

A Study on Liquid Ecology

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Abstract: With climate changing frequently, environmental crisis has been gradually realized by the people around the world and scholars even the government are attaching great importance to it. The approaches to the question are given and presented as the forms of theory or documents. Therefore, with the purpose of settling this pressing crisis thoroughly, there remains a must to learn about liquid ecology from James Miller. This thesis is to introduce James Miller's opinions and hope to provide a new perspective for addressing environmental problems.

Keywords: Ecology; James Miller; The subjectivity of nature; The porosity of the body

1. Introduction

James Miller analyzes the environmental situation mainly in the book of *China's Green Religion: Daoism and the Quest for a Sustainable Future* and has the attempt to do with the significant problem "how to create a sustainable way of living for human species".^[1] In this doing, he firstly makes a distinction between religion and ecology, then elaborates the subjectivity and the porosity of the Body and lastly envisions a harmonious and flourishing world, which develops his thought of liquid ecology.

2. Religion and Ecology

Religious adherents account for a large amount of the population in the world and hence religion has the capability to leave great impact on our environment. However, does the number of religious adherents play a crucial rule in the development of the harmonious global environment? Miller argues that it is the key that is a worldview and value system, which is quite relevant to sustainability. Daoism offers a natural and valuable way to realize and establish a relationship between human species and nature in the classic works, Laozi and Zhuangtsu. According to this, Miller insists that studies on Daoism is likely to push forward the solution to the environmental crisis.

Aiming to explain his opinions clearly and convincingly, Miller employs a new interpreting approach, "confrontational hermeneutics" made by Michael LaFargue. This way contains two elements, one aiming at understanding the text precisely in its otherness from our own views and values, focusing on the ways the basic thought patterns of the text's original authors and audience were fundamentally different from our own; the other one being the wrestling itself, considering the pro's and con's of this reconstructed view of the world vis-à-vis our own views or other views we might be attracted to.^[2] Through this way, Miller thinks that it is easier for people to consider Daoism as a tradition wholly sealed within itself and opposed to operating within a dominant social framework. From LaFargue's perspective "confrontational hermeneutics", Miller not simply differentiates clearly Daoism from religion but forms a decolonial approach to interpret Daoist text.

Although there exists a "green religion" or "dark green religion" distinguished by Bron Taylor in order to distinguish friendly environmental religion, Miller would like to focus on its own concepts of "religion" and "nature" rather than articulate them according to contemporary discourse. He shows that the present ecological crisis needs us to develop traditional ways and conceptualize the engagement on religion and ecology.

3. The Subjectivity of Nature

Miller suggests that the natural world remains its own subjectivity to some extent. He points out saving the world is not only saving the nature but saving human species. Nature is unable and unnecessary to be saved by us. All we are supposed to do are doing with the relationship between nature and human beings. If this relationship gets better and healthier, the nature will be more and more

flourishing and we can also be saved by the nature. This is because the vitality of the human body derives from the vitality of the nature. Pursuing human prosperity is not always diminishing the long-term viability by destroying the nature. The natural order has its ability to produce the creativity and support the well-being and flourishing of human beings, which is termed the subjectivity of nature by Miller.

In his opinion, the subjectivity of human species is rooted in the subjectivity of nature, and also modeled from nature. Daoists cultivate themselves usually by feeling and experiencing nature, which is in accord with the notion of the subjectivity of nature. In other words, nature possessing the subjectivity just like Daoists' experience is likely to be apprehended and experienced from the inner world. The subjectivity of humans lies in their consciousness grounded in the emergence from nature, namely heaven, earth, and Dao. In this regard, Dao, as the resource of everything, is self-generating, natural and spontaneous. In so doing, nature has the potential to be subjective in some way.

Isolated from the nature, people gradually lose their respect for it especially while exploring and extorting from it for their own sake. That is why scholars are willing to read traditional texts so as to look for relevant notions. Based on the wisdom and large universality, Miller emphasizes the significance of the subjectivity of nature considerably and expects to give alert to people that people have no rights to destroy nature freely and if these bad behaviors occurs, people will incur unpredictable disasters for the saints in ancient time attach great importance to the nature and affirm definitely the subjectivity of nature or Dao.

4. The Porosity of the Body

In Daoist text, while cultivating, existing orifices can offer practitioners transactions, usually through the mouth with the natural vitality. Miller says that "May your mouth spit out purple blossom to nourish my heart and concentrate my spirit; as my crimson organ spontaneously becomes alive, may I become a soaring immortal."^[3] The process of this transaction leads to the flowing of something, which is called liquid body. So many orifices from the liquid body foster the transmission between human beings and nature. But, apart from people, all the other things can be seen as the liquid body, which means that everything not simply pervades and penetrates but also is pervaded and penetrated mutually. It proves that everything is correlated. If all the best, our world must be flourishing.

5. Conclusion

It is necessary to imagine liquid ecology through the way of understanding the subjectivity of nature as the neutral backdrop of human species and the transfiguration of the porosity of the body as the transaction and coevolution between human species and nature. As far as Miller is concerned, Qi as the way of transfiguration is construed as the basis of liquid ecology and a kind of liquid vitality. In traditional Chinese culture, Qi usually functions as a liquid which is pervading the boundaries of the invisible "walls", flowing through orifices and collecting in nature that is full of vitality. It can disappear to nearly exist nothing after dissipated and also coagulate after condensed an entity. Qi is presented as the two forms of "yin" and "yang". Yin flows into yang and yang flows into yin, which forms the yinyang dynamic. This dynamic keeps balanced and liquid will be hopeful for prosperity.

References:

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