

The dialectical thinking of "Lao Tzu's" the reversal movement of Dao and its ecological value implication

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DOI: 10.64649/yh.eg.issn3078-4794.20260414

Abstract: As the understanding of Tao, Lao Tzu's "the movement of anti-Taoism" reveals the operation law of all things in the universe and the survival wisdom of human beings, which is embodied in the existence state of positive and negative, the development trend of things reaching extremes and the overall rhythm of circulation. From the perspective of ecological civilization, it contains the ecological wisdom of harmonious unity between man and nature, conscious control of development limits and following the law of ecological cycle.

Keywords: Laozi; the reversal movement of Dao; ecological wisdom

0. Introduction

Among the hundred schools of thought, Laozi's understanding of Tao contains rich dialectical thoughts. Different from the dialectics which emphasizes the spiral rise through the negation of negation in Marxism, Laozi reveals the value orientation of returning to the beginning rather than infinite development through the demonstration of anti and weak. The opposite is the movement of the Tao, and the weak is the use of the Tao.^{[1]154} reveals the operation law of Tao promoting the transformation and return of all things in opposition and the weak and indisputable rule of life. Re-examining this thought of Lao Tzu provides a useful reflection on the relationship between man and nature, the reasonable limits of development and the reconstruction of ecological cycle in the development of contemporary civilization.

1. The dialectical thinking of "Laozi" the movement of the movement of Dao as reversal

The academic community generally believes that the word "anti" has two meanings, one is "opposite" and the other is "return." These two meanings reflect Laozi's thinking and understanding of the operation of Tao and the existence of all things. It can be further expanded into the opposites/complementarity complementary existence state, the development trend of the extreme and the overall rhythm of the cycle.

1.1 Positive and negative: the existence state and the highest realm of all things

Laozi's understanding of all things in the universe has always been from the perspective of opposite. The world is a dynamic whole with countless opposites interdependent and mutually stipulated. This unity of opposites is the fundamental state of the existence of all things, and also the ideal state of its trend.

From the perspective of cosmology, Laozi first described the formation and harmonious state of all things with yin and yang. "Tao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two give birth to three, three give birth to all things"^{[1]165}, "one" is a chaotic undivided unity, "two" is the opposite of yin and yang differentiated from the unity, "three" is the harmonious state generated by the interaction of yin and yang, and all things are generated from this. The formation of the universe is a process from unity to opposition and then back to unity in opposition. "Everything is negative and holding yang, inflated as and."^{[1]165} million things are the unity of yin and yang coexistence, in the dynamic interaction to achieve balance.

On this basis, Lao Tzu further pointed out the coexistence of opposites in the empirical world: 'The world knows that beauty is beauty and evil; we all know that good is good, and bad is bad. Therefore, there is no mutual promotion, difficulty and difficulty complement each other, long and short phase shape, high and low phase inclination, sound and voice harmonize, front and back phase.'^{[1]8} Beauty and ugliness, good and evil, with or without, difficulty... Everything has its opposites, the two sides are interdependent and can not be neglected. We can't find pure and isolated beauty or goodness in the empirical world. Everything inherently contains its opposite.

In addition, Lao Tzu's "pushing the heavens to clarify human affairs" reflects the wisdom of life and the realm of saints from the laws of the operation of all things.^{[1]8}, the two concepts of "inaction" and "inaction" have internal identity. The saint follows the heavenly way, governs the world with "inaction," but can "succeed." Dao constantly does nothing, yet nothing is left undone^{[1]138}, it is embodied in daily practice as: 'Qu is all, wrong is straight, depression is surplus, depression is new, less is gain, more is confusion'^{[1]86}, which seems to be a negative and negative state, but can achieve positive results. Qu and Quan, Qu and Zhi, Wa and Ying, Bi and Xin, Shao and Duo, these seemingly opposing concepts actually achieve each other, and do not compete for a moment of strength, in order to maintain the root of the long-term. This is the wisdom of 'Opposites and complementarity complement each other'.

1.2 The extremes of things must be reversed: the inherent law of development limits

The complementarity of opposites is not only the existence state of things, but also the dynamic development process. The opposing sides will realize mutual transformation in mutual penetration. For example, in the thirtieth chapter, 'When things are strong, they grow old'^{[1]116}, and in the seventy-sixth chapter, 'A strong army is destroyed; a strong tree is broken.'^{[1]289} and so on all illustrate this inherent law. When things are strong to a certain extent, they will inevitably become aging, and the harder the trees are, the easier they will break. Taking natural phenomena as a metaphor, Lao Tzu points out that once anything develops to the extreme, it will inevitably go to the opposite side, which is the irresistible law of the universe.

However, Lao Tzu's "extremes must be reversed" is not unconditional relativism, but takes "extremes" as a condition for the transformation of the two sides, "misfortune depends on blessing, blessing lies in misfortune." Who knows the best?^{[1]235} "extreme" as the meaning of boundary and limit shows that when the development of things does not reach a certain limit, there is no condition for transformation. In other words, the accumulation of the amount required for the occurrence of transformation can reach the critical point, 'the wood of the embrace, born at the end of the mill; nine-story platform, from the soil; thousands of miles, starting from the foot.'^[1] The formation of 253 trees, the barrier of the high platform, and the thousands of miles of walking all begin at the end of the micro. Only when things develop to a certain limit, will they really transform.

Since the transformation is conditional on the 'pole', then people can not only passively adapt to the operation law of this heavenly way, but can use human power to influence and intervene in this transformation. 'Reversal is the movement of Dao; weakness is the function of Dao'^{[1]154}. The Tao plays a role in a weak way, so it can be omnipotent and endless. 'It is not as good as its own'^{[1]33}, 'contented, not to know, can last for a long time'^{[1]176}. Everything should follow the inherent limits of the development of things, consciously control the desire, grasp the boundaries of action, so that the transformation between opposites moves toward harmony. Therefore, 'anti' and 'weak' are mutually beneficial: the former is the objective law, and the latter is the subject's response; the two together constitute a complete picture of the unity of development and change and human initiative in Laozi's dialectical thinking.

1.3 Reciprocating: the overall rhythm of the movement of everything

The word "anti" in "the movement of anti-Dao" not only has the meaning of "opposite," but also

contains the meaning of "round-trip," that is, cycle and return to the root.

Laozi first stipulated the Tao itself, 'there is a mixture of things, born congenitally. Lonely, independent does not change, Zhouxing and not lost, can be the mother of the world. I do not know its name, the strong word said 'dao'.^{[1]95} Tao, as the origin of the whole, precedes the heaven and the earth, transcends perception and is silent and invisible, and does not rely on external conditions 'independence does not change'. He Shanggong said: 'Independents are incomparable, and those who do not change are regular'.^{[2]101}, this self-sufficiency means that the movement of Tao must be a cycle within itself, that is, the process of constantly returning to itself.

Furthermore, Laozi carried out this cycle process in detail with 'passing away', 'far away' and 'anti'. 'Strong is called big, big is called passing away, passing away is called far away, far away is called return.'^{[1]95} Feng Dafu pointed out, 'Da, Shi, Yuan, Fan is to describe the whole operation process of Tao, that is, Zhouxing'.^{[3]50} 'big' describes the vastness and creation of all things; 'Lost' refers to the separation of all things from the Tao and the continuous movement; 'far' means that the trend of movement is getting farther and farther away from the road; 'Reverse' refers to the distance from the road, the extreme must be reversed, and finally return to the origin. This process of 'death-far-anti' is a complete cycle from birth to alienation and then to return, which reflects Lao Tzu's grasp of the rhythm of the universe.

Since the Tao is circularly moving, then everything in the world as a concrete manifestation of the Tao, its existence also follows this. Man follows the earth, the earth follows the heaven, the heaven follows the Tao, and the Tao follows the nature.^{[1]95} people, land, and heaven follow the operation of the Tao. In the sixteenth chapter, Laozi further confirms this relationship from the perspective of empirical observation. 'All things are done at the same time, and I will observe it. Fuyuyunyun, each back to its roots. Return to the root of the quiet, quiet resurrection. Resurrection is daily, knowledge is daily.'^{[1]61} Everything varies and competes to grow, but eventually it must return to its roots, accumulate strength in emptiness and quietness, and open a new growth cycle.

2. The ecological value of "Lao Tzu's" the reversal movement of Dao

The dialectical thought revealed by Lao Tzu's "Anti-Taoism Movement" has important ecological value for the current understanding of the dialectical relationship between man and nature, the limitation of economic development and the understanding of the circulation law of nature. It provides useful enlightenment for us to better deal with ecological problems and realize the modernization of harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

2.1 The relationship between man and nature from the perspective of opposites and complementarities

The opposite and complementary thought of Laozi provides a unique perspective for understanding the harmony and unity of man and nature. Since modern times, anthropocentrism and natural centralism, as the two paradigms of western environmental ethics, have occupied an important position in the process of western modernization. Lao Tzu's thought of "anti-Taoism movement" transcends the two. Opposites are interdependent, and extremes on either side will lead to an overall imbalance. The value pursuit of anthropocentrism makes people constantly ask for and expand outward, which violates the law of 'heaven'. Under this anthropocentrism, the dichotomy of 'purpose(human)-means(thing)' completely ignores the self-reliance of the thing, and the meaning of the thing is equated with its usefulness to human beings.^{[4]14} The moral concern of natural centralism tends to protect the environment by restricting the development of science and technology and economy, ignoring people's initiative, difference and their own legitimate needs for survival and development, which also violates the 'humanity'. Laozi unifies the generation and cultivation of all things. Man and nature are a unified living organism. 'The Tao is great, the heaven is great, the earth is great, and the people are also great. There are four major areas in the domain, and human settlements are one of them.'^{[1]95}, as the primate of all things, people stand side

by side with the heaven and the earth in the world, and follow the operating rules of the Tao as all things do. Man and nature are a community of life. While paying attention to their own interests and needs, people should also conform to the operating rules of the heaven and achieve internal unity with nature.

2.2 Look at the limits of development from the extremes of things.

Laozi's thought of extreme anti-things contains a profound sense of development limit. If human activities go to extremes, they will inevitably be 'retaliated' by nature. 'Appropriate stop' is not only the principle of self-cultivation, but also the wisdom of dealing with the relationship between man and nature. From the perspective of the development of Western modernization, with the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution and the construction of modern philosophical rationalism metaphysics, the great progress of science and technology has broken the instrumental rationality and value rationality. Under the guidance of this instrumental rationality, the human subject takes nature as the object, from revering nature to conquering nature, causing a serious natural crisis. Laozi's limited thinking provides a philosophical basis for understanding the inevitability of such revenge. The ecosystem has its own carrying threshold. Within the threshold, human activities and natural operation can still maintain a dynamic balance. Once this critical point is broken, the system will 'return' external pressure to human beings in the form of disasters, pollution, resource depletion and so on. Global crises such as contemporary climate change, biodiversity decline, and land desertification are all direct consequences of human development overstepping the ecological red line. From this point of view, the dilemma of the western modernization model lies in its lack of awe of 'extreme' and consciousness of 'stop'. In the process of development, we should grasp the critical point of ecological carrying and control the endless demand for nature, which is the enlightenment of Lao Tzu's limited thinking to the construction of contemporary ecological civilization.

2.3 The law of ecological cycle from cycle to cycle

Laozi's 'cycle' reveals the inherent cycle law of the ecosystem. Everything in nature is luxuriant and endless. As Meng Peiyuan said, 'the whole nature is a harmonious and orderly whole, running along the circular road of the road... The harmony of nature is the harmony of life.'^{[5]208} all things will eventually return to their roots, and complete the accumulation and renewal of life in the emptiness. This process of return and recovery constitutes the internal rhythm of self-regulation and sustainable regeneration of the ecosystem. People live between heaven and earth, and survival and development should also conform to this law. However, modern human activities often deviate from this principle. The expansion of instrumental rationality and consumerism ideology has hindered the realization of 'return' and 'restoration' in the natural cycle. Since the Western Industrial Revolution, the production mode dominated by human society has often been characterized by the one-way flow of 'resource-product-waste'. This linear economic system is at the cost of high exploitation, low utilization and high emission. Although it promotes economic growth, it also destroys the circulation chain of nature. The expansion of instrumental rationality and consumerism ideology makes man-made objects accumulate in large quantities and cannot participate in the natural cycle again, resulting in the disorder of the ecosystem. Therefore, we should learn from Lao Tzu's ecological concept of "Zhizhi", "promote the formation of a virtuous cycle of 'emission-return-regeneration' under the premise of respecting the rhythm of natural transformation and restraining unlimited desire, and actively build a circular economy system, so as to truly reduce the interference with the natural cycle and realize the harmonious coexistence of heaven, man and things.

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