of God for people in the third millennium. Yet, at the same time, it seems that IES or Subsistent Being Itself has been seriously misconceived and long ignored by many. Indeed, the investigation of ‘being’ has been massively abandoned in modern philosophical research. Consequently, there is no interpretation sufficiently dynamic, pertinent and attractive to offer to this searching generation concerning St. Thomas’s scholastic concept of God as IES.

In other words, many, in encountering the current varieties of interpreting Aquinas at large, are still looking for an appropriate understanding as regards the URAM of IES. As Fergus Kerr, O.P., succinctly informs us, “the most intractable conflict of interpretations centres on Thomas Aquinas’s description of God as ‘self-subsistent being’ (ipsum esse subsistens) and the related doctrine of divine simpleness.” Although these two doctrines have been regarded by traditional Thomists as St. Thomas’s “most profound and original contributions,” Anthony Kenny of Oxford thinks that “even the most sympathetic treatment of these doctrines cannot wholly succeed in acquitting them of the charge of sophistry and illusion.”

However, in defending St. Thomas’s concept of IES, Jacques Maritain, a well-known French Thomistic philosopher, has declared that this Thomistic doctrine ---- that in God there is no real distinction between His essence and existence ---- “designates, without seeing it, the sacred abyss which makes the angels tremble with love and with awe.” “It is like a formula in chemistry which would set off an immense explosion.” The author, moved by Maritain’s profound insight, desires, therefore, to further examine this ingenious observation of God. As countless Christians and non-Christians are looking for a relevant concept of God, it is the

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17 Ibid.
20 Fergus Kerr, O.P., After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism, p. 73.
author’s hope that IES would become one sufficiently attractive to many today.

As we know, “no historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth.”21 It is hoped, therefore, by virtue of delving into IES in terms of Guanzi Si Pian’s concept of qi, St. Thomas’s most profound and original contributions would become an extraordinary spiritual formula as regards God’s omnipresent participable Esse22 (i.e., Act of Existing) and Essence. In this way, an immense spiritual explosion or conflagration would be set off for many carried away for a long time by materialistic agnosticism. At the same time, such an endeavour would also help renew the mediaeval metaphysical concept of IES. Thus, IES might appear or re-appear, as it should, to many in the 21st century, even for the first time, as a meaningful, relevant and attractive concept of God.

In retrospect,23 it appears that, since the publication of the encyclical Aeterni Patris (August 4, 1879) in which Pope Leo XIII sought to renew Thomism,24 Thomism has generally encountered three schools of thought. The first school is approached via the manual scholasticism taught predominantly in seminary education before the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).25 In this approach, no independent

21 Pope John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, no. 51.
22 Throughout this thesis, God’s uncreated Esse (existence or act of existence) is capitalized, while created or non-divine esse remains non-capitalized. Cf. Étienne Gilson, God and Philosophy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992 [1941]), p. 143. Gilson states: “[T]rue metaphysics does not culminate in a concept, be it that of Thought, of Good, of One, or of Substance. It does not even culminate in an essence, be it that of Being itself. Its last word is not ens, but esse; not being, but is.” Ibid. Shen Qingsong (Vincent Shen) similarly states that the goal of metaphysics is the study of the esse of beings. Cf. 沈清松:《物理之後/形上學的發展》二版，臺北市：牛頓出版股份有限公司，民國 80 年，頁 13。
23 Some Thomists today would argue that “what Thomas Aquinas inaugurates is best understood as a continuum of intellectual achievement, one that begins in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and remains active to the present moment.” Romanus Cessario, O.P., A Short History of Thomism (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), p. 93. However, the author is convinced that it is possible to identify intervals or periods within the larger history of Thomism without jeopardizing such a continuum of intellectual achievement. Apparently, these chronological markers may help us understand better and clearer the continuous flow of this trans-historical intellectual achievement initiated by St. Thomas whose teaching provides “a sure guide to the truth of the Christian faith.” Ibid., p. 35.
25 Cf. John C. Cahalan, “On the Training of Thomists,” in: The Future of Thomism. Edited by Deal W. Hudson and Dennis Wm. Moran (Notre Dame, Indiana: American Maritain Association, in association with University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 133-134. Quentian Quesnell has recently given us a description of that milieu: “This Scholastic thought world was one that put an extraordinary premium on logic, clarity, the mechanics of exposition, on precise divisions and subdivisions of the material. It presupposed the possibility of perfect and exact definitions of everything... The chain of reasoning can always be followed, if one has the patience and stamina to pursue it. This was its strength but also its weakness. For so much emphasis on form could easily allow form to replace substance. Ideas and names are always sharper and clearer than reality, and a world of definitions, divisions and logic could soon become a world of words alone. It was obvious that the system was not devised to promote innovation.” Quentian Quesnell, “A Note on Scholasticism,” in The Desires of the
historical research is necessary; what is required is a certain logical, meticulous and mechanical reading through the originals in the context of their own times. The second school is the historical-textual analytical approach to Thomism exemplified by Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), M.-D. Chenu (1895-1990), James Weisheipl (1923-1984) and Fernand Van Steenberghen (1904-1993). As a whole, these neo-Thomists sought to offer us an authentic historical and philosophical Thomism based on their direct historical study and philosophical analysis of the original texts.

Finally, the third school is the creative philosophical-critical Thomism which seeks to address modern problems in terms of Thomism. On the one hand, it is represented by the creative critical realism of Jacques Maritain, including that of William Norris Clarke and Karol Wojtyla, etc., under the personalist influence of Maritain. On the other, it is represented by the creative transcendental Thomism of Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) following the transcendental method of Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944). While the first two schools of Thomism have lost their considerable momentum since Vatican II, the third still has

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26 Cf. Ibid., p. 148.


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quite a few followers, being regarded as the best hope of neo-Thomistic philosophy serving theology into the third millennium.37

Historically speaking, one may regard the mediaeval scholasticism of St. Thomas Aquinas and its doctrinal defenders, as a whole, as the first historical Thomism.38 In that order, it was an outstanding group of Dominicans in the decades before and after the Council of Trent (1545-1563) who launched the second historical Thomism.39 As a consequence, the Dominicans, Jesuits and Carmelites, etc., were able to draw on the pertinent resources of the second historical Thomism to deal with the new array of problems faced by the post-Reformation church.40 Meanwhile, the scholasticism since Aeternis Patris (1879) may be viewed as the third historical Thomism.41 While this nineteenth-century neo-Thomist movement did not realize its anticipated hope in creating a unified system of contemporary philosophy,42 it has nonetheless evolved into the pluralism of Thomism of today.43

Reflecting upon the present postmodern state of pluralistic Thomism, one cannot help but ask, as J. A. DiNoia, O.P., does: “Is there a future for the study of Aquinas after the gradual displacement of the neo-Thomistic synthesis in Catholic theology underway for several decades?”44 On the one hand, the future development of Thomism would certainly be at stake if we continue to hold on fixatedly to what Norris Clarke, S.J., characterizes as the pre-Vatican-II Thomistic triumphalism.45 However, it does not mean as regards the present state of pluralistic Thomism “that there are too many Thomists and that the movement which produced them ends in speculative failure.”46 Towards the hope of creating a unified contemporary Christian

38  It appears that there are a few ways in which the historical intervals of Thomism may be marked. Cf. Romanus Cessario, O.P., A Short History of Thomism, pp. 28-33.
40  Cf. Ibid.
41  Apparently, this Third Scholasticism took place modestly even before Aeterni Patris. However, after the promulgation of Leo XIII’s encyclical, it developed into a leading force until Vatican II. Cf. McCool Gerald A., S.J., “A Preface,” in: The Future of Thomism, p. 1.
43  Cf. Desmond J. FitzGerald, “Gilson, Aeterni Patris and the Direction of Twenty-First Century Catholic Philosophy,” in: The Future of Thomism, p. 84; Gerald McCool, From Unity to Pluralism: The internal evolution of Thomism (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), pp. 1ff. To some extent, one may say that the current pluralistic Thomism is the fourth historical Thomism.
philosophy or theology based on traditional Thomism, one might say that the time for such a comprehensive project is not yet ripe. Among others, perhaps many more dialogues with various major thinkers, cultures and religions, etc., are needed before such a mega-synthesis would become truly possible in the future.

On the other hand, we should become more realistic (or less ambitious) and begin to work towards “a more dialectical and less systematic construal of the philosophical component of Aquinas’s theology.” In this way, the present pluralistic postmodern age would instantly become a wonderful opportunity for the multi-faceted development of various inter-philosophical, inter-theological, inter-cultural, inter-denominational and inter-religious (or inter-spiritual) dialogues, etc. As we know, quite a few dialectical works have been done on this recently-discovered horizon, i.e., in comparing St. Thomas’s philosophy with various Westerner authors like Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, etc.

It is true that some dialogues between the thought of St. Thomas and that of Chinese philosophers have been carried out. However, it may only signify a certain beginning, in view of the plethora of significant Chinese thinkers and their works. Evidently, much more of this kind of dialogue needs to take place still between Thomism and Chinese philosophy, for the continuous development and creative enrichment of both traditions. The current thesis represents, thus, a serious effort on the part of the author towards this ideal aspiration. Yet, to be practical, this work has to limit itself to a comparative study between Aquinas’s concept of IES and the concept of qi in the Guanzi Si Pian.

In fact, over many years, the author has found Aquinas’s metaphysical concept of God as IES quite impressive and all-encompassing, describing God, for example, as the Prime Mover, Uncaused Cause, Necessary Being, Most Perfect Being, and Ordering Mind of all created beings. Axiologically, that IES is Unity, Goodness and Truth Itself, etc., is equally magnificent and necessary in our postmodern world today.

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48 Cf. Ibid., pp. 242-245.
50 Cf. 沈清松：－「談士林哲學的研究方向」演講紀錄－,《哲學與文化》第卅一卷第十二期 (2004.06), 頁 176。
in which there is no absolute moral or axiological foundation. However relevant and appropriate it appeared once to a vast number of people, such a mediaeval Thomism is in need of a certain “detechnicalizing,” in congruence with the commonly lived experience today. In this way, IES would become much more comprehensible, attractive and exciting to many again.

Indeed, for a long time, the author has been hoping for some change or improvement as regards this mediaeval notion of God. What now moves him forward are three awe-inspiring and -exciting truths which he has recently stumbled upon. First, it is the remarkable concept of God suggested by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). This idea seems quite relevant, relational and stimulating to the present or future generation, as he states:

The God for whom our century is waiting must be: 1. As vast and mysterious as the Cosmos. 2. As immediate and all-embracing as Life. 3. As linked (in some way) to our effort as Mankind. A God who made the World less mysterious, or smaller, or less important than the God we await --- will never more be He to whom the Earth kneels.

Second, the author has discovered something about the amazing versatility of Paul Ricoeur’s theory of Threefold Mimesis. Consisting of Mimesis 1, Mimesis 2 and Mimesis 3, this Threefold Mimesis, to be briefly explained later, can be interpreted

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56 Cf. 沈清松，《呂格爾》，臺北市：東大圖書公司，2000，頁 112-114。
and used for practical hermeneutics. In fact, one may employ it as a hermeneutical method for the re-interpretation or re-figuration of some obsolete and problematic narrative, story, play, fiction, etc., including even a metaphysical theory.

Third, the author has discovered, to his astonishment, that one can actually apply Ricoeur’s Threefold *Mimesis* in the re-interpretation or re-figuration of Aquinas’s metaphysical concept of *IES*. In particular, when we do so in terms of the *Guanzi Si Pian*’s metaphysics of Dao, *Dao-Qi* or *qi*, the latter could help us explicitly bring forth the striking features of Teilhard’s concept of God somehow hidden or unexpressed in Aquinas’s metaphysical concept of *IES*. In other words, being re-interpreted or re-figured by virtue of *Guanzi Si Pian*’s metaphysical concept of *qi*, Aquinas’s mediaeval scholastic concept of *IES* could become in a real way, as mentioned, i.e., 1) as vast and mysterious as the cosmos; 2) as immediate and all-embracing as life; and 3) as linked (in some way) to our effort as humankind.

Further, the author has found out that, surprisingly, no attempt has ever been made by anyone academically to re-interpret or re-figure St. Thomas’s concept of *IES* in terms of *Guanzi Si Pian*’s concept of *qi*. It is true that attempts have been made to compare certain components of St. Thomas’s philosophy or theology with some Chinese thinkers, works, thoughts or philosophy at large, such as with Zhu Xi’s metaphysics, *Yi Jing*’s cosmology, Confucius’s concept of ritual, *Tao-Te Ching*’s concept of the nameless Dao, as well as with Chinese philosophy as a whole.

Encouraged or emboldened by these discoveries, the author has decided to move forward and make some improvement on Aquinas’s scholastic, metaphysical concept of *IES*. Specifically, he does it by virtue of the concept of *qi* in *Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters* which appears, as shall be seen, to be significantly concrete, dynamic and relational. It is hoped that such a re-figuration would help many today in discovering

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57 As seen in Chapter III, *Guanzi Si Pian*’s metaphysics of *qi* is its expression of Dao or *Dao-Qi*.
59 Cf. 颜建球: 《朱熹與多瑪斯形上思想的比較》上下冊, 臺北: 臺灣商務印書館, 民國六十六年。
60 Cf. 雷敦龢 (Edmund Ryden): 〈易經的宇宙論與多瑪斯的五道說〉: 《神學論集》, 第 91 號, 1992 年春, 頁 105-110。
61 Cf. 胡國楨: 〈至聖先師孔夫子教會聖師多瑪斯紀念彌撒大典經文試作〉: 《神學論集》, 第 32 號, 1977 年夏, 頁 271-276。
63 Cf. 羅光: 〈聖多瑪斯哲學對中國哲學的可能貢獻〉; 羅光, 《中國哲學的展望》再版, 頁 403-418.
or re-discovering the concrete, dynamic and relational aspects long hidden in St. Thomas’s concept of IES.

Moreover, an amazing windfall has emerged. The author has discovered that, in terms of Ricoeur’s Threefold Mimesis, an encultured (or incultured) metaphysics or theology may even be formed, i.e., when Guanzi Si Pian’s metaphysics of qi is re-interpreted or re-figured in terms of Aquinas’ metaphysics of God. In other words, in terms of Aquinas’s Christian metaphysics of IES, Guanzi Si Pian’s Huang-Lao Daoist metaphysics of qi could even be transformed, re-figured or re-created anew into a Christian metaphysics or theology of qi. As the Chinese culture has begun dialoguing with Western civilization, it may become a unique contribution to such an inter-cultural discourse --- religious or spiritual by nature --- between these two major traditional metaphysical systems or transcendent worldviews.64

Upon these wonderful discoveries, the author has decided, therefore, to embark on the thesis.

2. Methodology Based on Ricoeur’s Theory of Threefold Mimesis

The hermeneutical method or methodology of the present thesis is based on the author’s interpretation as regards Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutic theory of Threefold Mimesis.65 Historically, modern hermeneutics ----- as an art of understanding and theory of interpretation66 and a type of philosophy beginning with hermeneutic questions of interpretation67 and grounded upon the scientific principles of proper textual exegesis68 ----- was initiated by Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834). At the beginning, the founder of modern hermeneutics was concerned principally with interpreting Biblical texts.69 Over the course of the next century and half, through the

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64 Cf. 項退結：〈兩種不同超越與未來中國文化〉，沈清松編，《詮釋與創造—傳統中華文化及其未來發展》，臺北市：聯合報系文化基金會，民國八十四年，頁 503-522；項退結：《中國哲學之路》，初版，台北市：東大出版，民 80，頁 37-40。
particular efforts of William Dilthey (1833-1911), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), and Jürgen Habermas (1929- ), etc., the field of hermeneutics has evolved subsequently into at least seven distinctive literal ways or definitions. In approximately chronological order, these seven classifications are: (1) the theory of Bible exegesis; (2) the

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73 It appears that the most important contribution of the earlier Ricoeur is his philosophy of the will. As regards the latter Ricoeur, his greatest contribution is his hermeneutics of the self (Hermenéutique du soi) and narrative theory. As regards the hermeneutics of the self, consult Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1990). His narrative theory can be found in his classical work Time and Narrative, vol. 1-3, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984 (vol. 1), 1985 (vol. 2), 1988 (vol. 3). Cf. 沈清松：《呂格爾》 , 台北：東大圖書公司，2000 年，頁 37。Undeniably, the most significant component of his narrative theory is his Threefold Mimesis (cf. Ibid.) which the author is interpreting and using in this thesis. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 1, pp. 52-87.


75 The first six distinctive ways or definitions are the descriptive observations of Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics: Interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer, p. 33. In Palmer’s words: “All of these characterizing adjectives are somewhat inadequate and unsatisfactory; I use them very tentatively and provisionally simply to indicate the diversity among the six different approaches.” Ibid., footnote 1.

76 The first six of the following seven classifications or definitions of hermeneutics are taken from...
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general philological methodology;78 (3) the science of all linguistic understanding;79 (4) the methodological foundation of Geisteswissenschaften;80 (5) the phenomenology of existence and of existential understanding;81 (6) the system of interpretation, both recollective and iconoclastic, to reach the meaning behind myths and symbols;82 and (7) critical hermeneutics.83

In a similar fashion, in accordance with Vincent Shen (1949- ), three major trends in the development of hermeneutics can be discerned currently. The first trend may be described as “philosophical hermeneutics” founded by Heidegger and further developed by Gadamer.84 The second is “methodological hermeneutics” advanced by Ricoeur and E. D. Hirsch (1928- ), etc.85 Further, the third is the “critical hermeneutics” of Habermas and K.-O. Apel (1922- ), etc.86

Should there be one thing in common among these three major trends of hermeneutics today, it is to help us see, envisage or understand what we otherwise would be unable to. As we know, since time immemorial, human beings have been dealing with the universal problem that “truth exceeds its expression”87 and that “spoken discourse always lags behind what one wants or has to say.”88 If it is so, the famous adage that “there is hermeneutics where there is misunderstanding”89 would

77   According to Palmer, Biblical hermeneutics “has many different directions; in the eighteenth century alone it included grammatical, historical, pietistic, and other schools, and it continues to be many-sided in the present time.” Ibid, footnote 1.
78   Indeed, philological hermeneutics “also enjoyed a complex development in the eighteenth century.” Ibid.
79   This is in reference to Schleiermacher’s project and “is simply meant to suggest his effort to put hermeneutics on a universal, systematic foundation.” Ibid.
80   The term “Geisteswissenschaften” refers to “disciplines focused on understanding human art, actions, and writings.” Ibid., p. 41. This succinct label refers to “Dilthey’s project, but it is hardly sufficient to suggest the emphasis on the historical in Dilthey.” Ibid., p. 33, footnote 1.
81   The term ‘existential’ here “is stretched to designate both Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s conceptions of hermeneutics.” Ibid.
82   Referring to Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, Palmer is convinced that “‘cultural’ can hardly suggest the richness of Ricoeur’s application of hermeneutics to the quest for a more adequate philosophy centered on the interpretation of symbols.” Ibid.
83   The term “critical hermeneutics” is taken from Vincent Shen’s work. Cf. 沈清松：《對比·外推與交談》，頁 92。
84   Cf. Ibid., pp. 92-95.
85   Cf. 沈清松：《對比·外推與交談》，頁 92, 95, 96。
86   Cf. Ibid., pp. 96-98.
be crucial for opening up new vistas with respect to the inner truth missed, unexpressed or concealed from our present understanding in general. Consequently, the author is convinced that some hermeneutical method — grounded in this case upon Ricoeur’s theory of Threefold *Mimesis* or the interpretation of it — is necessary in helping him see the hidden truth or inner aspects as regards St. Thomas’s metaphysics of *IES* and the *Guanzi Si Pian*’s metaphysics of *qi*.

It is hoped, thus, that the author’s interpretation of Ricoeur’s methodological Threefold *Mimesis* could become, insofar as the methodology of the present thesis is concerned, an “art of rightly understanding the discourse, and especially the writings, of another.”[90] In other words, the author hopes that his interpretation of Ricoeur’s Threefold *Mimesis* would become a new curtain raiser, i.e., a “new way of seeing things”[91] or an “art of avoiding misunderstanding.”[92] In this way, this thesis as a whole might become, paraphrasing Ricoeur’s words, a “work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning implied in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meanings implied in the literal meaning.”[93] Thus, the author’s interpretation of the traditional metaphysics by both St. Thomas and the *Guanzi Si Pian* would be appreciably inspiring to many.

Besides, methodologically speaking, the author is convinced that such a creative, interactive, hermeneutical interplay between these two time-tested metaphysical traditions would also help to forge new paths in search of universalizable truths between East and West. Pope John Paul II states succinctly: “Every truth — if it really is truth — presents itself as universal, even if it is not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times.”[94] Hopefully, this thesis might help many discover as well as integrate some of the shareable truths somewhat hidden in both St. Thomas’s concept of *IES* and the concept of *qi* in the *Guanzi Si Pian*.

As we know, “not since Marco Polo has the relationship between East and West, in all its promise and prejudice, been higher in the world’s consciousness. It has

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[91] Ibid., p. 75.
Become our Zeitgeist.95 Hence, it is the author’s ardent desire that a certain “unified and organic vision of knowledge”96 between these two traditional metaphysical concepts might emerge for the enrichment of many in both East and West today. As a result of this inter-metaphysical, inter-cultural and inter-spiritual dialogue, it is hoped that such a knowledge, however small, still, would also serve as a beginning or springboard for much further research and development in the future.

Consisting of Mimesis 1, Mimesis 2, and Mimesis 3, Ricoeur’s systematic Threefold Mimesis deals mainly with the recollective re-interpretation or re-figuration of the text as regards a certain traditional narrative, story, play or fiction, etc. Refusing to let the negative phenomenon or image of that past text lead, this hermeneutical method is an effort to measure or control from the side of the interpreter.97 The goal is to break the negative image (i.e., to be iconoclastic) of this historical text, etc., and reveal the significant meaning or not-yet-expressed truth somehow hidden behind the traditional symbol or myth of this text.98 In Ricoeur’s words, such a symbol is “any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.”99 According to commonly held intelligible structures,100 symbolic resources,101 and temporal norms102 (found in Mimesis 1 or Pre-figuration),103 the text of this narrative, story, play or fiction would then be

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96 Pope John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, no. 85; cf. Ibid., no. 27.
98 Cf. Ibid., p. 33.
100 Structurally, the human situational pre-understanding (Mimesis 1) of the emplotment in Mimesis 2 can be anchored descriptively in terms of “what,” “why,” “who,” “how,” “with whom,” or “against who.” In other words, minimally speaking, the background for Mimesis 2 requires a certain Mimesis 1, i.e., a “familiarity with terms such as agent, goal, means, circumstance, help, hostility, cooperation, conflict, succession, failure, etc., on the part of its narrator and any listener.” Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol. 1, p. 55.
101 With respect to the symbolic aspect of Mimesis 1, “symbolism is not in the mind, not a psychological operation destined to guide action, but a meaning incorporated into action and decipherable from it by other actors in the social interplay.” Ibid., p. 57. Ethically, it is via such symbolism that the overall action and value system in (and for) Mimesis 2 is justified. “There is no action that does not give rise to approbation or reprobation, to however small a degree, as a function of a hierarchy of values, for which goodness and wickedness are the poles.” Ibid., p. 59.
102 Timewise, Mimesis 1 describes the way in which the field of human acting in Mimesis 2 is prefigured with respect to the temporal structures directing the followability of a narrative, e.g., in terms of the “highly ramified network of temporal adverbs: then, after, later, earlier, since, until, as long as, during, all the while that, now that, etc.” Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol. 1, p. 62. This structuring of within-time-ness seems to be one of the best ways to characterize what makes Dasein ordinary, real and existential in the field of human acting. Cf. Ibid., p. 61.
103 Cf. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol. 1, pp. 54-64.
re-interpreted or re-figured (in Mimesis 3 or Re-figuration),\textsuperscript{104} by virtue of a newly discovered or configured plot or emplotment (in Mimesis 2 or Con-figuration).\textsuperscript{105}

It must be made clear that the author’s employment of Ricoeur’s theory of Threefold Mimesis is somewhat different from Ricoeur’s. While Ricoeur uses his Threefold Mimesis textually as a narrative theory for the textual Pre-figuration, Con-figuration and Re-figuration of a past narrative, story, play or fiction, the author employs Ricoeur’s theory principally for the textual Pre-figuration, Con-figuration and Re-figuration of a traditional metaphysical concept.\textsuperscript{106} Apparently, a narrative or fiction is different from a metaphysical concept in the sense that the former deals usually with a personal, social, historical or fictional story, while the latter engages itself substantially with a metaphysical theory. However, a metaphysical theory such as St. Thomas’s concept of \textit{IES} or the \textit{Guanzi Si Pian}’s concept of \textit{qi} may also be interpreted or re-interpreted as a cosmic story about the transcosmic, trans-historical movement of \textit{IES} (in St. Thomas) or the Dao expressed through \textit{qi} (in the \textit{Guanzi Si Pian}).

In his commentary on the metaphysics of Aristotle, St. Thomas remarks that “the philosopher as much as the poet must be \textit{philomythes}, a lover of stories.”\textsuperscript{107} The author’s employment of Threefold Mimesis in this metaphysical discourse should, therefore, be viewed as an application of Ricoeur’s theory of Threefold Mimesis in a broadened or much-broadened sense. This is done in order not only to accommodate the two transcosmic, all-encompassing metaphysical stories. Out of necessity, such a broadened use of Threefold Mimesis also seeks to lay bare the URAM of both cosmic stories, as a path seldom trodden upon by modern or postmodern scholars.\textsuperscript{108}

Although the metaphysical concepts of St. Thomas and \textit{Guanzi Si Pian} belong to two vastly different times, cultures and philosophies, it may still be possible to discern a core of philosophical insight common to both “stories”, i.e., a substantial body of knowledge which may be judged, to paraphrase the words of Pope John Paul II, as a

\textsuperscript{104} Cf. Ibid., pp. 64-70.
\textsuperscript{105} Cf. Ibid., pp. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{106} Essentially, hermeneutics is a method seeking to understand the other. The scope of the other can be extended to philosophy, metaphysics, cosmology, literature, history, tradition, culture, religion, spirituality or social behaviour, etc. Cf. 黎志添：《宗教研究與詮釋學：宗教學建立的思考》，香港新界沙田：中文大學出版社，2003，頁37。
\textsuperscript{108} Cf. Ibid., pp. xi-xii, 1ff.
kind of implicit philosophical heritage of humanity.\textsuperscript{109} Precisely because these two transcospic stories appear to be both culturally distinct and philosophically similar at the same time, it is of great import that a certain comparison be conducted between them. By virtue of Ricoeur’s \textit{Threefold Mimesis}, it is hoped that not only a core of implicit philosophy, perennial by nature, may be discerned as common to both stories. In particular, it is the author’s concern that some of the incredible truths somehow hidden implicitly within them might be brought forth explicitly to make a significant difference to many today.

\textit{Mimesis} \textsuperscript{1}, as mentioned, consists of Ricoeur’s concepts of temporality, intelligible network and symbolic resources.\textsuperscript{110} Applying this Pre-figuration in a more general and broadened sense to the author’s own situation, \textit{Mimesis} \textsuperscript{I} would include, among others, the following five vital sub-stages:

1) Encountering Difficulty ---- Here the author encounters St. Thomas’s metaphysical concept of \textit{IES} as a cosmic story far from being intelligibly understood and appreciated by many in terms of today’s dynamic, concrete and relational symbolic resources;

2) Pondering for Change or Improvement ---- The author is not satisfied with the modern or postmodern negative understanding and reaction to \textit{IES} or Subsistent Being Itself. As a positive response, he is pondering for some serious change or constructive improvement;

3) Discovering Truth ---- Meanwhile, the author stumbles upon the \textit{Guanzi Si Pian}’s dynamic, concrete and relational cosmic theory or story of the Dao as expressed in terms of \textit{qi}. Simultaneously, he also discovers the exciting truism with respect to Teilhard’s prophetic concept of God and Ricoeur’s ingenious Threefold \textit{Mimesis} as mentioned above;

4) Deciding for Change or Improvement ---- Encouraged or emboldened by the

\textsuperscript{109} Cf. Pope John Paul II states: “Although times change and knowledge increases, it is possible to discern a core of philosophical insight within history of thought as a whole. Consider, for example, the principles of non-contradiction, finality and causality, as well as the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness. Consider as well certain fundamental norms which are shared by all. These are among the indications that, beyond different schools of thought, there exists a body of knowledge which may be judged a kind of spiritual heritage of humanity. It is as if we had come upon an implicit philosophy, as a result of which all feel that they possess these principles, albeit in a general and unreflective way. Precisely because it is shared in some measure by all, this knowledge should serve as a kind of reference-point for the different philosophical schools.” Pope John Paul II, \textit{Fides et Ratio}, no. 4.

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. Paul Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narrative}, Vol. 1, pp. 54-60.
newly discovered truths, the author decides to go ahead as regards the necessary change or interpretive improvement over our current concept of IES;

5) Working and Hoping ---- The author, hence, begins to work and hope that the difficulty encountered would be overcome. He is convinced that, by virtue of the three awe-inspiring truisms discovered, a significant re-interpretation of IES could occur.

*Mimesis* 2 or Con-figuration consists mainly of the newly formed plot or emplotment along with its rules. Indeed, without *Mimesis* 2 or the necessary Con-figuration, no change or improvement of the problematic encounter mentioned is possible in *Mimesis* 3. Specifically, this plot consists in bringing forth first the *Guanzi Si Pian*’s cosmic story of the Dao by means of its dynamic, concrete and relational *qi* (as found in Chapter III). Second, such an emplotment seeks to apply the author’s understanding of Ricoeur’s Threefold *Mimesis* in re-figurating St. Thomas’s cosmic story of IES in terms of the *Guanzi Si Pian*’s cosmic story of the Dao (in Chapter IV). In this way, relevant improvement of the problematic metaphysical cosmic story of St. Thomas Aquinas as regards IES would be possible in the necessary Re-figuration or *Mimesis* 3. Third, this plot, as it is developed further, includes also the unexpected gain (in Chapter V), i.e., the Re-figuration of the *Guanzi Si Pian*’s cosmic story of the Dao in terms of St. Thomas’s newly re-figurated cosmic story of IES (as re-conceived in Chapter IV).

*Mimesis* 3 or Re-figuration is the consequential product, as mentioned, of the whole process of Threefold *Mimesis* in which the original problematic narrative, story, play or fiction is being re-figured anew according to the plot. Narratively, Ricoeur’s Re-figuration or re-construction of a meaningful world occurs according to the reader’s (or listener’s) Con-figuration as emplotted in *Mimesis* 2. In the author’s case, it is hoped that the problematic cosmic story of IES by St. Thomas would be appropriately re-figured (in Chapter IV) by the author as a reader or listener. At the same time, according to his chosen emplotment, the concrete, dynamic and relational metaphysics of *qi* in the *Guanzi Si Pian* would also be re-interpreted afresh in a Christian manner via St. Thomas’s re-figurated concept of IES (in Chapter V).

Chapter V should be called an unrehearsed windfall which has occurred beyond his original expectation. Indeed, the author has discovered only most recently that it is possible to re-figurate the *Guanzi Si Pian*’s cosmic story of the Dao (as expressed
through \( qi \) in terms of St. Thomas’s cosmic story of IES.\(^{111}\) In addition, through this Re-figuration, the concrete, dynamic and relational metaphysics of \( qi \) found in the *Guanzi Si Pian* might become an appropriate enculturated (or inculturated) Christian metaphysics or theology for the Chinese people. Being a committed Chinese Christian, it is natural for the author to find such a discovery so amazing and unexpected.

As a whole, for the purposes of the present thesis, the author would vastly broaden the application of Ricoeur’s theory here in two significant dimensions. First, extending the use of Threefold *Mimesis* beyond that of a narrative, story, play or fiction, he will use Ricoeur’s theory for the philosophical and spiritual re-interpretation or Re-figuration of a metaphysical system. One may find such an application in (a) Chapter IV as regards the Re-figuration of St. Thomas’s metaphysics of IES in terms of the metaphysics of \( qi \) in the *Guanzi Si Pian*, as well as (b) in Chapter V as regards the Re-figuration of the latter’s metaphysics of \( qi \) in terms of St. Thomas’ metaphysics of IES.

The second dimension is that of *cosmic time*. Just as Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* has transformed Heidegger’s *existential time* into his *narrative time*,\(^ {112}\) the author will extend Ricouer’s *narrative time* into its *cosmic* dimension. This is being done for the purposes of Re-figuration as regards the cosmic metaphysical dimension found in both Chapters IV and V as mentioned. Otherwise, no Re-figuration is possible for St. Thomas’s cosmic metaphysics of the all-embracing IES, as well as for the cosmic metaphysics of the all-permeating \( qi \) in the *Guanzi Si Pian*.

### 3. Structure of Argumentation

According to the order of the chapters, the procedural structure of argumentation is largely interactive and dialogual, as regards the present work entitled “A Comparative Study between St. Thomas Aquinas’s Concept of *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and the Concept of *Qi* in the *Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters*.” What follows is the author’s brief explanation.

In Chapter I, the author will introduce the thesis, describing tersely his very motivation and justification for writing the study. Then, he will present the methodology of this work based on Paul Ricoeur’s theory of Threefold *Mimesis*,

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111 In retrospect, credits must be given to the insightful and inspiring advice of Prof. Vincent Shen.
112 Cf. 沈清松：《呂格爾》，頁 115。
explaining how *Mimesis* 1, *Mimesis* 2 and *Mimesis* 3 are used as well in the present work. Here, the author will also discuss the difference and relation between a narrative theory and a metaphysical theory, which allows him to broaden Ricoeur's Threefold *Mimesis* to his metaphysical discourse in this work. Finally, the structure of argumentation as regards the present dissertation is concluded. By and large, Chapter I is filled with varying critical characteristics of *Mimesis* 1.

In Chapter II, the author will outline the metaphysical concept of IES according to St. Thomas Aquinas. Here we are at the very heart of St. Thomas’s thinking in respect to God as IES, i.e., Subsistent Being Itself, Self-Subsistent Existence,\(^{113}\) or Subsistent Act of Existing or Existence Itself.\(^{114}\) Indeed, IES may be looked upon as the very key which leads us through the whole of St. Thomas’s philosophy or theology,\(^{115}\) coherently so. Divided into three parts, part I is a short introduction to the chapter. While part II describes briefly the definitive meaning, characteristic and development of St. Thomas’s theocentric concept of being, part III focuses on the URAM, as well as the current challenge of IES.

In Chapter III, the author will describe briefly the metaphysical concept of *qi* in the *Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters*. Here, the metaphysical nature or worldview of the *Guanzi Si Pian* is condensed from the metaphorical stories or descriptions of *qi* therein. At the same time, it must be stated that the Dao is the ultimate irremovable ground and root of the totality of reality in Daoism,\(^{116}\) and subsequently in the Huang-Lao Daoist philosophy and in the whole of *Guanzi Si Pian*.\(^{117}\) The author’s investigation of the metaphysics of *qi* in the *Guanzi Si Pian* begins, therefore, with (a) the exploration of the metaphysics of the Dao, followed by (b) the study of the metaphysics of *qi*, and (c) the observation of the efficacious function of the *xin* 心.


through which the metaphysics of qi may be brought to its magnificent fulfillment. Although the metaphysics of the Dao is only brought to reality through the metaphysics of qi, the entire metaphysics of qi is ultimately grounded or rooted in the metaphysics of the Dao and is to be fulfilled par excellence primarily through our xin 心. Hence, the Dao, qi, and xin 心 become the three paramount paradigms by which the ultimate reality and metaphysics of qi subtly hidden in the Guanzi Si Pian are being made explicit.118

In Chapter IV, the author will use his broadened interpretation of Ricoeur’s Threefold Mimesis to re-interpret St. Thomas’s potentially cosmic metaphysics of IES in terms of the Guanzi Si Pian’s cosmic metaphysics of qi. It is hoped that Aquinas’s scholastic concept of IES might, therefore, become strikingly similar to the awesome features of Teilhard’s prophetic concept of God for many. As mentioned, the God for Whom the present or future generation is waiting should be One Who is as vast and mysterious as the cosmos, as immediate and all-embracing as life, and linked in some way to the effort of humankind.119 Hermeneutically, Chapter IV is thus an interactive dialogue between St. Thomas’s concept of God (Chapter II) and the Guanzi Si Pian’s concept of qi (Chapter III). In the context of Ricoeur’s theory, this Daoist metaphysical concept of qi is used as the Con-figuration (Mimesis 2) for the Re-figuration (Mimesis 3) of the Thomistic concept of IES.

In Chapter V, in terms of St. Thomas’s metaphysical concept of IES, the author will, then, try to re-interpret or re-figure the Guanzi Si Pian’s metaphysical concept of qi. It is hoped that, as mentioned, an encultured Christian interpretation of the Guanzi Si Pian’s metaphysical concept of qi might be produced or re-figured accordingly. Resembling what is done in Chapter IV, it appears, however, that this re-figuration of the Guanzi Si Pian’s concept of qi ----- i.e., in terms of St. Thomas’s metaphysics of IES ----- is something which has never been attempted by anyone before. Evidently, Chapters II, III and IV are also engaged in some interactive dialogue in Chapter V. According to the theory of Threefold Mimesis, St. Thomas’s re-figurated concept of IES (found in Chapter IV) is employed as the Con-figuration (Mimesis 2) for the Re-figuration (Mimesis 3) of the Guanzi Si Pian’s concept of qi (Chapter III) in Chapter V.

Finally, a consortium of brief summary conclusions of the whole study will be drawn in Chapter VI. As a whole, it must be acknowledged that this work focuses

118 Cf. 李玫芳: 《管子形上思想探究 — 以「道」、「氣」、「心」為主軸的構建》, 輔仁大學哲學研究所博士論文, 指導教授: 李振英博士, 中華民國九十三年四月, 頁 3。
more on Re-figuration (Mimesis 3), rather than on Pre-figuration (Mimesis 1) and Con-figuration (Mimesis 2). Patently, it is only through Mimesis 3 that the motivation and purposes, etc., of the author as regards the present dissertation can be substantially fulfilled. However, as mentioned, no Re-figuration is really possible without first establishing the indispensable Pre-figuration and Con-figuration accordingly.