

A Study on Allegorical Narration and the Art of Argumentation in the Prose of Pre-Qin Philosophers

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Abstract: During the development of Pre-Qin philosophical prose from aphoristic writing to expository writing, allegory has been employed in various forms to achieve these changes in genre. Allegory is a type of argumentation that uses fictional narration to present rational persuasion and is thus closely related to the art of argumentation. The three parts of this paper are the combination of style, method of argument and display of ideas. The narrative turn can provide a reason for argumentation other than examples; thus, the main tools of argumentation are metaphors, counterfactual narratives and dialogic refutations, and shifts in perspective, control over the story and allegorical presentation are also ways to change one's way of thinking. Based on the above results, narrative elements are not merely decorations for the argument but also form the foundation of the text in which the art of argumentation is displayed. The Narrative Structure and the Argument Structure are closely related, so the Pre-Qin philosophers were also aware of this.

Keywords: Allegorical Narration; Art of Argumentation; Pre-Qin Philosophical Prose; Generic Fusion; Logical Construction.

Introduction

As an essential part of the history of Chinese thought and literature, the style and argument methods of Pre-Qin philosophical prose have long attracted the attention of scholars. A typical feature of the works of these philosophers is that they use many allegories; these allegories are not only parts of the literary story but also have important argumentative functions. However, most of the above studies have either focused on the literary value of allegories or concentrated on the analysis of argumentative logic; they have not yet offered a systematic theoretical explanation for the intrinsic connection between allegorical narration and the art of argumentation. In fact, the stylistic development of Pre-Qin philosophical prose shows a trend of change from the aphoristic style to the expository style, and at the same time, narrative elements were added and the argumentative context was enriched; thus, a close interaction between allegorical narration and the art of argumentation took place at the textual level. Further investigation of this relationship will provide more specific examples of the style, type of argument and mode of expression in Pre-Qin philosophical prose. The subject of this study is the interaction between allegorical narration and the art of argumentation, and therefore, the three dimensions of investigation are generic fusion, argumentative strategies and the display of thought. To discover the structural function of allegorical narration in Pre-Qin philosophical argumentation and learn how narrative elements are employed to present and shape the logical form and artistic quality of argumentation.

1. Generic Fusion of Allegorical Narration and the Art of Argumentation

1.1 The Narrative Turn in Pre-Qin Philosophical Prose and the Context of Argumentation

The style of Pre-Qin philosophical prose shows a clear trend of change; it has shifted from aphoristic to expository in nature, and at this time, narrative elements have been added to create new types of writing. In the early aphoristic style, the records of discourses mainly consisted of short questions and answers, and narration served only as an introduction. By the middle and late Warring States period, the works of various philosophers had accumulated a large number of allegorical stories with complete structures and vivid plots, and narrative elements had gradually moved from the periphery to the core of expository texts. This turn was not only a change in the form of writing but also

closely associated with the development of argumentative essays.

The intellectual pattern of the Hundred Schools of Thought required each school to respond to the criticism of others and put forward its own views accordingly; thus, argumentation became the basic form of intellectual creation. Considering argumentation, many of the propositional statements are not very convincing; however, narrative also takes on an argumentative function because it is concrete and situational. Allegory creates an artificial world to present an abstract idea in the form of a story about a fictional world, making it more accessible to all people of different ages. Therefore, the narrative turn became an essential way for Pre-Qin philosophers to meet the demands of argumentation, and it was formed that allegory and the art of argumentation had been in close contact at the textual level^[1].

1.2 The Stylistic Features of Allegory as a Vehicle for Argumentation and Its Functional Adaptation

As a kind of writing, allegory usually has the purpose of presenting ideas and promoting rational thinking in fictional works. Most of the allegories in the pre-Qin philosophical prose have a two-level structure; the outer level is the specific characters, events and plots, and the inner level contains propositions or teaching ideas. The two levels can give the allegory a stronger sense of argumentation than the usual case. Allegory is very good at creating a world, and by setting the time, place and relationships of characters, it can build a closed-off world for the argument. One can be free from the constraints of real life in this way and test the truth of a claim in a fictional world.

Allegorical figures can be employed to present arguments; often, their role is reduced to carrying a certain attitude or idea, and their words and actions take the form of specific logical paths. Narrative closure of allegory helps to focus the attention of the argument; thus, as the plot develops, it is always directed back to the main issue and does not wander off into general discussions. The above stylistic features make allegory an indispensable way for Pre-Qin philosophers in the art of argumentation; it has the advantages of narrative coherence, situational control and clear intention, and is thus well-suited for the logical rigor and persuasive effect required in argumentation.

1.3 The Structural Role of Narrative Strategy in the Construction of Argumentative Logic

The function of narrative strategy in the argumentation of Pre-Qin philosophers has moved beyond rhetorical ornamentation to become part of the structure of argumentative logic. The arrangement of allegorical narratives can be used to present an argument, and often, the chain of causation in the story will correspond to the logical links among the reasons and conclusions of the argument. The order of narration affects the speed at which the reasons are introduced; sequential narration can show the gradual accumulation of reasons, and anachronisms are often used to build suspense and draw the reader into the reasoning process.

The placement of the narrative point of view will also influence how the argument is presented; an all-knowing narrator can directly state this information, but a limited narrator can also create a cognitive gap by showing only what the character knows and leaving some room for the reader to think for themselves. The structure of dialogue among characters in allegory directly reveals the logic of argumentation; that is, the distribution of speech between the two sides, the order of refutation and shifts in topic are all deliberate designs of argumentative strategy. A change in narrative space also has its reasons; generally, going to a different place is to show the development of arguments or to shift the focus of the discussion. Making full use of these narrative elements, the Pre-Qin philosophers no longer needed allegory to support their ideas; instead, they made it the foundation for reasoning, and thus, at the level of text, close structural correspondence was achieved between narrative organisation and the logic of argumentation^[2].

2. Argumentative Strategies and Logical Construction in Allegory

2.1 Metaphorical Reasoning: The Argumentative Efficacy of Allegorical Analogical Mechanisms

Allegory construction is employed to present the argument of analogy in the form of a metaphor. There is a structural correspondence between the surface narrative and the deeper meaning of an allegory; that is to say, the characters, actions and results in the story are set up as mappings for the propositions to be proved. Organize the details of the story in an ordered manner, create structural isomorphism between the content in the two areas through mapping, and thus transfer the reader's judgment of the narrative events to their understanding of abstract ideas. The reason one may use

metaphor is that it can be verified through the circumstances of the story; the causal chain shown in an allegory is intuitively logical, and by accepting the logic of the narrative, readers are implicitly accepting the argumentative premises. Pre-Qin philosophers made good use of metaphor to regulate the analogous correspondences they were willing to accept or reject; thus, they could select, omit or emphasize certain narrative elements according to the purpose of their arguments and present analogical reasoning naturally within the framework of a story.

The reason for using figurative language in the arguments of the Pre-Qin philosophers is to present abstract ideas. Metaphysical propositions and value judgments cannot be directly observed in daily life; therefore, allegory is used to present them in a more accessible and discussable way. Openness in metaphorical structures allows the same allegory to be used in various kinds of argumentation; although the narrative framework is the same, the mapping relations differ, and thus good argumentative effects can be achieved in different circumstances. Common metaphors in the allegories of Pre-Qin philosophy, such as those derived from nature, artifact production and bodily experience, all have the characteristic of argumentation and concretisation of abstract ideas. Metaphorical reasoning can motivate readers to use reasoning by similarity in situational cognition and thus changes the argumentative mode from unilateral propositional assertion to co-construction of meaning by the reader and the text^[3].

2.2 Counterfactual Narration: Extending the Boundaries of Argumentation with Hypothetical Scenarios

Counterfactual Narration is added to the list of reasons by constructing intentional hypothetical scenarios that violate common knowledge or sense. The first type of allegory creates a situation that is either impossible or has not yet happened in real life, deduces the logical consequences of the events under hypothetical circumstances, and thus tests the validity of a particular principle or proposition. Counterfactual narration omits many of the contingent factors in the actual situation and focuses on presenting the main logical relations for analysis. Fictional situations are not without reason for being hypothetical; by taking them out of real life, allegories can present their reasons in a pure logical world and show links among principles that are not obvious in ordinary circumstances. The Pre-Qin philosophers used counterfactuals because they wished to explore the limits of possibility, and by establishing hypothetical extremes, they would test the logical self-consistency of propositions.

The other purpose of argumentation in counterfactual narration is to expand the range of argumentation. If a dispute cannot be resolved because the parties disagree on the existence of certain facts, counterfactual situations can be created to increase the level of discussion from mere presentation of facts to logical reasoning, and both sides can come to a preliminary agreement on their positions in these hypothetical circumstances. Counterfactual Situations in allegories are often presented as stories with their own tensions, and there is a logical need for these hypothetical circumstances and the resulting outcome; thus, this necessity shows the truth of the hypothetical circumstances. The many hypothetical narrative frameworks in the Pre-Qin philosophical allegories indicate that their purpose is to promote counterfactual thinking. Narrative mode is free from the constraints of citing and interpreting empirical data, so it can be presented at the level of logical deduction and thus enhance the theoretical depth and universality of the argument.

2.3 The Structure of Refutation in Dialogic Allegory and Its Rhetorical Tension

Dialogic allegory shows the process of argumentation directly as a verbal confrontation between characters, and the structure of refutation is the main driving force of the narrative. This kind of allegory combines the two features of dialogue and narration at the level of style: dialogue accounts for the main content of the text, and narration presents the circumstances and behaviour of the occurrence of dialogue. The Design of the structure of refutation can be seen in several ways, such as how to divide the roles of the two speakers, how long each person speaks, the organisation of rebuttal logic, and the control over the rhythm of turn-taking in conversation. Philosophers in the Pre-Qin period have created interlocutors at all levels of cognitive ability in dialogic allegories, and they have used the cognitive reversal that occurs in the participants during the dialogue to expose their argumentative goals. The question-and-answer relationship in the structure of refutation is an organised arrangement of logic, and each round of questioning builds on the previous one to show that the original proposition is false^[4].

The rhetorical tension of dialogic allegory is the result of a cognitive gap between the speakers and

an uneven distribution of discursive power. The party that has achieved the upper hand in the allegory is entitled to set the rules for the story and can lead the other side into a prearranged line of reasoning by posing questions. The party at the bottom represents daily life or the public's view, and their words are gradually refuted or corrected in the course of the talk. The two sides are not the same, so there is tension in the talk and also a plot to be revealed. As the reader reads, they are led into the logical development of the dialogue and can feel the change in thought and the arrival of conclusions through this conversation. The careful organisation of the structure of refutation in the dialogic allegories of the Pre-Qin philosophers shows that they were aware of the process of argumentation itself, and dialogue served not only as a way to present reasons but also as an internal mode for generating reasons.

3. The Artistic Dimension of Argumentation and the Presentation of Thought

3.1 Shifts in Point of View in Allegorical Narration and the Expression of Argumentative Stance

Changing the subject of view for allegory can also be done to present all sides of a problem. In the allegories of the Pre-Qin philosophers, there are often changes in the point of view during the course of the story; for example, the narrator may start from the perspective of one character and then switch to the observational position of another to show many aspects of the subject matter through differentiated presentation of the same event from different viewpoints. Shifts in the point of view do not limit the argumentative position to a single speaking subject; rather, a fluid narrative point of view can show many different sides of the argumentative position. When the cognition from the perspective of a particular character is later corrected or refuted by another view, one can show the weakness in the argument through the gaps created by this change in perspective rather than stating it directly in the text. Indirectly expressing one's attitude is a way to present the argument indirectly and inclusively; at the same time, it can help the reader form their own opinions on this change in perspective^[5].

Changes in the point of view of the allegories of Pre-Qin philosophy also serve to obscure the argument. When a character speaks directly in an argumentative manner, its persuasiveness will depend on whether people respect the character's authority and credibility; however, by changing the point of view and presenting this information in the form of narration, we can also avoid making the reader feel judged by direct instruction. The general development of Pre-Qin philosophical allegories is from a particular view to an all-encompassing one; this is a cognitive leap from partial knowledge to comprehensive understanding, and this very change in perspective provides the basis for the argument. A Change in perspective can result in a new kind of knowledge for the reader, and similarly, the allegorical figures in the story will be understood differently based on this; thus, by altering one's own view, the reader can proactively construct this knowledge rather than being led by it. This story develops the art of argumentation from conflict at the level of discourse to reconstruction at the level of cognition and shows the profound self-awareness of the Pre-Qin philosophers in their methods of argumentation.

3.2 Narrative Modulation of Argumentative Rhythm: Elaboration, Transition and Convergence

Modification of narrative rhythm is a necessary artistic way to achieve the goal of philosophical allegory in the Pre-Qin period, and the three basic types of rhythmic variation are elaboration, transition and convergence. In the stage of elaboration, details are added, scenes are depicted, and the plot is extended to provide a cognitive foundation for the development of the argument. Although this stage is not directly related to the main content of the argument, it can help reduce the psychological distance for readers by offering a story and making it easier for them to learn about the argument later. All the elements of the narrative in the elaboration stage have specific functions; that is, some provide a frame of reference for understanding the subject matter, and others lay the foundation for the preconditions of the next section. Control of narrative density in the elaboration stage of Pre-Qin philosophical allegories shows that these thinkers were aware of the reader's cognitive speed; if it were too short, the basis for thought would be weak, and if it were too long, the audience would lose interest.

The two more evident parts of the modulation of argumentative rhythm are transition and convergence. Transition can be expressed as concentrated argumentation in allegorical narration; that is to say, it breaks the cognitive equilibrium reached in the development stage by introducing plot reversals, cognitive inversions or disappointments to make readers reconsider what they have just learned. The Strength and Speed of the transition will directly affect the force of the argumentation; therefore, they should be moderate, or the logical basis of the argument will be damaged. The

convergence stage presents the new cognitive equilibrium that has been reached through the process of change and concludes the closure of the argument with a final narration, character commentary or the end of further plot developments. The allegories of the Pre-Qin period took many forms; some were open-ended and invited further thought from the readers, while others were closed-ended and provided immediate answers to the problem. Organic combination of elaboration, transition and convergence gives allegory a whole argumentative structure at the narrative level, and thus modulation of narrative rhythm is required for the art of argumentation.

3.3 Allegorical Presentation of Philosophical Propositions: From Concrete Narration to Abstract Speculation

The first way that the Pre-Qin philosophers presented the abstract ideas of philosophy was through allegory; this method moved from concrete descriptions to abstract thinking and enabled a change in the way of knowing. Allegory is used to provide specific images for abstract philosophical ideas, and at the same time, it is also convenient to incorporate the logical system of these ideas into the entire world of the story. The characters, plots and settings in allegory constitute the textual field for the presentation of philosophical ideas, and the logical components of these ideas are given concrete expression in the story. In this way, the original abstract philosophical ideas will be more accessible to the readers, and they can grasp the meaning of these ideas through stories. Narrative treatment of daily life, such as natural phenomena, the creation of artifacts and interpersonal relationships, in the Pre-Qin philosophical allegories has a method of self-awareness that connects abstract speculation with sensory experience; thus, the philosophical propositions can be released from the closure of pure speculation and achieve the possibility of public discussion.

Concrete narration and abstract speculation are in opposition and dialectics but work together in allegory. A concrete level can provide cognitive anchors and a verification area for speculation; at this level, abstract propositions can be checked in light of the narrative context, and conversely, the speculative level can offer theoretical support for concrete narration, thus allegory can move away from empirical description and enter the realm of intellectual construction. Many allegorical expressions for the same philosophical idea in the Pre-Qin philosophical allegories show that people have attempted various ways to approach the theoretical core. The framework of allegory is not only the external form of the philosophical idea but also an interpretation and limitation of that idea; thus, the selection and arrangement of narrative elements directly determine how the idea is perceived. It is not a sudden jump from concrete narration to abstract speculation, but rather a gradual movement of thought through allegory and explanation to help the reader learn. By creating an allegorical system of stories intentionally, the Pre-Qin philosophers had readers think abstractly and learn about life in practice; thus, they provided a story form for philosophical ideas and a spreadable medium.

Conclusion

This paper will systematically investigate the interaction of allegorical narration and the art of argumentation in Pre-Qin philosophical prose from the three aspects of generic fusion, argumentative strategies and presentation of thought. Research has shown that allegory is not a subordinate way of presenting evidence in argumentation; rather, it is the whole system of presentation for the art of argumentation. Generally speaking, the narrative turn can provide allegory with a type of argumentation that is not based on exemplification, and it establishes a close isomorphism between narrative structure and argumentative structure. Metaphorical reasoning is a type of argument that shows an abstract idea in concrete terms through analogy, counterfactual narration extends the scope of reasoning by putting forward hypothetical circumstances, and the structure of refutation in dialogic allegory is naturally in line with the goal of argumentation. Artistically, one can change the point of view to produce various expressions and show one's attitude towards an issue indirectly; by varying the speed of the story, adding some expansion and contraction, and occasionally condensing it, all sorts of effects can be achieved to attract the audience. Allegories can be used to present particular stories in an abstract form. The Pre-Qin philosophers consciously used allegorical narrative devices to give the art of argumentation a textual form that went beyond simple logic, and thus considered narrative factors a way of intellectual creation and meaning construction. Future research can extend to compare the narrative styles of different schools of thought, investigate the mechanisms of interaction between allegorical narration and cognition from the perspective of the receiver, and explore the evolutionary path of allegorical narrative forms in light of the texts that have been excavated.

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