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Dissertation title: The Use of <i>yi</i> 以 in the <i>Spring and Autumn Anaals</i> and A Rhetorical–Hermeneutic Reading		
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Faculty of Humanities

BA Dissertation Approval Form

Student Name	Qiyuan Wang
Degree Scheme	2023 BA Sinology
Start date	2026.02.25

Title of Dissertation:

The Use of *yi* 以 in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and A Rhetorical–Hermeneutic Reading

Aims and Objectives:

This study examines *yi* 以 within the writing principles of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. It surveys traditional commentaries on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* across successive dynasties, and using Fu Weixun’s ‘Creative Hermeneutics and its five dialectical steps’ approach as an interpretive lens. It aims to offer a more comprehensive and systematic examination and interpretation of the writing principles of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

Abstract (approximately 500 words):

Spring and Autumn Annals’s writing principles are never stated outright; its meanings often lie beyond the words. Taking the *Spring and Autumn Annals*’ use of *yi* 以 as an example, this study brings out the rhetoric and the interpretive possibilities embedded in this style. Among the *Three Commentaries* 三傳, the earliest text to explicate ‘*yi*’ is the *Zuo Tradition*, which states, ‘Whenever an army can be commanded, the text uses “*yi*”.’ On this view, ‘*yi*’ indicates that control over military forces lies in the hands of the agent.

Next, the *Guliyang Commentary* approaches “yi” from the standpoint of normative judgment and moral praise-and-blame, stating that ‘yi means ‘it should not be done by means of “yi”’. In cases of the pattern ‘A “yi” B’, A’s status or the relevant ritual norms do not warrant using B as an instrument. Therefore the text writes ‘yi’ to censure what is improper. Many later Confucian scholars followed this view. For instance, the Tang scholar Lu Chun 陸淳 writes, ‘As for “yi”, it points to a case where what is being done is not something that ought to be done.’ By the Northern Song, Hu Anguo 胡安國 offers a further interpretation of this character, ‘Where it concerns an army and the text uses “yi”, it means one can direct it at will; where it concerns territory and the text uses “yi”, it means one can take it or give it up; where it concerns a person and the text uses “yi”, it means one can decide life and death.’ These are representative views of earlier scholars on ‘yi’. Yet across the exegetical tradition, interpretations of this character vary widely. Their merits and shortcomings cannot be judged in sweeping terms, for each is grounded in a particular perspective and offers its own insights.

Drawing on Fu Weixun’s 傅偉勳 view, this article maintains that hermeneutics has nothing to do with so-called ‘objectivity’ or ‘absoluteness’. A blind faith in ‘objectivity’ and ‘absoluteness’ too easily leads to academic dogmatism and self-aggrandizement, thereby becoming an impediment to the development of the humanities and social sciences. What Fu Weixun calls ‘interpretive studies’ is in fact close to the long-standing work of explicating the Spring and Autumn Annals through successive traditions of commentary and subcommentary. By bringing together Western hermeneutics and the Eastern tradition of *yili* 義理 (principled learning), he develops a ‘creative hermeneutics’ and proposes a five-level analytical framework: *shiwei* 實謂, *yiwei* 意謂, *yunwei* 蘊謂, *dangwei* 當謂, and *chuangwei* 創謂. This study has identified forty instances of ‘yi’ in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. It takes as its guiding threads Hu Anguo’s threefold account, namely ‘yi’ as ‘directing troops’, ‘mastering territory’, and ‘controlling persons’. With Fu Weixun’s Five-wei method as its interpretive framework, it examines in broad outline the major explanations of ‘yi’ in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. At the same time, it consults major works in the Song Learning tradition of *Spring and Autumn Annals* studies and weighs them against Han Learning commentaries and subcommentaries. It

aims to offer a more comprehensive and integrated reading of the implications of ‘yi’ in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

This paper will be divided into four chapters:

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. Research Motivation and Objectives
2. Review of Previous Scholarship
3. Research Methods and Scope
 - (1) The Five-wei Levels in ‘Creative Hermeneutics’

Chapter 2 The Shiwei 實謂 and Yiwei 意謂 of ‘Yi’ in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*

1. The Shiwei 實謂 of ‘Yi’ in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*
 - (1) A Philological Study of the Character ‘Yi’
2. The Yiwei 意謂 of Yi (以) in the *Chunqiu*
 - (1) A Ritual–Normative Interpretation of ‘Yi’

Chapter 3 The Yunwei 蘊謂 of ‘Yi’ in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*

1. ‘Yi’ as Directing Troops
 - (1) ‘The men of Song, together with the men of Qi, Cai, Wei, and Chen, attacked Zheng.’ (Duke Huan, Year 14)
 - (2) ‘The Duke, with the Chu army, attacked Qi and seized Gu.’ (Duke Xi, Year 26)
 - (3) ‘The Marquis of Cai, together with the Viscount of Wu, fought the men of Chu at Boju.’ (Duke Ding, Year 4)
2. ‘Yi’ as Mastering Territory
 - (1) ‘Ji Ji entered Qi, bringing Xi with him.’ (Duke Zhuang, Year 3)
 - (2) ‘Zhu Shuqi fled to us, bringing Qi and Lüqiu with him.’ (Duke Xiang, Year 21)
 - (3) ‘Ju Mouyi fled to us, bringing Moulou, Fang, and Zi with him.’ (Duke Zhao, Year 5)

3. ‘Yi’ as Controlling Persons

- (1) ‘They captured the Duke of Song and attacked Song with him.’ (Duke Xi, Year 21)
- (2) ‘Liu Zi and Shan Zi settled Wang Meng at Huang.’ (Duke Zhao, Year 22)
- (3) ‘The Yin clan, the Earl of Shao, and the Earl of Mao fled to Chu with Prince Chao.’ (Duke Zhao, Year 26)

Chapter 4 Conclusion

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Proposed Supervisor:

Chang kao ping

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The above topic, proposal, and supervisor have been agreed:

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Chen, Su Fan

..Programme Director

Date: 27/02/2026

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