

The Chinese Philosopher's (Lao Zi) View of Freedom

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Keywords: Freedom, Natural, Inaction, Worthless

Abstract: The word "freedom" does not appear in Lao Zi's Tao Te Ching, but the ideas expressed in the book all imply Lao Zi's pursuit of freedom, and the essence of this freedom refers to the absence of any external coercion and oppression, so this article will elaborate on Lao Tzu's view of freedom from three aspects: natural, doing nothing, and worthless.

Introduction

British writer Isaiah Berlin put forward in his book "The Concept of Two Freedoms": negative freedom and positive freedom. Negative freedom means that what the individual obtains is a field of action that is squeezed to a minimum, and the action in this field is also hindered by others, so the individual is in a state of repression at this time, the individual's will and Behavior is also subject to the restraint and control of others. Positive freedom means that an individual can control his own behavior and will within a certain space of action, and at the same time is not subject to the manipulation and control of external forces and others, and can make his own decisions. These two viewpoints have profoundly affected the understanding of freedom of human beings. It is obvious that what Lao Tzu's thought embodies is positive freedom.

1. Letting Things Take Their Course: Political Freedom

1.1 Govern by Non-interference

The philosopher's thought of inaction is first reflected in the requirements of the ruler, and its purpose is to achieve political freedom. In Laozi's "Tao De Jing", at least more than 30 chapters directly or indirectly talk about the idea of "inaction". Which is doing nothing is the core of Laozi's political freedom thought. The thought of inaction can be summarized into two meanings: First, the ruler should be inaction, should reduce the interference and restriction on the people, giving the people enough room for free development, and allow the people to achieve realism within the reasonable control of rights. Secondly, the ruler's inaction is also a role model for the people, allowing the people to maintain their true appearance of doing nothing, and wanting to be quiet.

An example is the 57th chapter of the "Tao De Jing", "The laws and decrees are nourished, and there are many thieves... Therefore, the saint said: 'I do nothing, but the people are selfish.' [1] [Chen Guying. "Lao Zi Jin attention to the modern Translation". Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006, 280.] Lao Zi believes that "laws and regulations are abundant, and there are many thieves." It will increase accordingly. This will not only make the people seriously have lack of freedom, but will also make the people more reckless and reckless due to excessive restrictions in a small space that is not free. Inaction includes the ruler's inaction and non-action, so what the ruler should do is to leave enough space for the people to do things for themselves. Only the ruler can do things for themselves, and the people can do everything. [2] Because no matter how large the scope of the ruler's actions, the scope of actions is limited, if the ruler does anything then he will do it in his own way, and the people cannot do it in his own way, then he cannot achieve the true freedom.

1.2 Doing Nothing and Doing All Manner of Evil

"To rule a big country, if you cook small fresh food" [1] [Chen Guying. "Lao Zi Jin Annotated Today" [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006, 291.] Xiao Xian is a small fish, when cooking small fish it should not be overturned, but it must be kept intact. Lao Tzu used cooking Xiaoxian as

an analogy to govern a great country and vividly expressed Lao Tzu's thought of "inaction". U.S. President Reagan also quoted in his "State of the Union Address" in 1988. Laozi's philosophy of "ruling a big country, like cooking small fresh food". During the Eastern Han Dynasty of our country, a policy of recuperation and rejuvenation was implemented to restore national strength. In all this, we can see that a country wants long-term stability and relies on the monarch's inaction to govern the country in order to achieve the peace of the people and the country's prosperity. The will is imposed on the people, enabling the people to develop freely. If we go the other way, "the people are hard to cure, and if they do what they do, it is hard to cure. [1][Chen Guying" Lao Zi Jin attention to the modern Translation" [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006,330. And "The people are not afraid of death, how can they die?"[1] [M]. Beijing: the Commercial Press, 2006, 328.], which is governing the country is like cooking a small dishes, and doing nothing to achieve political freedom that will make the country safe and sound.[3]

2. Good Nothing: Spiritual Freedom

2.1 The Functions of "None"

In our daily life, what we often notice is whether the surrounding things can be used by us and whether it can provide us with convenience, because the objects we use directly are there, so we say that we only have "there" in our eyes. "", and forget the "nothing".[4] The root of these "beings" can be effective is "nothing?" Lao Tzu is different from ordinary people. He observes the problem and keenly finds that "nothing" is more useful than "being". In fact, this is a kind of "use" that is always overlooked by people. Lao Tzu does not think about problems from a useful perspective, but to find the more usefulness of all things from nothing, he believes that following the "Tao" will inevitably enter the free state of "uselessness" and thus obtain spiritual freedom.

"Thirty spokes, a total of one hub, when it is not, it is used for a car, and the old one is used as a tool, The chisel is used as a room, when it is not, as there is a room to make use of as the Profit, but nothing is useful. "[1]Chen Guying" Lao Zi Jin attention to the modern Translation" [M]. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006, 115.] If you change "nothing" in the wheel "Yes", then the car can no longer drive; and same implies to all of our appliances, if there is no space inside and no cup walls, it is a waste product; if our house has no doors and windows, this house will not be, as it is not Suitable for living but abandoned by others. Therefore, when all "beings" are in play, they actually use "nothing", the so-called "emptiness" and "space". Laozi mentioned in the beginning of "Tao De Jing" that "the two came out of the same name but have different names." In fact, he emphasized the relationship between "being" and "nothing". They are equal, but this is also It's just like this in logical theory. In real life, people usually feel that nothing is better than nothing. Why would you said this? For example, Chen Ziang's poem: "You will not see the ancients before, and you will not see the people afterwards. [5]I think of the leisure of the heavens and the earth, but stunned." Everything between the heavens and the earth will have life and death, even the most powerful things will eventually perish, in other words The so-called "being" is gone, but the "nothing" in our living space is still there, "being" may not exist, because there is life in it, there is life and death, so it is destined to be short-lived, and nothing is long-term.

2.2 Spiritual Freedom

The longevity of "Nothing" also allows us to understand why we always feel that we are so small, and we often feel that space is so big and time is so eternal, so we can only achieve true freedom if we leave the eternal spirit in "Nothing". . So what does eternal spiritual freedom mean? In Chapter 33, Lao Tzu put forward the point of view that "the one who dies but does not die" [1][Chen Guying. "Lao Tzu attention to the modern Translation" [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006, 201.], Some people understand that immortality means eternal existence. Because the body dies but the spirit persists. There is also a certain reason, that the body will die but the spirit is immortal which is not a high-level of immortality, but the higher level of immortality can only be mastered, as the way of life is endless, human beings will continue to extend. As long as humans are alive, they will

not be extinct. This majestic idea is eternal spiritual freedom. How to achieve this state of spiritual freedom?[6] In Lao Tzu's view, it is necessary to follow the "Tao", to conform to the Tao and to conform to the nature, and not to cause the death of life through his own misbehavior. Such people are "immortal" people. Only in this way can people better feel the nature of Tao which seeks to achieve spiritual freedom.

3. Spontaneously: Natural Freedom

Laozi's view of freedom is constructed on the basis of the unity of man and nature. He believes that freedom is nature, and even more so. Mr. Zhang Shiyong once said that ancient Chinese philosophy is a kind of "pre-subject philosophy", which means that there is no self-subject concept in Laozi's thoughts. This is also a good understanding of why Lao Tzu believes that all things in heaven and earth are born of Tao, Tao is the source of all life, and Tao is the mother of all things. Therefore, Lao Tzu proposed that "people follow the earth, the earth follows the heaven, the heavens follow the Tao, and the Tao follows the natural." Chen Guying. "[1]Lao Zi Jin Zhujin Translation" [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006,169. It is precisely because there is no concept of subject in Lao Tzu's philosophy, so Lao Tzu does not regard us as the master of all things, but should be one with nature. Nature equals freedom, and freedom equals nature. The word "freedom" does not appear in Laozi's Tao Te Ching, but the word "nature" in Laozi's "Tao for Nature" clearly has the meaning of freedom.[7] Just like Lao Tzu emphasized that "the people are for success and for success the people are called 'I am natural.'"[1] [Chen Guying. "Lao Zi Jin attention to the modern Translation" [M]. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006, 141.] The "natural" in the words also shows the meaning of freedom. Because of this, in Laozi's view of freedom, man and nature are equal, and not opposites.

Everything in the world has its own authentic and unique way of living. The so-called "Natality" has two meanings: First, everything is generated and grown according to their own nature, in order to emphasize that their own existence is everyone. What can't be replaced grows and decays by itself in the world. The second is that everything must not only grow by itself, but also realize the identity of itself, recognize the essential difference between itself and others, and avoid any interference and restriction caused by other things.[8] In summary, Laozi's view of freedom is to emphasize the original attributes of things and their uniqueness, and to allow them to develop with the freedom of nature after identifying themselves. It can be seen that the "nature" mentioned by Lao Tzu is the "nature" that we often refer to now. So as far as the people are concerned, this kind of nature is just the original state of nature that people are born with. Instead of being controlled by acquired desire, subjective will, and strong purpose, we will enlighten and gain the Tao, in order to realize the perfect unity of nature and man, and become an infinite existence of absolute freedom.

"The five colors are blinding, the five tones are deafening, the five flavors are refreshing, the galloping hunt is maddening, and the rare goods are troublesome." [1] [Chen Guying. "Lao Zi Jin attention to the modern Translation" [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006, 118.] From this, it can be read that Lao Tzu hates those who have deviated from his true essence and just blindly pursue desires. But this is not to say that Lao Tzu simply opposes the "five colors", "five flavors" and "five tones", but in Lao Tzu's opinion, colorlessness is the best color, tastelessness is the best flavor, and nature is the most and best sound, the natural sound, color and taste are the most true, good and beautiful, so Lao Tzu proposed "doing nothing, and tasteless" [1] [Chen Guying. "Lao Zi Jin attention to the modern Translation" [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006, 298]. Lao Tzu is not simply opposing people's desires, pursuing desires, and pursuing things outside the body, because in his view all the glory, wealth, and madness are nothing more than things outside of the body, something that exists beyond the natural truth of man. [9] And we should return to the natural nature of life, and not pay too much attention to things outside of the body. Only in this way can we live in harmony with all things in nature and achieve a natural state of life. From the perspective of secular utilitarianism, Lao Tzu's thinking seems to be retrogressive. But from the perspective of freedom, it contains the meaning of freedom that "the most beautiful life should be in harmony with nature".

Although the full text of Tao Te Ching is more than 5,000 words, it is a pity that later generations can't get a full view of it. Among them, Lao Tzu's concept of freedom is rich in connotation, which extends from itself to national politics and then to the whole mankind's grand freedom. The View is different from other unique features, from a metaphysical point of view, Lao Tzu's entire view of freedom starts from "Tao", and has gone through the explanations of "Nature", "doing nothing", and "worthless", turning the metaphysical mystery into a metaphysical reality. , In order to hope that people will keep the true nature of life, and the country will be stable and prosperous, and the realization of the endless goal of mankind. Today, we are not only combing and reviewing Laozi's view of freedom, but also an excavation of its practical significance.[10]

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