

The Enlightenment of Taoist Thought in the Pre-Qin Period to the Value Orientation of Contemporary College Students

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Abstract. The hermit realm of Taoist thought in the pre-Qin period has certain enlightenment to the words and deeds of contemporary college students eager for quick success and instant benefit. Through the study of hermit realm and the diversification of value orientation of college students, this paper extracts the guiding suggestions of hermit realm to the value orientation of college students, expecting to have a positive effect on setting up correct values of college students.

1. The Hermit Realm of the Essence of Taoist Thought in Pre-Qin Period

The *Tao Te Ching* and *Chuang-tzu* embody the soul of Taoism. In terms of human value, Taoism divides the subject of value into individual and class. Human value can be divided into individual value and class value. Individual value advocates the transcendental value of individual life, which refers to the prominent position of self-desire and satisfaction, emphasizing the transcendence of individual to social relations and other equivalence relations. As Lao Tzu said, “it’s wise to know who you are^[1].” “Self-knowledge” means to know oneself beyond the group. Zhuangzi pays more attention to the satisfaction of individual “emotion” and “nature”. Class value refers to the Taoist view that human beings are equal to heaven, earth and Tao, which is a special value that other things can not have. Lao Tzu positioned the human value in this way: “So Taoism is big, heaven is big, earth is big, and people are big. There are four big things in the universe, and human beings are one of them^[1].” It can be seen that human being, as one of all things, has particularity and transcendence in both individual value and class value.

Later generations sometimes mistakenly think that Taoism thought of pre-Qin Dynasty was born passively, but in fact it is not. They adopted an alternative way of entering the world. Taoism holds that since the emergence of human society, there has been good and bad state domination. Individuals, as a member of society, can only act according to the will of the rulers in such a society, so they easily lose themselves, and participate in social affairs with “doing something” to form social value, which is of no benefit to the transcendent individual. Therefore, Taoism opposes “doing something” and holds that having originates from nothing and nothing is the essence of all things. “The existence of all things in the world is tangible with a name, but the tangible things with a name must take the nameless and invisible “Tao” as the root. But inaction is invisible. It is very difficult to do inaction. In the end, Taoists believe that letting nature take its course in reality is the best way to achieve it. Lao Tzu emphasized that human beings should “discard knowledge”, “forsake cunning and profit”, “have less private desires” and return to the absolute state of nature and freedom of the baby. Zhuangzi also put forward in “A Happy Excursion” that only when people reach the state of “without dependence” and “no oneself” can they be free. Under the guidance of this idea, Taoism advocates that people should not worry about outside fame and fortune, and they should conceal themselves for self-study, realize their inner moral character, and naturally pursue freedom. This kind of state, which regards natural conditions as living conditions, pursues the transcendent moral realm of self or group, and is not controlled by external fame and interests, is the hermit realm.

2. The Cornerstone of Hermit Realm

The formation of this hermit realm is not imaginary, but has a certain cornerstone. Taoism calls this cornerstone “Tao”. It is a state of being unable to see or speak clearly, but able to dominate human existence. The Taoist school once described it like this: “There is no clear fixed entity in Tao. It’s such a trance, but there’s an image in it. It’s such a trance, but there’s something in it^[1].” It doesn’t say exactly what it is, but it has a vague sense of existence. But it is certain that this sense of existence is absolutely true, and the Tao is the commander of all creation, an invisible thing reflected in tangible things. “Tao is unique. Tao itself contains Yin and Yang, which intersect to form a proper state in which everything comes into being^[1].” “All things in the world are produced from visible tangible substance, and tangible substance is produced from invisible intangible substance^[1].” Tao is invisible. This explanation deepens people’s doubts about Tao. What is Tao? In response to this doubt, Lao Tzu tried to give Tao a name to illustrate it, but there was no exact word to describe it. He reluctantly said, “I don’t know what to call it. The word “Tao” is forcibly named “big”. It is vast and running endlessly, and then stretching far, and then returning to the original^[1].” If space and time are enlarged endlessly, the Tao becomes a very vague object. Therefore, Lao Tzu brought Tao back to reality in the way of relativity, and Tao became the supreme leader of the real world, that is to “stretch far, and then return to the original.” However, in the real world, there are many images of “big”, just saying that Tao is big. How do heaven, earth and man get along with Tao? Taoism interprets this as: “Among the four, man imitates the earth, the earth imitates the heaven, the heaven imitates the Tao, and the Tao is pure and natural^[1].” Since then, the relationship between man, earth, and heaven and Tao has become clear. Human activities are indirectly guided by Tao, which, as the supreme leader of the real world, is also bound by nature. In other words, nature implies in a nonverbal way how heaven, earth, man and Tao should develop. For example, in the cycle of seasons, the alternation of day and night tells people to let nature take its course. Nature conveys its will through Tao, and Tao conveys the laws of nature through various states of tangible things. If everything goes against the Tao, it will go against the laws of nature and be punished. This is how Taoism conceives hermit life on the basis of Tao and realizes individual value naturally. If such an ideal society can be realized, for the class value formed in such a society, people can also achieve the state of natural harmony by pursuing natural life, having less private desires, standing aloof from worldly affairs, and doing not fight with each other. So the highest realm of Taoist hermits’ life is to achieve the natural harmony of society.

3. The Current Situation of Value Orientation of Contemporary College Students

As far as contemporary college students are concerned, especially the college students in post-90s and post-00s, most of them are only children. In the process of growing up, they rely heavily on their parents and families. Especially in the case of being spoiled more, they tend to highlight their individual consciousness in values, show strong egoism in words and deeds, and at the same time, their social responsibility consciousness is relatively indifferent. Moreover, with the continuous development of society, the conflict between traditional concept and modern concept, and the contradiction between individual needs and social reality make them feel more discomfort, hesitation and even loss during college. In terms of value orientation, contemporary college students show a trend of diversification, which has a huge negative impact on the practice of socialist core values and the formation of dominant values. At present, the diversification of college students’ value orientation is mainly manifested in the following aspects:

3.1 Self-Awareness is Strengthened and Self-Interest is Highlighted.

With the profound changes of contemporary society and the further deepening of reform and opening-up, college students’ self-awareness has been significantly enhanced, and their concern and pursuit of self-worth has been continuously strengthened. As a result, in terms of value orientation, the concept of self-interest is highlighted. Everything to meet self-needs, regardless of the influence

of others and society, frequently occurs. The selfless devotion led by the society and the moral custom of attaching importance to righteousness while neglecting profit have been seriously impacted by egoism.

3.2 Lack of Honesty Consciousness and Sense of Responsibility.

Contemporary college students are very concerned about their own interests. They do things mainly for self-interest satisfaction, and sometimes, in order to achieve their goals, they do not hesitate to hurt others for their own sake. For example, the trend of plagiarism in university campus exams is spreading. In terms of responsibility, they are unwilling and afraid of taking responsibility. Even when they do something wrong, they find various reasons and excuses to shirk responsibility.

3.3 Mental Impetuosity, Lack of Ideals and Aspirations.

In recent years, frequent campus fights and murder incidents show that college students neglect other people's lives and property, and the legal system. In addition, due to the abundance of external material conditions and the enhancement of purchasing power, many college students often lose themselves in enjoyment. They are indifferent to personal development, social responsibility and ideal of life in the future. They are in a state of muddling around, which is very dangerous for students and the state.

4. Enlightenment of Hermit Realm on Value Orientation of College Students

4.1 The Hermit Realm Enlightens Us to Pay Attention to Improving Our Moral Accomplishment and Neglecting the Present Fame and Wealth.

Taoism acts on the basis of the construction of individual value system, not interfered by external things and interests, can be indifferent to the world's fame and interests, and consciously practice individual value. This is the integration of individual and heaven and earth, with the characteristics of transcending secularity. If contemporary college students can learn from this value orientation of Taoism, everything outside will be disillusioned, people will do not have to fight for fame and wealth, there will be no fraud and struggle, natural people will live in peace, and the country will be prosperous.

4.2 The Hermit Realm Enlightens Us to Maintain a Normal Mentality and Learn to Let Nature Take its Course.

Chuang Tzu once said, "When the sun rises, I begin to work; when the sun goes down, I go to rest; and I live freely between heaven and earth"^[2]. To have this state of mind, we must maintain a normal mentality and not suffer from gains and losses. For the impetuous psychology of college students, it is a good medicine. In addition, Taoism pursues freedom, which is not restrained by secular disturbances, and they can live naturally. Lao Tzu once commented on man's infinite selfish desire: "No misfortune is greater than discontent, no blame is greater than desire"^[1]. Therefore, only when people have a good heart and do not struggle with everything, can they have no worries. "The best man is like water, which is good at nourishing all things without contending with them. The best people do right because they have indisputable virtues, so when there is no fault, there is no blame"^[1]. This is reflected in the contentment and happiness, with an indisputable way to reduce people's pursuit of interests. Contemporary college students can also, as Taoists say, reduce their personal desires, not to compete excessively for external interests, and pursue the perfection of their self-accomplishment. In that way, they will see farther and live more freely.

4.3 The Hermit Realm Inspires Us to Have Lofty Ideals and Aspirations, Whether in Good or Bad Times.

Taoism holds that human life should be a process of pursuing Tao from the tangible world to the intangible world. The reason why human beings can persevere in pursuing Tao for a long time is that "from ancient times to the present, these wise sayings will not go out of date"^[1]. Tao is the ultimate value goal pursued by generations. Thus, we can see how far Taoism's ideal aspiration is. Lao Tzu praised it like this: "Tao is inaction but nothing is not done by it"^[1]. Tao is the master of life and death of all things in the universe. People should pursue it tirelessly and eternally.

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