

The Thought of the Relationship between Man and Nature in *Wandering About Freely* and its Modern Value

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Abstract

Wandering About Freely is the masterpiece of Zhuangzi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, which contains thoughts about the relationship between man and nature. It uses the symbolic approach to explain the author's main ideas through several stories about animals and people. Zhuangzi of the Taoist school believes that the nature of man is the same as nature. People should return to their natural nature, and at the same time conform to nature and get along with nature. These thoughts of Taoism are reflected in this article of Zhuangzi. Moreover, such an idea is of great value to us in dealing with the relationship between man and nature today, when environmental issues are prominent. In this article, the first part will be an analysis of *Wandering About Freely*, and the second part will be based on the above analysis to illustrate the philosophical ideas contained therein. The last part is to link the thoughts with the environmental problems in the world today and explore its significance in the modern era.

Introduction

Zhuangzi is an important philosopher in ancient China. He is also a representative of the Taoist school. His masterpiece is *Wandering About Freely*. In this article, Zhuangzi expressed his philosophy. And the idea that people live in harmony with nature is still of great significance to our society today. At present, there are many environmental problems in the world, including environmental pollution, species extinction, global warming, etc. The existence of these problems is actually a concrete manifestation of the relationship between human and nature. We have not been able to deal with the relationship between man and nature very well, which has led to a large number of problems. In this ancient article of *Wandering About Freely*, the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi actually gave us a way about how to make people and nature live in harmony and he told us the right way to treat nature. Therefore, this is the value of the thoughts in *Wandering About Freely* in the modern times.

Three stories in *Wandering About Freely*

Wandering About Freely includes three stories: the story of big fish becoming a roc, the dialogue between a turtledove and a cicada, and the story of the three ideal figures that Zhuangzi considers. In the first story, a giant fish lurks in the sea for a long time. One day, when the sea moved to produce a strong wind, it became a roc and then flew to the sea in the south. In this story, the author wants to explain to us the conditionality of things. Before the absence of strong winds, the big fish lurked in the sea until one day, with favorable conditions for it to use, it used this condition to achieve its purpose. At the same time, the author also told us that we should be good at using the existing conditions. The second story is a conversation that takes place between two small creatures, turtledove and cicada. They are very small compared to the roc and the giant fish. These two small creatures could not understand the behavior of the roc and thought that there was no need to fly so far. They say that they often can't fly to the top of the tree and fall, not to mention flying to the 90,000-mile sky where the roc can fly. Although they can't reach the height of the roc, they are not depressed, but satisfied with what they are.

In the second story, the author tells us that different things have different abilities, and we should be satisfied with what we are, rather than constantly craving more and constantly demanding to satisfy our own desires. The two little creatures in the story have no way to fly to the sky like the roc, but they are not frustrated. On the contrary, they think they have their own advantages, so they feel happy and satisfied. The story of turtledove and cicada tells us that we should learn to be satisfied and know ourselves. They are not depressed because of their own smallness but are satisfied with the happiness they currently have and are satisfied with their current state.

The last story is about three people. In the text, they are called the perfect man, the divine man and the true Sage. They are the people in the minds of the author who truly reach the realm of freedom. They do not pursue fame and money, they can even eliminate the boundaries between self and foreign objects, thus forgetting themselves and integrating with nature. These three people are the most ideal people in the author's opinion. By shaping these three ideal figures, the author expresses the belief that the man should be in harmony with nature and follow nature's course to us. In addition, this is also the core idea of Zhuangzi. Through these stories which are full of philosophical and abstract thoughts in *Wandering About Freely*, the author expounds his philosophical thoughts, explaining that man and nature should live in harmony, obey the rules of nature, and that human should survive under the premise of obeying the rules of nature.

Chinese philosophical thoughts in the story

These are some of the stories in the *Wandering About Freely*. These stories are romantic and reflect the author's rich imagination. By fictionalizing these images and

stories, Zhuangzi mainly aims to convey his philosophical thinking. As an ancient Chinese philosopher, he is not like other philosophers. He does not need to explain his philosophical thoughts in obscure language but expresses his thoughts through vivid stories. Therefore, his articles are very interesting. At the same time, because of the use of symbols and other literary creation techniques, his works are difficult to understand, and *Wandering About Freely* is such an article. The above mentioned is the specific story content in the work, however, Zhuangzi does not intend to just tell us some wonderful stories. These interesting stories are just his means. His real intention is to convey his ideas through stories.

First of all, all the above stories run through a central idea, that is, nature. This is the core idea of Zhuangzi's philosophy and the central idea of Taoist philosophy. Nature means respecting things as they are, following the laws of nature, and not artificially distorting or transforming them. In Taoist philosophy, nature is not what we often understand. It is not a noun, but a verb. Zhuangzi does not oppose the use of nature by man. He opposes that people do not use nature in accordance with the laws of nature. Secondly, Zhuangzi's philosophy advocates respect for nature and love of life. He believes that everything in the world, like our human beings, has the rationality of existence. The life of all things is related to human life. Therefore, human beings must treat and respect all things in nature. He also believes that nature is an organic whole, it is not an inanimate object. The natural interior has a strong vitality. It breeds everything and gives life the power of life, including humans. Based on the idea that all things have the same status, we can find that Zhuangzi advocates an ecological wisdom of equality of all things.

In the modern history of the world, the idea of anthropocentrism has always occupied a dominant position. Human beings have always believed that man is the subject and the master of the world, and nature is the object used to serve people. Those who hold anthropocentric views regard nature as a mechanical physical world and believe that its value is endowed by human beings. Human beings are the masters of the world, and everything else belongs to human beings. They are all means or tools for human existence. This is the view that those people agree with. It is such an idea coupled with the endless desire of mankind, nature is destroyed by us, ecological problems appear frequently, and the relationship between man and nature is in trouble. Therefore, after the rational awakening of modern humans and the beginning of science, human beings have gradually forgotten the role of nature, gradually placed themselves in a supreme position, and the relationship between human beings and nature is increasingly alienated. Nowadays, if we want to solve this problem, we need to re-recognize the relationship between man and nature and adjust the current unreasonable way of life. And the Zhuangzi and Taoist philosophy as reflected in *Wandering About Freely* can correctly guide us to re-examine the relationship between man and nature. Respecting and revering the nature is the most profound revelation of Zhuangzi philosophy to modern people.

Modern value

Putting the ideas in the article into the present, it still makes sense. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, today's environmental problems are getting more and more serious. How can we solve these problems? From my point of view, solving various environmental problems in the world through various methods is only a temporary method. Thinking in essence, why do these problems arise? It is because the way we get along with nature is wrong. If we just focus on solving various specific environmental problems, it may not have much effect on solving the whole problem. Because once one problem is solved, the next problem will occur. Only when we fundamentally change the way we transform nature, change our way of life, improve our relationship with nature, and change from plundering nature to rational use of nature, the problem will stop. As Zhuangzi said in *Wandering About Freely*, we should live in harmony with nature and obey the laws of nature instead of opposing people and nature.

This is also the basic spirit in Zhuangzi's philosophy. Such a harmonious way of thinking is worthy of consideration by modern people. Although it was proposed by the ancients, it is only a simple way of thinking about the relationship between man and nature, but it can indeed be adopted by our society today. People and nature are like people getting along with each other. We must regard nature as a friend and use the environment in which we live as an object we should care about. Nature is not an objective object without life, but something that is full of vitality and important to us. While developing nature, we also need to protect nature and use it under the premise of protection. This is Zhuangzi's idea that people and nature live in harmony. Harmony between man and nature not only emphasizes that human beings should protect the natural environment, it also emphasizes that human beings must live in harmony with everything in nature, such as protecting animals and plants. It is consistent with the concept of emphasizing the equality of all things in Zhuangzi's thought.

This article can inspire us. It shows the following values for the modern people in the relationship between man and nature. Firstly, from the perspective of the exploitation of nature, we should be moderate. Just like the giant fish turned into a roc. It is the full use of the existing conditions to achieve the purpose, rather than try every means to create conditions to the purpose. Natural resources are limited, and we should exploit them moderately. Make full use of the natural resources that we already have, don't waste resources while constantly mining new resources, and complain that resources are not enough. Secondly, from the perspective of the people themselves, we need to be content. Natural resources are limited, and human desires are infinite. What we can do is to be content and develop nature in a reasonable degree of desire. Finally, from the attitude of man to nature, we need to go with the flow and follow the laws of nature.

In short, by analyzing the ancient Chinese story of *Wandering About Freely*, we can

see the author's thinking about human and nature issues, and these ancient Chinese philosophical thoughts are still of great significance to modern people even today. Perhaps this is another role of myths or fairy tales. They can convey the author's thoughts, and some of them will have important meanings at all times. Building a harmonious living world is a comprehensive and globally important issue in the 21st century. Although it appears on the surface to solve the problems of ecological destruction, resource shortage, environmental pollution and other predicaments in the current social development, from a deeper perspective, it reflects the human being's attempt to deal with the relationship between man and nature and a deep philosophical concept. Returning to the thought of ancient Chinese philosophy, returning to Taoist philosophy, we can unearth the rich and profound ancient ecological consciousness that embraces nature, cares for life, and unites man and nature. Although this ancient survival wisdom cannot provide a ready-made answer to the survival dilemma faced by modern people, it plays an important role in the pursuit of building a modern and harmonious living world and correcting the paranoia of modern people's way of life and life attitude. It is a valuable ideological and cultural resource. This also shows that sometimes a myth or legend or fable story is not just a simple fiction, the ideas conveyed in the story are often more inspiring than the story itself.

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