

An Interpretation of the Relationship between Man and Nature in Wei Jins' Metaphysics: Based on the Confucian Ethical Code of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and Nature

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Abstract: “Nature” and “the Confucian ethical code” are two of Wei Jins’ most important metaphysics. The ethical restrictions of “the Confucian ethical code” and the conflict of free development lie behind this pair of diametrically opposed philosophical conceptions. The Seven Sages proposed the concept of “transcending the realities and embracing our nature,” which was strongly influenced by Lao-Tze and Chuang-tzu. They advocated for the tremendous liberation of man’s nature, as well as a new explanation for man’s relationship with nature: human nature is also nature, enlightening future generations to maintain a harmonious relationship with nature.

Keywords: The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove; Transcending the realities and embracing our nature; Man and nature

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1. Transcending the realities and embracing our nature

To some extent, the debate between “nature” and “the Confucian ethical code,” which was discussed by metaphysicians of the Wei and Jin Dynasties, can also be seen as a debate about talents, words, and meanings. The Seven Sages criticized the gloom of society and the solidified ethics of the time, and adhered to the nature of freedom, based on philosophical concepts of freedom.

Ruan Ji stated, “When there are no saints, truth begins to fade. Writings can be regarded as a means of passing on knowledge and guiding future generations^[1].” He considered that people’s horizons and views had been restricted by the authority of the classics and customary stereotypes. In reality, under “the Confucian ethical Code,” which suppressed people’s nature, people were burdened by reputation and constrained by different rites. Ji Kang, like Ruan Ji, stated that “respecting the Divinity and nature, acting morally, and playing with the yin and yang changes can help attain eternal life^[2].” This is an ideal world in which people accept their natural selves, free themselves from the constraints of reality, and pursue their passions.

“Gentlemen” appear to follow “the Confucian ethical code” on the surface. In actuality, they exploited the coding to satisfy their desires. This resulted in a lot of hypocrisy. The Seven Sages used precise language to communicate their inner disappointment, as well as their contempt for secular etiquette and the pursuit of freedom.

Despite following Lao Zhuang’s “passive escapism,” the Seven Sages’ primary beliefs were Confucian

“sageliness within and kingliness beyond.” They sought to bring Great Harmony to the globe by their own might. They “died a hero’s death” despite travelling their entire lives.

2. Harmonious symbiosis between man and nature

Although the Seven Sages put forward the idea of “transcending the realities and embracing our nature” to oppose the conservative, it was easy to see the origin of the harmonious coexistence relationship between man and nature.

3. The historical evolution of the relationship between man and nature

The concept of “nature” was elevated to a philosophical category by Lao Tzu. “Nature,” as defined by Lao Tzu, is the fundamental law that all things must obey in order to function and develop. The greatest way for rulers to reach a state of “small country with few people” was to keep people’s honest and simple character, and to limit the distracting ideas of material aspirations that bother people’s hearts. “As Heaven benefits the Earth, Taoism benefits Heaven, and Nature benefits Taoism, Earth benefits men.” This sentence accurately disclosed that the “Tao” was Lao Tzu’s “nature,” and that humans could not exist without it. The “Tao” is its own eternal development law. “Tao” was the natural law, the natural force, the source of all things, and the natural force.

Chuang-tzu followed Lao Tzu’s “nature” and brought the concept of “nature” to the extreme. If Lao Tzu’s “nature” was the noumenon and was integrated with Tao, then Zhuangzi furthered this idea and applied it to life. The “nature” understood by Zhuangzi is beyond human beings. “Nature” became the supreme being without emotion but a rule. Laozi had only advocated “inaction,” while Zhuangzi advocated “inaction” and “inaction without self”, which meant deconstructing oneself to become one with the “Tao.”

Lao Zhuang’s concept on man and nature was inherited and expanded by Ruan Ji and Ji Kang. Ruan Ji expressed his thoughts “What is the state of the primordial? There is no such thing as a being who exists before or after the primordial. Don’t go to the extreme since you don’t know where it came from. Don’t try to dismantle the roots; no one understands what they are ^[3].” He referred to the state that causes everything to happen as “nature.” “Nature” creates and is generated by “The Divinity.” In “The Theory of Health Care” and “The Theory of Neither Sorrow nor Joy,” Ji Kang inherited and refined the idea of advocating for nature. These writings emphasized the importance of man conforming to the natural state of everything. Ji Kang went so far as to emphasize man’s nature and study the human mind in its natural state.

However, in modern times, the relationship between man and nature has undergone a fundamental change. In this process, man and nature are independent of each other, man transcends nature, and tries to study the laws of nature to transform or even conquer nature. Although people have greatly deepened motivation, they have neglected the existence of objective objects. Through practice, men again march for an era of harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

4. Create a harmonious relationship between man and nature

Humankind’s theme has always been “harmony.” When we say that man and nature are one, we’re referring to the philosophical perspective on the relationship between the two. Confucius is referred to in “Harmony is the most precious etiquette,” according to Confucius’ Analects. The king rules the land in the name of harmony, no matter how minor or large the issue is. All things are born in harmony, according to Xunzi; according to Lao Tzu, “all things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and the energy thinks they are harmonious.” “The Dao uses it haphazardly or doesn’t make it at all, and the abyss is like the sect of everything... “Harmony” is the state of all things in the world interacting, as well as the result of their mutual progress.

The perception of “all things in one” is strengthened by the harmonious relationship between man and

nature. “Everything is one” suggests that the environment around us is a complete system with interconnected and inseparable components. We should think about how man and nature are inextricably linked. The diverse parts of the natural world are also one and the same, forming a symbiosis. The peaceful synergy of man and nature underlines man and nature’s equal standing. We must discard prior notions of “conquering nature” and “man conquering the Divinity” in order to develop a healthy coexistence between man and nature. We can only preserve a sense of awe when exploring nature if nature is treated as an equal subject to man. We must protect nature in accordance with natural rules in order to achieve a peaceful and long-term condition of interdependence between man and nature.

Harmonious coexistence is, of course, not just the embodiment of the ecological notion, but also a systematic and organized strategy. We have generated significant environmental damage and pollution as a result of our rapid societal development. To prevent future crises and deal with existing ones, we should give full play to the role of multiple actors in society, such as the government, businesses, social groups, and so on. We need to promote the concept of peaceful coexistence between man and nature, and we need to link theoretical findings with social practice. We can not only put in place a peaceful coexistence between man and nature, but we can also motivate other countries to do similarly.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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