

Research on Traditional Chinese Ecological Ethics and Its Value

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Abstract: The traditional Chinese culture is broad and profound, and the philosophy of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism contains rich ecological ethics. It is obvious that the ancients emphasized on conforming to nature, attaching importance to ecological protection and the ecological concept of living in harmony with nature, such as the Taoist idea of "integration of humanity and nature", the Confucian realm of "the wise man enjoys the mountain, the benevolent enjoys the water", the Buddhist concept of "everyone is equal". The values of traditional Chinese ecological ethics are conducive to reconstructing the harmonious ecosystem between people and society, and fundamentally solve the current ecological crisis and ecological imbalance.

Ecological ethics refers to a series of moral norms formed by human beings in the process of exchanging material, energy and information between nature and dealing with the relationship between themselves and animals, environment and nature and other ecological environments. It aims to achieve the benign interaction between human beings and nature to realize the moral concern for natural ecosystem and the sustainable development of human beings themselves. In traditional Chinese culture, both Confucianism and Taoism regard the relationship among heaven, earth, and people as one of the most important elements of political ethics and philosophy of life. In addition to focusing on the harmony and unity of the three, they also put the basic idea of "integration of humanity and nature" throughout all aspects of social life. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism all have their own unique ecological ethics, which has profound theoretical value for the ecological crisis that is prevalent in modern society.

1. Ecological Ethics in Confucianism

Confucianism attaches importance to human moral practice and the realization of personal values. It does not separate man from nature in the relationship between man and nature, but attaches importance to the connection between them. The Confucian thought of "The gentleman aims at harmony, and not at uniformity. The mean man aims at uniformity, and not at harmony." [1] Indicates that gentleman handles interpersonal relationships in an appropriate way. Confucius emphasized that "The man of virtue, while establishing himself and pursuing success, also works to establish others and enable them to succeed as well." [2] "Be good to others first if you want to be good at all" [3], which requires people to be able to be considerate, and is also necessary to follow when dealing with the relationship between man and nature in principle. Confucius also said that "fishing with bamboo only rather than with net, shooting flying birds only rather than the birds overnight." [4]. It is believed that fishing and hunting cannot be done in one sweep. In fact, people are regarded as part of nature with the heart of "benevolence", and the relationship between people is pushed above the relationship between Taoism and nature.

Confucianists are awed by nature. Confucius said, "Sin is in heaven, and there is no prayer" [5]. He believed that human power is limited after all, and human should conform to the destiny. Xunzi directly put forward the idea that "Nature is the true law" [6], which is an objective understanding of the laws of nature, and provides a theoretical basis for people at that time to make rational use of natural resources and correctly deal with the relationship between man and nature. Mencius emphasized the cultivation path of "wholeheartedness", "intellectuality" and "knowing heaven". The ultimate goal is to "keep its nature and raise its heart, so it is also a matter of heaven." The so-called

"things of heaven" is not only the ultimate goal of gentleman's personality cultivation, but also a good state of harmonious coexistence with nature based on the understanding of the whole world, including the essential laws of nature and society. Zhang Zai put forward the idea of "unity of nature and humanity" on the basis of summarizing the Confucianism. He said: "Confucians are sincere because of logic, and because of sincerity to logic, so nature and humanity is unified" [7]. The combination of nature and humanity is the goal of Confucian cultivation. Its internal logic is the combination of gentleman's personal cultivation and the law of nature. It is not only the embodiment of individual subject spirit, but also the embodiment of individual virtue cultivation and the harmony of everything outside. Therefore, Confucian ecological ethics emphasizes caring for all things on the moral basis of "benevolence", starting from the cultivation of personal virtue, and pursuing the realization of personal value on the basis of the realization of "the unity of humanity and nature", which are the highest realm of Confucian culture and the core of traditional Chinese culture.

2. Ecological Ethics in Buddhism

The core thought of Buddhist philosophy is "the origin of emptiness", which means that all things and all kinds of phenomena in the world do not exist by chance and independently, but are formed by the interaction of many complex factors. "The origin of emptiness" is based on the origin of everything, therefore, everything has no fixed attributes, and everything is constantly changing. Buddhist concept of "origin emptiness" reveals that all things in the world are interrelated and interdependent, which determines that no matter the individual behavior or the group behavior of human beings, there will be a kind of "Butterfly Effect".

Buddhism puts forward the theory of "according to the right is not the same" in the relationship between man and natural environment. The so-called "according to the right is not the same" means that there is an integrated relationship between the environment and all living beings. The positive karma (all living beings) shows the current state because of the good and evil karma that has passed away, and all living beings can be changed according to individual practice. And the environment refers to the objective material world in which all living beings live, which is caused by the common karma of good and evil of the whole human group. It requires the joint efforts of the entire human community to change the environment. The environment and all living beings are in the minds of sentient beings, and are "not one in one". They are interdependent. According to the law of origin, the good and evil attributes of the actions of all living beings will also appear in the objective environment. Therefore, human beings should treat each other equally, including everything in nature, birds, fish and insects, plants, animals and animals, and there is no distinction between high and low. The so-called "a world in a wild flower, and a bodhi in a leaf" embodies the Buddhist wisdom and ecological ethics of coexistence and equal coexistence of all things.

3. Taoism and Ecological Ethics in Taoism

Taoism regards "Tao" as the root of all things. Lao Zi said in the *Tao Te Ching* that "The Tao produces one, two, three, and three things" [8]. Since all things are transformed by Tao, all things have the same origin and are basically the same. There is basically no difference. Therefore, the Taoist saying "the unity of humanity and nature" actually means that both nature and man are different manifestations of Tao, which finds an internal logical basis for the relationship between man and nature. Thus human activities should follow the laws of nature, not destroy them. The early Taoist classics said that "Heaven, earth, and human beings have the same vitality, and they are divided into three bodies." "The vitality is trinity and nature, and they are condensed into one, named Heaven and Earth; the land formed by dividing and producing Yin is called "the second"; because in the world, when Yin and Yang are combined to produce people, it is called "the third"; the symbiosis of the three systems, the longevity is called talent. " [9]. Here, the material vitality replaces Lao Tzu's "Tao" as the source of the transformation of all things. Its generation path is first heaven and earth, then Yin and Yang, and the combination of Yin and Yang is human. Therefore, the

vitality is actually the transformation of "three talents" of heaven, earth and human beings. The "three talents" have the same root and homology, which is the concrete embodiment of the "unity of nature and humanity".

On the basis of the concept that human beings and nature share the same roots, Taoism advocates "kindness to things" and pays more attention to the flora and fauna of nature, and believes that there should be a loving heart and can not casually harm its life. *Bao Puzi* said that "Be merciful to things ... Insects and trees should never be hurt." [10]. There is also a Taoist classic that says that "If you want to learn from me, you should be careful not to think about killing. All living beings are greedy for life and fear death. My life is his life, be careful not to neglect it" [11]. It can be seen that Taoism will treat all life in nature in the same position as human beings and cherish it. This is a kind of ecological ethics respecting nature. In the course of concrete practice, Taoism emphasized "natural inaction", whose essence is to respect nature and the laws of human social development, and try not to destroy the nature with human conscious behavior. As it is said in the *Tao Te Ching* that "To support the nature of everything" [12], which is to require people to help everything with inaction. Of course, it is not to ask people not to do anything, but to ask people not to do anything in vain, not to destroy the original appearance and development law of things.

4. Value of Traditional Ecological Ethics

That following the traditional Chinese ecological ethics thought of "the unity of man and nature" embodies the deep wisdom that people attach importance to internal and external, human body and environment, nature and society. This idea is not only valued and advocated by people in ancient society, but is still of positive significance in modern China with developed science and prosperous economy.

First of all, it is conducive to improving the current situation of ecological imbalance. The traditional Chinese ecological thought has absorbed the Taoist ideas of "harmony between man and nature" and "unity of man and nature". It pursues the Confucian realm of "The gentleman aims at harmony, and not at uniformity. The mean man aims at uniformity and not at harmony" [13]. It emphasizes conforming to nature, attaching importance to ecological protection and harmonious coexistence with nature, and minimizing the damage of human activities to nature. The values of traditional ecological ethics are conducive to reconstructing an ecological system in which people and society coordinate with each other, and fundamentally solve the problems of ecological crisis and ecological imbalance. Only by loving nature from the heart and following the rules of nature, can we fundamentally change the crisis of contemporary ecological environment. The choice of living environment based on this principle can also improve people's quality of life at a certain level.

Secondly, it is conducive to the inheritance of traditional village culture and the perfect fit of modern rural construction. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly requires carrying out the rural environment improvement actions, and it makes special arrangements for the rural environment improvement actions in the relevant documents of implementing the spirit of the conference. It requires all departments in various regions to take improving the rural living environment as the main content of new socialist rural construction, so as to promote the rural living environment management and improve such issues as dirty and disorderly rural areas and environmental pollution. It is the key issue to be considered at present that how to carry out policies and ideas of the CPC Central Committee on the construction of new countryside, and combine the characteristics and development needs of rural areas and combine the idea of living environment in traditional culture with the construction of modern rural houses, so as to take a road of new rural construction with Chinese characteristics.

In addition, it is conducive to the rational planning and construction of modern cities. The city is not just a collection of buildings, but a carrier of regional historical culture. The layout of urban planning directly reflects the relationship between society, people, and nature in the context of a specific era. Urban design should reflect the ideological theme of respecting the relationship between human and human, human and society, human and nature, and the basic needs of human.

The philosophical thinking and aesthetic appeal contained in traditional Chinese ecological ethics can provide better theoretical guidance for modern city construction, and it is worthy of reference for modern people. The concept of "the way from what is beneath abstraction" in Taoism is embodied in the harmony between man and nature, the harmony between the city and the environment, and the city and its surrounding landscape environment can tolerate and adapt to each other. Therefore, in the process of urban construction, local governments must plan rationally and have an overall ecological concept according to local natural resources and environmental status, so as to increase the construction of urban public green spaces and protect the natural scenery around the city.

In short, traditional Chinese ecological ethics is valued and promoted by people in ancient society. In contemporary China, where science and technology are developed and the society and economy are prosperous, it is worth carrying out innovative development and effective utilization through in-depth reading and mining of its essence and combining modern life ideas and methods, so that the wisdom of the ancients radiates a dazzling light again in the construction of contemporary livable cities.

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