

Zhou Xing in Lao Zi

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ABSTRACT

This paper mainly discusses that Lao Zi's Dao is firstly a limited and constructive structure and process. If this dimension is ignored, it is impossible to understand the logical problem of how Lao Zi's Dao can generate the universe and all things. In addition, it is necessary to trace and investigate: as Lao Zi's core categories expand from Wu-You, Yin-Yang, to Zhou Xing, a gradual shift in understanding occurs. The generation of the universe and all things by Dao is a vertical field, but how the universe and all things return to Dao is a horizontal, diverse and counter-productive field. This shifts from emphasizing the origin of the universe and Wu-You to Zhou Xing (the circular process) of the structure and operation of Dao in the universe and all things themselves. This is the basic connotation of Zhou Xing category.

KEYWORDS

Lao Zi; Dao; Zhou Xing; Wu-You; Yin-Yang

What is Zhou Xing? Zhou Xing is the Way (the Dao), which is how the Way works. Zhuang Zi said that thing is formed by the condensation of Qi. Lao Zi's Dao is also Qi. How is Qi condensed? Of course, condensation is a form of Xing (action), not motionless, nor is it dispersion. Dispersal is also action. The saying that a trend in the world will inevitably split after a long time and then unite again, after a long time, is also a matter of condensation and dispersion. Later, Zhang Zai talked about Qi and also believed that Qi is a matter of condensation and dispersion. It is widely accepted that matter is the condensation of Qi. But what we need to ask is how it is condensed.

1 The definition of Zhou Xing

How should we understand Zhou Xing? Mr. Chen Guying has summarized that scholars have two kinds of explanations for Zhou Xing. One is that Zhou Xing is a comprehensive operation, and it is said that Zhou Zuo, Zhou Bian, and Zhou Pu all talked about it. The basis is that Wang Bi said in his explanation of Lao Zi that Zhou Xing is omnipresent, which is the most accurate interpretation of Zhou Xing. Zhou means omnipresent, and we usually say it means being considerate and comprehensive.

In this way, Zhou Xing is a journey that reaches everywhere, which is in line with the Daoism of Lao Zi, which is unchanging and independent. Therefore, the Dao reaches everywhere, and the whole world is the land of the Dao.

The second meaning is circular operation, revolving around the cycle. Mr. Chen believes that this second interpretation is more appropriate. Because the term Zhou Xing, translated as "Zhou Xing", is intensely named as "big", "big" is translated as "passing away", "passing away" is translated as "far", and "far" is translated as "reversal". The term "reversal" has the meaning of circularity, so "Zhou Xing" should be translated as the circular operation that brings endless life and prosperity, and it is unassailable.

However, Wang Bi's view is not without logic. There is a thing that is formed in a mixed state, born before heaven and earth, silent and vast, unchanging and independent, moving in a circular way without danger. The unchanging and independent nature of the circular movement of the Dao is not ordinary. The Dao moves everywhere, without any obstacles.

The two interpretations are: one is in terms of form, which is circular and repetitive; the other is in terms of its existential nature and sphere of influence, that is, from an existential perspective, it can be seen as encompassing all things, and thus can be regarded as its content. In this way, circular operation and all-encompassingness seem to be unified.

2 Lao Zi's specific interpretation of Zhou Xing

But how should we understand the concept of Zhou Xing? We need to study it in detail. It can be said that since the Han Dynasty, scholars, including Wang Bi, generally believed that Lao Zi talked about a grand vision. This view, in today's words, is a grand narrative. But if we only understand Zhou Xing as a grandness, or only understand the Dao from the cosmological level and as unchangeable, then how does the diversity of heaven and earth come into being?

Lao Zi's understanding of the greatness of the cycle of change is that greatness is the essence of change, change is the

essence of distance, and distance is the essence of reversion. Firstly, what is the essence of Yue? Greatness is the essence of change, change is the essence of distance, and distance is the essence of reversion. Some scholars believe that 'Yue' is equivalent to 'but'. However, it is more appropriate to interpret it as 'equal to', which means 'is'.

Great means passing away, and greatness is the essence of passing away. The connotation of greatness is distance, and the connotation of distance is opposition. However, they are different. Greatness is passing away, but this passing away is also distance, and at the same time, it is opposition. It has multiple dimensions or levels of meaning, and it is all encompassed in one.

Therefore, the big itself contains the essence of the past, and they are not in a chronological order, but in a logical relationship. How does this essence operate and contain?

Wang Bi explained that "Shi" means "to go". Wang Bi's explanation is quite appropriate. However, Wang Bi regarded "Xing" as "the way of the Dao", still speaking of the meaning of "Shi" in the perspective of grand narrative. If we pursue it more carefully, in the book "Shuo Wen Jie Zi", what does "Shi" mean? "Shi" means "to go back", it talks about the past of time. This kind of going, the going of the past, can also be extended from another angle, like flying and running, which means that something has already left. So, "Shi" means "to go back" in terms of time, but it means "leave" in terms of logic. It is more appropriate to speak of it from the perspective of leaving.

So, the great saying is that to go, but this kind of going has a more specific meaning. It is to leave, and going and leaving are not the same. Leaving is a more specific kind of going.

3 Zhou Xing of inter-root

So we need to further analyze what 'leave' means. Here we should connect it with Lao Zi's concept of 'Dao'. 'Dao' is action. 'Action of Dao' is also action. What does 'action of Dao' do? 'Dao' is action, it is birth, the birth of all things in the world. According to Chapter 1, this kind of birth is the birth of Wu-You. This kind of action, this kind of 'leave', is the manifestation of Wu-You. It also means the generation of Yin-Yang, which means it is not an isolated generation. How is it generated? According to the understanding of Chapter 2, it will not leave without a reason, nor will it leave in isolation. There must be something else present. The high and low are inclined to each other, and the difficult and easy are complementary to each other. That is to say, this kind of generation means that it occurs through the mutual generation with something else. Because of our daily experience, we know that leaving must have a reason, and that reason is present in this kind of leaving. In this case, the matter of leaving is not so simple.

In that case, this understanding is not about leaving. It must be about being affected and leaving. So this kind of departure is actually two, with the presence of others. The word "departure" brings out the presence of others. But it is still a departure, from where? There is such a saying, from the perspective of self-cultivation, from the perspective of practice, He Shang Gong believes that this kind of departure, leaving, what is left is the body. It cannot be said that there is no truth to it, and it is quite profound. It is often what we call giving up or willing to leave our body to consider others. This will be great, and it must be mutual. If it involves others but still for oneself, it is not great enough. This is small. This is a kind of self-centeredness that leaves oneself, taking oneself as the center. This is called selfishness, it is not great enough.

Greatness must be the mutual root and mutual generation that Lao Zi talked about. What does this mean? Our greatness, apart from ourselves, is also a kind of dedication, not to ourselves, but to others, which is still not mutual root and mutual generation, because we have already lost ourselves, or sacrificed ourselves. The true greatness is mutual root and mutual generation, also generating ourselves, also generating others.

However, according to Lao Zi's philosophy, the Dao is the fundamental principle of the universe, including the human body. Therefore, the departure of greatness cannot be said to be on the body. It must leave from the starting point, which is the body. But where does the body begin? The body is not the ultimate starting point. The starting point of the body is still the Dao.

So the starting point is positioned on the body, which has practical importance, but it still has a distance from the Dao, and it is not yet ultimate and thorough. But the Dao is not outside the body and all things. In this sense, we cannot say that the starting point is the Dao, and it is not in the body, without a body, because the Dao is mixed. So there is a reasonable emphasis on the body by He Shang Gong, but we should pay attention to the body, emphasizing the body and the way of the body, which is also the starting point in the ultimate sense from the Dao. From this perspective, then the starting point can be the body, or other things, such as thing-in-itself. Because the Dao is present, if the Dao is not present, there is no Dao, lacking the ultimate nature of the Dao, then it will be gone, regardless of what has been left, and what is taken as a starting point, it cannot be called Shi (gone).

What is moral may not be in line with the Dao, and may not be in line with the fundamental principles. Therefore, the Dao's standard is higher than all kinds of standards in reality. In this sense, many aestheticians, art theorists, and great critics have found a fact that poetry, literary and artistic works often exceed the scope of ethics. They are equally moving, and may even be more moving. They have such a great power to move people deeply and change customs. Therefore,

many aestheticians, art theorists, and critics trace the function of literary and artistic works to the ultimate ontology or fundamental principles of all things in the world. In recent years, some scholars have also begun to doubt whether this kind of thing is a grand narrative.

In many popular works, including online works, there are many works that don't necessarily need such profoundness. They don't even touch on ethical issues, only touch on some other issues, such as sex, violence, or sex plus violence, or just the bizarre and unfamiliar, such as time travel. There are many audiences, and many people are willing to watch them. They don't have that kind of profoundness and depth. Therefore, we suspect that the kind of aesthetics and art that trace back to this fundamental field is too classical, and may not adapt to reality.

But from a philosophical perspective, there are other judgments and conclusions. This kind of thing doesn't change with the times or the ethos. According to Buddhism, true, deep things can be shaken. This is the realm. Of course, this realm, including the body, including the world of instincts and desires as Freud understood it, and the social and ethical order based on it, needs to be shaken and healed, remade and healed. This kind of work is needed in any era. Compared with other works, which are like foam, it's just a consolation or a pacification, a temporary satisfaction, a limited satisfaction.

The beginning of Shi (the passing) can be the thing, it can be the body, but it must be the body of the presence of the Dao. The essence of this departure is the departure of the Dao, which means that the Dao will leave itself. Because the Dao is also a multiplicity, and it is also a body and a thing. Therefore, based on the fact that the Dao must give birth to all things and create diversity, it must depart. This separation is also reflected in the process of the Dao's coming from nothingness.

Wu, it can be a kind of departure, separation, causing disappearance, the disappearance of past relationships, but this disappearance must be a complete disappearance, a disappearance without any trace. In this complete disappearance, there will be emergence, and this emergence is the process of seeking, constructing, or generating mutually with others.

At this time, Da Yue Shi (the greatness of the passage) is the Way, that is, leaving, which more specifically interprets the generation of the Way, the beginning of the generation of all things in the world. Therefore, the greatness of the passage is Two, that is, the generation of Two, and Shi is the generation of Two.

The passage of time is far away. What does 'far away' mean? Many scholars still interpret it from the perspective of grand narrative, such as He Shangong who said: 'The far is, reaching to the infinite, spreading Qi to the heavens and the earth, and being omnipresent.' The far is hard to fathom, hard to control, and hard to reach. Therefore, Wang Bi said that the far is the extreme, the ultimate extreme, moving in a circular path, reaching to all directions, not biased towards one passage, hence it is called far.

This explanation makes sense, but it's overly grand. We understand that it's still necessary to link with the fundamental nature of the Dao, and follow the principle of the diversity of Yin-Yang and Wu-You. The formation of the greatness has already occurred, and it's happening in the process of formation.

The distant past is distant relative to the present, and this distance is relative to the composition of the past. Why is it distant? It is distant relative to the starting point. That is, this composition is mutual, inter-constitutive, and inter-rooted. To form in diversity, we must simultaneously take into account the inter-rootedness within diversity. The more others are present and participate in the composition, the more participants we must take into account, their mutual generation. Zhou is all-encompassing in the sense of composition and diversity. Distance is in this sense of distance. Any composition has its close constitutor, but when it has a close constitutor, we must also take into account those before it, that is, the historical participants of this composition, which requires multiple considerations. That is, in the perspective of diversity, a composition is not determined by considering only one party or both parties. It must be measured repeatedly and carefully. Lao Zi believes that it is possible, that is, the interdependence is based on Yin-Yang. The most fundamental experimental field, or the field of cultivation, is in the family, in the concept of home.

Ancient literati scholars often returned to their homeland, or what they called their pastoral land. When the pastoral land is about to be overgrown, why not return? This is the opposite. The concept of homeland is a starting point of culture. It is a piece of experimental land for cultivation. It is not only an experiment, but also a reality, something that people cling to and cannot give up. Then it can be spread or extended to various fields. People have been exploring and looking for this way. That is to say, it is by no means an ideal, it is something that has not been realized yet, something that people are still pursuing, something that has always been there, and all things are in it. In this sense, distance is Three, diversity, and the Two becomes Three. The present is not just one other person, it could be many diverse others. The Two becomes Three, the past becomes distant, the distant becomes the opposite, what is distance? It is not distance for its own sake. It has a moderation. To what extent is it moderate? It is a natural process, a process of opposition. That is to say, the opposition is in the process of distance, in the process of mutual generation and rooting of diversity. The opposition has always been present, and so has distance. Distance is present in separation, and the opposition is present in the mutual construction and mutual generation of separation and diversity.

Here is the end of Zhou Xing. What is the end? It is the moment of reaching everywhere. This is the possibility and

reality. How much is appropriate for a thing? It is when it reaches everywhere that it is appropriate and perfect. Of course, there is a prerequisite for this. It must be diverse, distant, and open. In fact, Zhou Xing has two contradictory and mutually supporting aspects. On one hand, it is distant and numerous, but this multitude is limited by Zhou Xing. To what extent is it numerous? So, the question of multitude, distance, is what Wang Bi calls the extreme. There is a reason why he calls it the extreme. In this sense, Yin-Yang refer to the two poles. When should we turn back? How should we turn back? There is such a point of no return. Without knowing this point of no return, we may be insufficient or excessive.

However, no matter how we grasp it, it seems that the process of circulation is a circular movement. This circular movement is seen from the level of things. As a kind of mixed and integrated thing, the Dao has a body and a level of things. However, from the perspective of its mutual rooting and mutual generation, that is, from its substantive content, it is also a kind of circular movement that reaches everywhere. Therefore, the two meanings of circular movement and circularity are included in it. It just corresponds to the duality of the Dao. It has its Wu-You, Wu-You and Yin-Yang, which is the Dao's nature. At the same time, it has its diversity in generating all things in the world. Moreover, this circular movement is unceasing, that is to say, it does not stop. That is to say, the circular movement is not a closed process, but a generation. The principle of circular movement is not closure, but generation, the generation of Wu-You, the generation of Wu-You and Yin-Yang. In this way, it is a process of continuous circulation. But what kind of circulation is it that needs to be emphasized. In this way, we can understand the circulation more specifically. We cannot only view the circulation from a grand narrative perspective. Dao not only generates all things in the world, but also has a mechanism for generating the diversity of all things in the world. Lao Zi emphasizes precisely the latter. Lao Zi sorts out these categories, precisely the concrete composition and concrete generation of diversity, such a circulation process.

This Zhou Xing (circular movement) is reflected in the concept of Lao Zi's greatness, which states that greatness is fleeting, and the fleeting is distant, and the distant is reverted. It is also reflected in Lao Zi's statement that 'the Dao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to all things'. All things have Yin- Yang within them, and they are harmonized by the movement of Qi. This is not a grand narrative, but rather the diversity of the creation of the world from the Dao. It is the mechanism by which the Dao creates a diverse world, or what we can call the circular movement mechanism. From this perspective, Zhou Xing is a further unfolding of Yin-Yang. Yin-Yang is about the mutual opposition, which can easily be understood as duality. Lao Zi's Yin-Yang must be further implemented into the process of Zhou Xing, or in other words, Zhou Xing is the inherent principle of Yin-Yang. The principle of Yin-Yang is not duality, but diversity. It is not stability, order, but generation, the generation of Wu-You. Zhou Xing is the inherent principle of Yin-Yang. In this sense, Lao Zi talks about Zhou Xing in a more specific way. Chapter 1 of Lao Zi states that the creation of all things originates from Wu-You, which is Chong Xuan (a philosophical concept: double metaphysics). Chapter 2 introduces the concept of the Chong Xuan, which is Wu-You and also Yin-Yang. Yin-Yang inevitably involves other entities, which relates to our world of perception or rationality, and the issue of non-isolation in the world of entities. The interconnectedness of Yin-Yang embodies a diverse and inter-constituting realm, known as Zhou Xing (the circular movement). Wu-You and Yin-Yang is the Chong Xuan. However, this Chong Xuan is actually a diverse circular movement structure and process. Therefore, circular movement is the unfolding of the intrinsic logic of the Chong Xuan, and it is not separate from it.

4 Conclusion

In summary, Lao Zi's Dao is first and foremost a constitutive structure and process of finitude. Without this dimension, it is impossible to understand the logical question of how Lao Zi's Dao can generate the myriad things of heaven and earth. Moreover, we should note that as Lao Zi's core categories, such as Wu-You and Yin-Yang, Zhou Xing, there has been a gradual shift in understanding. The generation of the myriad things of heaven and earth by Dao is a vertical realm, but how do the myriad things of heaven and earth return to Dao? It is a horizontal realm constituted by diversity and opposition. This shift has shifted from emphasizing the origin of the myriad things of heaven and earth, the question of Wu-You, to the circular process of the structure and operation of Dao itself in the myriad things of heaven and earth.

Many scholars fail to see or overlook this transformation, blindly focusing on the vertical process of the creation of all things in the universe, thus neglecting the diverse and finite realms of concrete composition, or this kind of real domain. This is the fundamental connotation of Zhou Xing category.

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