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**A discussion on the relation between the
Laozi and Hayao Miyazaki's animation
towards 'returning of innocence'**

**淺談《老子》與宮崎駿動畫「復歸童真」之聯
繫與啟示**

A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David
In fulfilment of the requirements for BA (Hons) in Sinology Degree

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Abstract

The image of the baby in the *Laozi* is original, gentle, vigorous, simple, etc., which is in sharp contrast with the general trend of chasing fame and fortune. *Laozi* hopes that through ‘returning to babies’, people can let go of their selfish desires, recover their original simplicity, find their nature, accept everything with a tolerant heart and be in harmony with the natural world. Hayao Miyazaki's animation also uses themes of children to express the value of childlike innocence. Children may seem weak, but they possess extraordinary strength and courage, and can resolve conflicts and become messengers of peace. This view of ‘return of innocence’ has something in common with the view of ‘returning to babies’ in *Laozi*. By analysing the image of the baby in *Laozi* and the characteristics of Hayao Miyazaki's animated characters, this paper summarizes the internal connection between them. It also explores the circular consciousness of reversion and primitive ethical concern behind it, by giving its practical significance combined with the current social situation.

Key words: returning to babies, returning of innocence, Hayao Miyazaki's animation, *Laozi*.

摘要

《老子》筆下的嬰兒意象，具有原初性、柔和性、生機性、質樸性等，與當今社會追名逐利的大趨勢形成鮮明對比。老子希望通過「復歸於嬰兒」，讓人們放下私慾、返璞歸真、找尋本性，以包容之心接納萬事萬物，與自然世界融洽相處。而宮崎駿的動畫也用兒童題材表達了童真的可貴。兒童看似柔弱，卻擁有著超凡的力量和勇氣，能夠化解衝突、成為和平的使者。這樣的童真回歸觀與《老子》的「復歸於嬰兒」確有共通之處。本文通過分析《老子》的嬰兒意象與宮崎駿動畫人物的特質，歸納兩者的內在聯繫，再進一步探討復歸思想的循環意識和背後的原初倫理關懷，並結合當今社會現況賦予其現實意義。

關鍵詞：復歸嬰兒，復歸思想，宮崎駿動畫，《老子》

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1. Introduction

At the 62nd Venice Film Festival (2005), the 64-year-old Japanese animation master Hayao Miyazaki was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award in Film Art. Executive Chairman Marco Müller says: ‘The fantasy world depicted by Hayao Miyazaki is dazzling and fascinating. After I watched his films, I always felt impressed, and it is also a great surprise that the hearts of us adults were revived.’¹ Most of Miyazaki’s animation chose children as the protagonists of the film, which is similar to the idea of ‘returning’ to original simplicity, gentleness, unprincipled knowing and objectless desires² in *Laozi*’s usual baby image. These children have been given important missions and responsibilities. To some extent, their strong and brave, peace-loving, and close to nature in different situations have brought spiritual comfort to adults, and their childlike innocence awakens the original nature of adults and redeems their lost hearts.

Miyazaki has published several books on his animation films, such as *Starting Point: 1979~1996* 出發點：1979-1996 and ‘*Turning Point: 1997~2008* 折返點：1997-2008, using articles or dialogues to describe his own experience in the process of directing animation. At present, many scholars are keen to study Miyazaki’s animation and the deep meaning of it. As far as Japanese scholars are concerned, Toshio Suzuki, who worked with Miyazaki, wrote *Happy to Work: With Hayao Miyazaki and Takahata at the Ghibli Site* 樂在工作：與宮崎駿、高畑勲在吉卜力的現場, and Nobuyuki Tsugata’s *The Power of Japanese Animation: Tezuka Osamu and Hayao Miyazaki’s threads of History* 日本動畫的力量：手塚治蟲與宮崎駿的歷史縱貫線, *Hayao Miyazaki’s Code* 宮崎駿的暗號, etc.

As far as Chinese scholars are concerned, there are also relevant books such as *Hayao Miyazaki, the Master of Animation* 動畫大師宮崎駿 and *Wind Catcher-Hayao Miyazaki: The Depth of Animated films* 捕風者宮崎駿 動畫電影的深度. They either

¹ Diyi caijing ribaoshe 第一財經日報社, *Dashi fangtan lu* 大師訪談錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2006), p.68. The original quotation is, ‘宮崎駿描繪的幻想世界讓人目眩神迷, 每次看他的電影, 在讓人感歎之餘, 也使我們這些成年人的赤子之心重新復甦.’

² Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: ‘Making This Life Significant’: A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.78.

analyze each film or classify it according to themes so that readers can have a deeper understanding of Miyazaki's ideas and film content. There is no lack of other journal articles and materials that discuss and interpret each film or the theme of childlike innocence, the theme of nature and the theme of human nature regression and so on, some of which indeed provide guidance and inspiration for this paper. This shows that Miyazaki's animated films still have a certain influence in the academic field, and many scholars are keen to study the metaphorical meaning behind them, the enlightenment to human society and so on.

In this paper, seven major films directed by Hayao Miyazaki are summarized and analysed. According to the release time, they are: 'The Valley of the Wind 風之谷' in 1984 and 'Laputa: Castle in the Sky 天空之城' in 1986, 'My Neighbor Totoro 龍貓' in 1988, 'Kiki's Delivery Service 魔女宅急便' in 1989, 'Princess Mononoke 幽靈公主/魔法公主' in 1997, 'Spirited Away 千與千尋' in 2001, 'Ponyo on the Cliff 崖上的波妞' in 2008. This paper also uses comparative analysis to connect the baby image of *Laozi* with the Child characters of Miyazaki's film, hoping to inspire modern people's deep thinking about the context of life through the concept of 'returning to innocence'.

2. An analysis of the characteristics of the baby image in *Laozi*

In the text of *Laozi*, there are many chapters related to babies, such as:

Chapter 10: When you concentrate the Qi and attain softness, can you be like an infant? 專氣致柔，能如嬰兒乎?³

Chapter 20: I am serenely among them and do not show any sign, like an infant that does not yet smile. 我獨泊兮其未兆，如嬰兒之未孩。⁴

Chapter 28: This stream in the world will not depart from the way of virtue but

³ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.37. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.20.

⁴ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.68. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.41.

rejuvenate to its infancy. 爲天下溪, 常德不離, 復歸於嬰兒.⁵

Chapter 49: The saint hopes that people can restrain their eyes and ears from chasing desires, and return to simplicity and innocence like a baby. 百姓皆注其耳目, 聖人皆孩之.⁶

Chapter 55: Those of deep *de* 德 can be compared to an infant. 含德之厚, 比於赤子.⁷

These chapters often use the metaphor of a baby to remind people of the importance of being original, gentle, vigorous, simple. The characteristics of the baby image are summarized into four points and specific explanations are as follows.

2.1. Innocent and simple 純真質樸

2.1.1. Chaotic and pure 渾沌單純性

The innocence and simplicity of babies are longed for by adults, as states in Chapter 20 of *Laozi*: 'I am serenely among them and do not show any sign, like an infant that does not yet smile...My desires alone are different from those of the other people—and I esteem the nurturing mother. 我獨泊兮其未兆, 如嬰兒之未孩...我獨異於人, 而貴食母.'⁸ We can understand it as a kind of soft state of indifferent and tranquil, unintentional like a baby. Xu Yiming 徐儀明 and Liao Yong'an 廖永安 believe that 'The state of a baby is chaotic and pure, which is close to the way a person who has attained the Dao looks at the world at a certain level.'⁹ The simplicity of a baby is the most innocent and flawless, like a piece of white paper. They do not have the motives or trickery that adults have acquired, so they make people feel precious and moving.

⁵ X.Y.Z. 許淵衝 trans., *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human* 漢英對照老子道德經 (Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2003), p.58.

⁶ This is translated on my own. Chinese context: Chen Guying 陳鼓應, Wang Yunwu 王雲五, *Laozi jinzhu jinyi ji pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), p.218.

⁷ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介 (英文版), ed. By Paul J. D'Ambrosio and Xiao Ouyang (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020), pp.308-311.

⁸ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.68.

⁹ Xu Yiming 徐儀明, Liao Yong'an 廖永安, 'Dui Laozi Yinger, Chizi, Hai de jiedu' 對《老子》嬰兒、赤子、孩的解讀, *Shaoguan xueyuan xuebao* 韶關學院學報, 5 (2013), pp. 46-48. The quotation is, '嬰兒的狀態是混沌而純粹的, 接近於一個得“道”的人在一定境界時看待世界的方式.'

Why did sages embark on a path of returning that is different from others? Lai, Shi-San analyses, ‘The key lies in the persistence of the “Shimu 食母” ...sages softened and relied on the mother of chaos-based on simplicity and innocence through returning to babies.’¹⁰ If you can be as soft and humble as a baby, and take Dao as the guiding direction, you can maintain a simple mentality to live in the world.¹¹

Chen Guying 陳鼓應 and Bai Xi 白奚 mentioned in the *Laozi Pingzhuan* 老子評傳:

Laozi is most opposed to people's use of trickery, cleverness and deceit. He repeatedly mentioned ‘baby’ in his book, hoping that people can return to their original nature, be as innocent and natural as babies, and maintaining a childlike heart, this is also the basic spirit and consistent proposition of the Daoist school he founded.¹²

2.1.2. Primitiveness and unlimited possibilities 原初性和無限可能性

Infancy is the beginning stage of a person's growth; therefore, the Primitiveness and instinctive drive of the baby is also more prominent. The original state of life is the manifestation of human nature. In real life, many people lose themselves and forget their original directions, and their lives have been in a state of confusion and suffering. If people can return from the lost way and restore to the initial state of the baby, they would be able to give themselves more choices and possibilities. When people let themselves start again, they can find the courage to move forward again, instead of being constrained by the oppression of social life.

It is true that compared to adolescence, middle age, and old age, people have the greatest possibility in their infancy. The reason is people's ideas and modes of

¹⁰ Lai, Shi-San 賴錫三, ‘Laozi de huntun siwei yu lunli guanhuai’ 《老子》的渾沌思維與倫理關懷, *Taida zhongwen xuebao* 臺大中文學報, 49 (2015), pp. 1-42. The quotation is, ‘關鍵就在於永不放棄的“食母”堅持...博大真人以復歸嬰兒般之渾樸天真，將主體柔化而依歸在渾沌母懷中’

¹¹ The sentence of ‘returning again to the state of uncarved wood’ in chapter 28, the ‘Simplicity seems clumsy’ in Chapter 41 and the ‘The most Skilful may seem clumsy’ in Chapter 45 of Laozi also have similar meanings: the true virtue seems lacking literary talent in terms of appearance; the extraordinary skills may not need to be meticulously crafted while keeping innocent and simple could bring infinite possibilities.

¹² Chen Guying 陳鼓應, Bai Xi 白奚, *Laozi pingzhuan* 老子評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2001), p.194. The quotation is, ‘老子最反對人運用心機、智巧和詐謀，他在自己的書中一再提到“嬰兒”，希望人們都能返璞歸真，象嬰兒那樣天真無邪、淳樸自然，保持一顆赤子之心，這也是他所開創的道家學派的基本精神和一貫主張’

thinking would be unconsciously instilled by parents, teachers and friends in their growth and the direction of development would also be limited gradually. In terms of academics, with the limitation of undergraduate, master's and doctoral research directions, the content of learning will be limited and specialized. Therefore, compared with a person's life, childhood has a greater possibility.

2.2. Tranquil and tender 恬淡慈柔

2.2.1. The way to attain softness 致柔之道

Chapter 10 says: 'When you concentrate the Qi and attain softness, can you be like an infant? 專氣致柔, 能嬰兒乎?' The vital energy in our body is the natural Qi. If we can use the softest way to direct our strength, the more relaxed we are, the more concentrated we will be. Different from what says in Chapter 55 that 'if the heart directs the Qi, this is called: forcing 心使氣曰強'¹³, the softest way is the most natural and not forced. Instead of breathing intentionally, the baby keeps the whole body and mind in the best state of fluency and accessibility.

Shi Deqing 釋德清 also says: 'Keep the mind from being impetuous, when you calm the mind down and the Qi will be adjusted and soft naturally.'¹⁴ If we can control our mind, then we can naturally adjust to a state of treating others with softness, and will not conflict with others.

2.2.2. The tender power 慈柔力量

The 'softness' mentioned in *Laozi* is not a kind of blindly 'weakness', and its power of kindness and softness should not be underestimated. As Chapter 55 says, 'Wasps, scorpions, and venomous snakes do not bite it; fierce birds and ferocious beasts do not capture it. 蜂蠆虺蛇不螫, 攫鳥猛獸不搏.'¹⁵ The innocent and unadorned open

¹³ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.38. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.122.

¹⁴ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing hanshanjie Jiedu* 老子道德經憨山解 [The Annotation of Daodejing by Venerable Master Hanshan], (Taiwan, Shin Wen Feng Print. Co., 2015), p.103. The quotation is, '制其心不使妄動以鼓氣, 心靜而氣自調柔.'

¹⁵ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, pp.308-311.

state of a baby makes birds, beasts, fish and insects unguarded. This is an interactive process, and mutual trust can also be perceived through each other's thoughts and behaviours. Zhan Jianfeng 詹劍鋒 believes that 'the characteristics of babies are innocent, pure, lively and ignorant...so that sorrows cannot enter, evil power cannot attack, and so other creature cannot hurt them.'¹⁶

The tender power of babies can actually be seen in many things. For example, seeds can break through the shell; crisp green buds can emerge from the soil; chicks can open their hard shells; silkworm pupae can break through cocoons after they become moths; the big trees will be broken under the strong wind, but the grass will not, because they know follow the wind and bend down so that they can continue to grow. All these natural phenomena tell us not to underestimate weak groups because their original strength is incredible. In fact, their 'softness' helps to make them 'strong'. The so-called 'The weak prevails the strong 弱之勝強也'¹⁷ also embodies similar meanings.

2.3. Unprincipled knowing and objectless desires 無知無欲

Chapter 49 of *Laozi* mentions: 'The saint hopes that people can restrain their eyes and ears from chasing desires, and return to simplicity and innocence like a baby.' The sage let the people give up their pursuit of fame, wealth and desire and step by step approach the Dao. Zhang Huihui 張輝輝 believes,

Human beings exist in the world, the expansion of material desires and so on make themselves constantly sink into the world and lose their innate nature (the nature of Dao), not only stay away from babies, but also run counter to the Dao, and are constantly alienated, becoming 'One Dimensional Man 單向度的人'.¹⁸

¹⁶ Zhan Jianfeng 詹劍鋒, *Laozi qiren qishu jiqi daolun* 老子其人其書及其道論 (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006), p.276. The quotation is, '嬰兒的特性是天真的, 純厚的, 生機活潑的, 不識不知的.... "憂患不能入, 邪氣不能襲, 故外物莫能傷".'

¹⁷ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: 'Making This Life Significant': A Philosophical Translation*, p.268.

¹⁸ Zhang Huihui 張輝輝, 'Shengmingguan yiyun zhong Laozi de yinger guan' 生命觀意蘊中老子的嬰兒觀, *Taiyuan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 太原師範學院學報, 10. 5 (2011), pp. 23-25. Zhang Huihui says, '人存在於世界之中, 物慾的膨脹等等使自己不斷地沉淪於世界之中而失去先天本性(道的本性), 遠離嬰兒, 背道而馳, 不斷地被異化, 成為 "單向度的人".'

In the social environment, it is difficult not to be affected, and it is also difficult not to follow the trend and lose the heart. The idea of ‘objectless desires’ is to appeal to people not to follow the pursuit of fame and wealth and forget the original mind. Desire cannot be satisfied all the time, and even a brief satisfaction cannot make up for the emptiness of the heart.

As for ‘unprincipled knowing 無知’, Wu Cheng 吳澄 says, ‘Babies don not know anything intellectual.’¹⁹ People who have great wisdom often seem slow-witted and do not think they know everything and understand all the truth. Wang Bi 王弼 annotated that ‘Babies do not need wisdom but are in accordance with natural wisdom.’²⁰ The attitude of ‘returning to babies’ really makes one’s mind calmer. People can be more one thoroughly when they deal with things, and will not be disturbed by their own desires and other’s trickery. In fact, such a concession attitude can also enable people to avoid danger and protect themselves when they in danger.

2.4. Vigorous 充滿活力

‘Though his bones are soft and his sinews supple, his grip is firm...He screams through the entire day and yet his voice does not get hoarse, such is the height of harmony. 骨弱筋柔而握固...終日號而不嘎, 和之至也.’²¹ We know that babies’ crying is loud and long-lasting, but the special thing is that babies’ voice will not be hoarsened. Why? Because the babies’ crying is very peaceful and will not hurt their throats. Chen Guying 陳鼓應 argues,

*Laozi uses the image of an infant as an analogy for a deeply cultivated person capable of reverting to an infant-like state of unadulteration and softness... ‘utmost harmony’ describes the state of a concentrated and harmonious mind.*²²

¹⁹ Wu Cheng 吳澄, *Daode zhenjing wuchengzhu* 道德真經吳澄註 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), p.39. Wu Cheng 吳澄 says, ‘嬰兒謂無所識知.’

²⁰ Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.62. 王弼 notes that ‘嬰兒不用智, 而合自然之智.’

²¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: ‘Making This Life Significant’: A Philosophical Translation*, pp.215-216.

²² Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.311. Chen Guying 陳鼓應 argues, ‘老子用赤子來比喻具

In *the Philosophy of the Daodejing*, Moeller 梅勒 also analyses: ‘By following its example, one will retain and thus increase one’s energies, powers, and efficacy. By following this Dao of sex, one will maximize one’s De.’²³

The four characteristics of the baby image in *Laozi* are representative and enlightening. We should keep our pure mind like a baby, treat others with tenderness and without any subjective prejudice, but still be strong and full of strength.

3. An analysis of the image of children in Miyazaki's animation

In Hayao Miyazaki's animation, most of the protagonists are children. The precious qualities of these children not only influence many adults, but also become indispensable elements on their way to success.

3.1. Innocent and simple 純真質樸

3.1.1. Be considerate of others 替人著想

In ‘Spirited Away’, a series of actions of Chihiro 千尋 all embody her sincerity of thinking for others. She was afraid that the faceless man 無臉男 would get wet, so she left a door for him. When Bailong 白龍 was injured, She gave him half of the meatball to heal him, which was given by the River God 河神. When the faceless man lost himself, Chihiro also gave him the remaining half of the meatball, hoping that he could spit out the filth and restore his original appearance. And this precious meatball can turn Chihiro's parents from pigs back into humans, but she gave up her own ideas, and thought for others first. Because of this, she finally got the gratitude of others and made a group of people repent and be good.

有深厚修養境界的人，能返到嬰兒般的純真柔和...“和之至”是形容心靈凝聚和諧的狀態。

²³ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.25. Moeller 梅勒 also analyses: ‘通過摹仿嬰兒這個樣本，一個人就可以保持活力，從而增加他的能量，力量以及德。通過遵循性之道，讀者可以使自己的德最大化’

3.1.2. The tender power 樂於助人

Kantai 堪太, the little boy in ‘My Neighbor Totoro’, lent her umbrella to Xiaoyue 小月 and Xiaomei 小美 when it was raining heavily, but he ran back to home in the rain. When Mei got lost, Kantai also tried his best to join the searching group. Even though he was not as tall as a bicycle, he still tried to ride the bike, which was faster than walking. ‘This kind of simple and sincere friendship between people does not have any affectation, as if a beautiful inner heart is naturally revealed. This is not available in a selfish and cold-hearted city.’ In children’s heart, it is natural to help others, that is the ‘primitive concern’.

Kiki 琪琪, the protagonist in the film ‘Kiki’s Delivery Service’, not only helped the owner of the bakery to return the things left by the guests, but also helped the old lady burn the stove and repair the light bulbs. To keep the whitebait pie warm that grandma gave to her granddaughter, she even wrapped the package tightly under her own clothes. Even if it rained heavily and was difficult to fly, she did not care and insisted on delivering the goods.



Picture1: from *Ghibli Roman Album*²⁴

In ‘Princess Mononoke’, Ashitaka 阿席達卡 was very kind-hearted, and he saved two strangers by the river beach. Even if his arm was injured, he still let his mount out for others to ride and walk on his own. He also carried another seriously injured person on his back and sent them home.

In ‘Ponyo on the Cliff’, Ponyo 波妞 was very willing to help others solve problems. For example, helping Zongjie’s 宗介 family restore electricity, helping to

²⁴ Animage Editorial department, ‘Kiki’s Delivery Service’ in *Ghibli Roman Album* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company, 2011), p.35.

find his mother, and pacifying the crying baby they encountered. Her magic is soft, without any side effects, and makes people around her feel full of warmth and kindness.

3.1.3. The tender power 言行天真

In 'My Neighbor Totoro', Mei 小美 often says some lovely words, which makes people feel the innocence of childhood. For example, a long time before lunch, she started to ask her father, 'May I have my bento?' When her sister Yue 小月 says, 'Our mom will leave hospital soon,' Mei asked, 'Is it tomorrow?' As adults, we may feel these words are very childish. How can a patient recover from the disease the next day? However, the children's words did not add their personal judgment, what she wants is to give the blessing to the mother, hoping to meet her again as soon as possible. Therefore, adults should not laugh at children. Instead, they need to reflect on themselves whether their thinking is mixed with acquired knowledge and insights, so that our minds are closed bit by bit. That is why many people cannot open their hearts to others.

Mei's actions also make people feel full of childlike innocence. At present, children's time has been occupied by computers and mobile phones. 'Children are surrounded by high technology and gradually lose their roots in light industrial products.'²⁵ Miyazaki also hoped that children could have closer contact with nature. 'I hope that after watching this film, children will run into the grass or pick up acorns on a whim.'²⁶ The Totoro 龍貓 is also a symbol of nature, 'The film hopes that people can get rid of the shackles of reality, and then regain their inner truth based on this film.'²⁷

²⁵ Hayao Miyazaki, *Turning Point 1997~2008 折返點 1997~2008* (Taipei: Taiwan dongfan, 2010), p.228.

²⁶ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979~1996 出發點 1979~1996* (Taipei: Taiwan dongfan, 2012), p.467.

²⁷ Wu Xiaoshan 伍小珊, 'Miyazaki's animation Longmao zhuti jiedu' 宮崎駿動漫作品《龍貓》主題解讀, *Dongman yanjiu*, 動漫研究, 16 (2015), p.123.



Picture2: from *Ghibli Roman Album*²⁸

3.1.4. The primitive mind 原初本心

The primitiveness of babies in *Laozi* can be embodied in the natural expressions of ‘eat when you are hungry, sleep when you feel sleepy’²⁹ and ‘laugh when you are happy, cry when are sad’.³⁰

The original nature of people is similar to primitiveness. In ‘Spirited Away’, Chihiro 千尋 needed to sacrifice her name in exchange for the chance to work in Tangwu 湯屋. This symbolizes that we sometimes need to give up our original mind in order to get the opportunity to work in society. But as Bailong 白龍 says, ‘Do not forget your original mind, otherwise you will forget your way home.’ No matter how difficult the reality is, we should keep our primitive mind and move forward in the right direction.

In fact, the original animation is based on the page-turning of manuscripts. It is just that modern people use computers, which is more convenient and efficient, but many details are not as natural and vivid as hand-painted manuscripts. When Miyazaki and his team made ‘Ponyo on the Cliff’, they were all hand-painted with

²⁸ Animage Editorial department, ‘My Neighbor Totoro’ in *Ghibli Roman Album* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company, 1988), p84.

²⁹ For example, Ponyo 波妞 and Mei 小美 are typical representatives. They also express their feelings simply and directly, they will not give up going ahead due to others’ interruption.

³⁰ Regarding the expression of emotions, when Zongjie 宗介 couldn’t find his mother, the two lines of tears were his worries about his mother; Xiaoyue 小月 feared that her mother would die of illness, so she held the grandmother and cried loudly; Mei, who was only four years old, rushed to the hospital alone because she was worried about her mother, either. She was not afraid of getting lost, because the love for her mother had surpassed everything else.

pencils and papers. A total of 170,000 manuscripts were used in the whole film, which was completed by 70 employees in one and a half years.³¹ For instance, a 12-second animation requires 1600 sheets of manuscripts.³²

Whether it is being considerate, helpful, innocent, or tracing the origin of the original mind, we can see the innocence and simplicity of children, which are very valuable.

3.2. Tranquil and tender 恬淡慈柔

3.2.1. Be kind to others 慈柔待人

Being kind and gentle can not only influence and help others, but also sometimes have incredible power. In ‘the Valley of the Wind’, in order to make people on the airship not give up the hope of life, Nausicaä 娜烏西卡 took off her face mask and smiled in the place where there was poisonous gas. This is not what ordinary people can do. As a princess, Nausicaä took the people's will as her own. Even if her life is threatened, she will not hesitate to save the villagers. Liking chapter 49 says: ‘When the sage is in his position, restraining his own subjective prejudices and merging his heart-mind. 聖人在天下，歛歛焉，爲天下渾其心.’³³ Fang Dongmei 方東美 says: ‘What is this mind? It is not a self-centred individual mind, but a universal presence of mind.’³⁴

Nausicaä 娜烏西卡 not only helps the civilians but also treats the enemy

³¹ Zuo Yanan 左亞男, Yu Miao 于苗, ‘Japanese Animation Master Hayao Miyazaki's Regression——Take Animation Film Ponyo on the Cliff as an Example’ 日本動畫大師宮崎駿的回歸——以動畫影片《懸崖上的金魚公主》爲例, *Liaoning shifan daxue xuebao* 遼寧師範大學學報, 5 (2010), p.109.

³² The documentary of ‘Focusing on Miyazaki and Ponyo's intimate contact in 300 days 聚焦宮崎駿與“波妞”的300天親密接觸’, NHK, 2008. In order to find and experience this original hand-painted feeling, I also tried to use pencil, rubber and watercolour pigments to imitate Miyazaki's animated characters during my writing period of this paper (Appendix below). Experienced the characteristics of the protagonists and the spirit of each person during the process, which inspired me a lot.

³³ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.282,285.

³⁴ Fang Dongmei 方東美, *Yuanshi rujia daojie zhexue* 原始儒家道家哲學 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), p.178. Fang Dongmei 方東美 says: ‘這個心是什麼呢？它不是以自我爲中心的個人的心，而是普遍臨在的公心.’

equally when they are in danger, showing her tenderness and undifferentiated care. For example, in the event of a raid, Nausicaä tried to rescue Kushanna 庫夏娜, who had hurt villagers and shared the airship with her. This is what chapter 49 of the *Laozi* says, ‘Nice people, I treat them nice; mean people, I treat them nice as well; in this way everyone can be made to become nice. 善者, 吾善之; 不善者, 吾亦善之; 德善.’³⁵

In ‘Ponyo on the Cliff’, Zongjie 宗介 is also a gentle boy. When he saw Ponyo 波妞 trapped in a small glass bottle, he quickly rescued her and kept her in a small bucket, ‘Don’t worry, I will protect you.’ No matter where Zongjie went, he always took a bucket and protected Ponyo. His kind behaviour also moved Ponyo, making Ponyo come back to find him. Zongjie finally passed the test of love: ‘No matter Ponyo is a fish, a half-mermaid or a human, I will always love her.’³⁶



Picture3: from Studio Ghibli³⁷

3.2.2. The tender power 慈柔待物

In addition to being kind to others, many children in the films also show kindness and tenderness when facing creatures. They build bridges between people, animals and insects to get along with each other in peace. For example, Nausicaä 娜烏西卡 communicated with king worm and giant gadfly, persuading them to return to the forest and not to harm humans. If she meets a king worm which is hard to be calmed

³⁵ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.282, 285.

³⁶ In addition to taking care of Ponyo, Zongjie often cares about the elderly in the nursing home, folding little goldfish amulets for them during the rainstorm, which gives them much comfort.

³⁷ Studio Ghibli 吉卜力工作室, <https://www.ghibli.jp/works/ponyo/>, accessed 24 March 2021.

down, she just stops it with flash bombs and flute sound instead of guns. When the airship accidentally fell into the sea and disturbed the insects, Nausicaä also apologized to king worms: 'I am sorry, we disturbed your nest, but please understand that we are not your enemy.' The king worms felt her sincerity and tender power through their tentacles, and immediately turned away.

In 'Princess Mononoke', Sang 桑 is also a messenger to protect the forest. When she heard the orangutans want to eat humans, she comforted them and says, 'you cannot gain human power even if you eat humans. That will stain your blood and make you more evil than humans.' She could feel the pity and anger of the orangutans, because humans uprooted the trees and destroyed the forest so that orangutans lost their homes. She comforted them, 'Don't worry, we will never give up planting trees. The mountain beast God is with you, and we will definitely fight to the end.'

In fact, sages treat all things equally, and their equal and loving hearts can empathize with the sufferings of all living beings. As *Laozi* says, 'A sage is good at helping people without rejecting anyone. He is good at saving things without abandoning anything. 是以聖人常善救人, 故無棄人; 常善救物, 故無棄物.'³⁸

3.3. Objectless desires and non-existent enmity 無欲無怨

3.3.1. Objectless desires 無欲

As a princess, Nausicaä 娜烏西卡 does not have the will to dominate and oppress the people. Instead, she gets along with people as friends, caring and loving everyone. As states in *Laozi*: 'I desire without desire, and the people turn to simplicity by themselves. 我無欲而民自樸.'³⁹ Moeller says, 'If the sage-ruler reduces his own political desires—desires for power, wealth, possessions, and so on, then this will determine the political 'climate' of the state.'⁴⁰

The villain, Kushana, has a strong desire to rule the people. She wants to destroy

³⁸ X.Y.Z.許淵衝 trans., *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human* 漢英對照老子道德經, p.56.

³⁹ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.77. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.126.

⁴⁰ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.77.

the forest with insects and unify the world by using the power of ‘Giant Soldier 巨神兵’, but during the process, she hurt too many innocent people and creatures. She does not know, the more she wants to gain, the more she will lose.

In ‘Castle in the Sky’, Pazu 巴魯 begged Granny Dora 朵拉婆婆 to take him with them when Sheeta 希達 was in danger, he said: ‘I must save Sheeta. As long as I am alive, I will try my best to protect her. I do not care about Laputa’s treasures, please let me go!’ As for the flying stone, Sheeta did not care at all.⁴¹ On the contrary, it was adults who fought for it by all means. This flying stone also reveals to us the admonition that ‘Sharp tools are not to be exposed to the people. 國之利器不可以示人.’⁴²

In the opening part of ‘Spirited Away’, Chihiro's parents went to eat the food in the restaurant without the owner’s permission and later on they were punished and turned into pigs. When the faceless man 無臉男 gave Chihiro 千尋 a lot of medicated bath boards, she also declined and says, ‘I do not need so many, just one.’ Later, the faceless man conjured a lot of gold from his hands and gave it to her, but she still shook his head, while the others in the Tangwu 湯屋 rushed up to grab the gold. For Chihiro, she knows what she should take and what should not belong to her. This also reflects the children's objectless desires and striving without contentiousness.

3.3.2. Non-existent enmity 無怨

In ‘Princess Mononoke’, in order to resolve the enmity between Sang 桑 and Huanji 幻姬⁴³, Ashitaka 阿席達卡 did not hesitate to use his body to stop the fight between them. Even if he was shot by accident, he had no resentment. Qin gang 秦剛 says, ‘These physical wounds vividly reveal the cost and hardship that humans have to

⁴¹ Seeing what was happening in front of her eyes, Sheeta sighed, ‘I wish I had thrown away that stone earlier.’ She did not want the powerful force to control people's minds or take their lives.

⁴² Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.79. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.77.

⁴³ Huanji's other name is ‘Lord black hat’, which called ‘黑帽大人’ in Chinese.

pay to resolve the confrontation with nature.’⁴⁴ Ashitaka used his great love to face the iron-making towns and forests with fierce conflicts and incompatibility. He rescued Sang who had broken into an iron-making town, and Sang's heart was touched. When Ashitaka could not swallow food, she chewed and fed him, then Ashitaka was moved to tears. Even at the end of the film, Sang still cannot forgive humans, Ashitaka was still willing to wait by her side.⁴⁵

In addition, in ‘Spirited Away’, Chihiro also has no prejudice or hostility towards people. Faced with the faceless man who was ten times larger than her body, Chihiro still sat calmly in front of him and persuaded him to return to his original place.⁴⁶ To Granny Qian 錢婆婆, Chihiro did not hate the harm she did to Bailong 白龍, but personally returned the seal and apologized to her. Chihiro still has no resentment towards Granny Tang 湯婆婆, and she thanked her when she left. Indeed, if people can let go of ‘being opinionated and being arrogant’, actually everyone can be accepted to the greatest extent, and the gap and misunderstanding between people will gradually be eliminated.

3.4. vigorous 堅強勇敢

3.4.1. The tender power 勇敢前進

In ‘My Neighbor Totoro’, in order to find her lost sister, Yue 小月 desperately stopped the tractor that was rushing in the field and asked the driver whether they had seen her sister. When she heard someone found a child's sandal near the Shenchu 神池, she immediately took off the clogs and ran barefoot along the countryside, fearing that his sister accidentally falls into the pond.

In ‘Kiki's Delivery Service’, Kiki 琪琪 was very worried when she saw her friend

⁴⁴ Qin Gang 秦剛, *Wind Catcher-Hayao Miyazaki: The Depth of Animated films* 捕風者宮崎駿：動畫電影的深度, (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2015), p.45. Qin gang 秦剛 says, ‘這些肉體承受的創痛, 形象化地揭示出人類化解與自然對峙關係所要付出的代價與艱辛.’

⁴⁵ This is why Miyazaki wrote in his book: ‘What should be written more about is the compassionate feelings of Ashitaka towards Sang, and the process by which Sang gradually open her heart to Ashitaka.’ It is the infinite power of tolerance that enables the people who have deep resentment to turn to be kind,

⁴⁶ The others resented and feared the faceless man, but Chihiro has no disrespect, and gave him the rest of the meatball to cure him, leading him out of the Tangwu 湯屋. She says: ‘That person went bad after he came to Tangwu 湯屋, so it is better for him to leave there.’

hanging in the air by a flying machine. Even if her magic has not recovered yet, regardless of the danger, she decided to borrow a floor brush (there is no magic sweep by her side) and flew to save him. Although she fell and collided several times, she did not give up and finally rescued her friend.

In addition, Ponyo's little sisters were also very brave and united. They protected their dear sister (Ponyo) all the time. Without language and teaching, they can unite into a huge force at the moment of need, and this is the nature of children. When their sister wanted to return to the land, they turned into big whale-like waves and help her to go ashore. When they saw Zongjie 宗介 and Granny Chen 辰婆婆 taking their sister to the bottom of the sea, they also gathered around and made a bubble to protect them.

3.4.2. Use one's own life to protect others' lives 以命護命

In 'The Valley of the Wind', in order to let King worm's child return to his family, Nausicaä 娜烏西卡 opened her arms and took off her guard to prevent humans from harming the little worm again. When the little worm's body fluids leak out, Nausicaä, who was seriously injured, tried her best to hold the king worm and stopped him not to enter the lake, otherwise, he would die. Her sincerity moved little worm, he used tentacles to heal her wounds, which was the result of heart-to-heart communication.

In the 'Castle in the Sky', to prevent the robot's gunfire from hurting innocent lives, Sheeta 希達 even used her arms to block the part where the shells were fired. Even if she was likely to be injured, Sheeta took the risk to prevent Muska 穆斯卡 from hurting the army. Finally, in order to stop Muska from inheriting the throne and killing people, Sheeta and Pazu 巴魯 held the flying stone tightly and recited the 'Destruction Curse' together, hoping that people would get peace and stability. Chapter 31 of *Laozi* also mentions, 'Weapons are not the tools of the noble man, weapons are the tools of ill omen. When he cannot do otherwise, he uses them. 兵者不祥之器，非君子之器，不得已而用之。⁴⁷ The destruction curse is used as a last

⁴⁷ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.78. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi*

resort; the purpose is to prevent greedy people from dominating the world and harming more innocent creatures.



Picture4: from Studio Ghibli⁴⁸

In 'Princess Mononoke', when San 桑 saw that humans set a trap for boars, she wanted to help the boar who was in charge but blind, using her eyes to show him the way. When the blind boar was extremely angry with humans' gunfire and might turn into a demon, San was unwilling to leave it alone. Fortunately, she was rescued in the end.

These children protagonists set an example for people. They are innocent, kind and they have no intentions. No matter in the face of life difficulties, or facing the choice of life and death, they are very resolute and courageous, dedicated to others and the team, even if they might sacrifice their lives. Their shining points make up for the lack of modern people's minds and let us experience the inspiring power brought by the innocence and selflessness of children.

4. The concept of returning and the returning road of adults

Except for the image of children, many adults in the film also left a deep impression on the audience. This paper mentioned 'returning to innocence', In fact, there are some adults who showed their goodwill, or succeeded in 'returning to innocence' under the leadership of the child protagonist. This chapter mainly discusses the circular dialectics of 'returning' and combined them with examples of adult images

daodejing 老子道德經, p.68.

⁴⁸ Studio Ghibli 吉卜力工作室, <https://www.ghibli.jp/works/laputa/#frame>, accessed 24 March 2021.

in the films to illustrate that the road of ‘returning’ is not empty talk, but it is confirmed. Those who have not yet returned also need to be awakened slowly, not in a hurry.

4.1. The cyclical concept of returning 具有循環性的復歸思想

Laozi's idea of ‘returning’ is not blindly backwards, but the ‘circulate’ concept of moving forward after returning. When discussing the ‘intergrowth of opposites’, Roger T. Ames 安樂哲 also mentions, ‘This cosmic unfolding is not “cyclical” in the sense of reversibility and replication, but is rather a continuing spiral that is always coming back upon itself and yet is ever new.’⁴⁹ In the text of *Laozi*, we can find a similar concept of ‘Guanfu 觀復’⁵⁰, such as chapter 16 says, ‘The ten thousand things and endlessly diverse, each of them returning to its origin. Returning to the origin is called tranquillity, tranquillity is called going back to the source. 夫物芸芸, 各復歸其根. 歸根曰靜, 靜曰復命.’⁵¹

Chen Guying 陳鼓應 analyses, ‘Fu 復: to go back, the circular motion of moving back and forth. Guigen 歸根: Returning to the origin.’⁵² Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司 proposes,

The idea of ‘returning’ gave rise to two distinct thoughts in the history of Chinese philosophy. Firstly, it came to be seen as a return oriented towards one’s inner subjectivity and agency. Secondly, temporal change from the past to the present constitutes a ‘return’ from a historical perspective.⁵³

⁴⁹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing 'Making This Life Significant': A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), p28. Roger T. Ames 安樂哲 also mentions, ‘宇宙的這種演變並不是在可逆和重複意義上的“循環往復”, 而恰是一個總是回返自身卻又常新的不斷螺旋上升的過程.’

⁵⁰ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.132. ‘Guanfu 觀復’ means ‘to see through the principle of alternation and circulation’.

⁵¹ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.132.

⁵² Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.125,128.

⁵³ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, pp.129-130. Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司 also says, ‘All

If we combine *Laozi's* concept of 'returning' with the concept of 'returning to babies', we can understand more about the fact that all beings are inseparable from the cyclical development of the universe, so we can call it 'the cyclical thought of returning'. Lai Shi-San also mentions, 'We are not advocating that *Laozi* and Zhuangzi should return to naive innocence, but instead emphasizes the dialectical innocence of returning.'⁵⁴

As Miyazaki mentioned in an interview with the film 'Kiki's Delivery Service': 'The biggest feature of this film is that you can see many aspects of a person.'⁵⁵ Kiki 琪琪 is the representative of young people who have entered society, and she had the ability to deal with things and problems.⁵⁶ That is to say, adults need to have the ability to discern and cope with the current complex environment, and be able to see through the essence of things. However, in terms of mind, they still have to look at problems with a simple childlike mind. Only in this way can they avoid subjective judgment, let go of tact, and face the world with an accepting heart.

4.2. The goodwill of adults 成人的善意

The boiler grandpa in 'Spirited Away' is very kind-hearted. He paid special attention to Chihiro 千尋 and told others that Chihiro is his granddaughter. When he saw Chihiro falling asleep, he covered her with a blanket to avoid catching a cold. When Chihiro wanted to visit Granny Qian 錢婆婆 alone, he helped her find the tram tickets and kindly reminded her to take care.

In 'Princess Mononoke', although Huanji 幻姬 is the leader of Iron Town, she is also considerate and caring for others. Worried that others maybe discriminate

individual entities maintain a relation of continuity with the Dao similar to the relation between the root of a tree and its branches, they are able to overcome their own finitude and incompleteness by returning from the branch to the root. This is what the notion of 'returning' is essentially about.'

⁵⁴ Lai, Shi-San 賴錫三, 'Zhuangzi de tongxin youxi, Shidian zhuanhua, Lunli huhuan' 《莊子》的童心遊戲、視點轉化、倫理呼喚, *Wen yu zhe* 文與哲, 33 (2018), p.104. The quotation is, '絕非主張老莊要退回幼稚的童真, 反而要強調的是: 返老還童的辯證式童真.'

⁵⁵ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979~1996*, p.489. Miyazaki says, '這部電影最大的特色, 就是可以看到一個人的許多層面.'

⁵⁶ Although she is a little girl in front of her parents, she is very independent after finding a job. She may be wilful to her friends, but she is polite and considerate to the elders. This is not a scheming performance, but a parental education since childhood, and gradually learned to treat different people with different reactions.

against the disabled, she employed disabled elders to work for her and took good care of them. An old man says gratefully, ‘She is the only one who treats us as human beings. She not only cleaned my injured body with her hands, but also carefully bandages it with the cloth.’ Although her personality is very complicated, she is very kind to villagers, and the people are willing to obey her arrangement.

‘Ponyo's mother, Gran Manmare (曼玛莲), the goddess of the sea, is a personified image of the ocean.’⁵⁷ Actually, it is similar to the Great Mother/Goddess in the mythological system. She used magic to restore the power of ships, and blessed Ponyo 波妞 and Zongjie 宗介 to be together. At the end of the film, everyone's life is reborn under the cover of the giant jellyfish. Such a kind and tender power make surrounding people warm.



Picture5: from Studio Ghibli⁵⁸

In the text of *Laozi*, many chapters use ‘motherhood’ as a metaphor for Dao. For example, Chapter 25 says, ‘Alone it stands fast and does not change, it can be mother to heaven and earth. 周行而不殆，可以爲天下母.’⁵⁹ Chapter 52 says, ‘Heaven and earth and the myriad things all have a beginning—their root and source. 天下有始，以爲天下母.’⁶⁰ Such endless maternal fertility shows the infinite possibility of Dao

⁵⁷ Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* 大母神：原型分析, trans. Ralph Manheim (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1988), p.11. ‘Her name, Gran Manmare (曼玛莲), is the replacement of the original order in English (Great Mother of the Sea) with Italian pronunciation.’

⁵⁸ Studio Ghibli 吉卜力工作室, <https://www.ghibli.jp/works/ponyo/>, accessed 24 March 2021.

⁵⁹ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.29. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.53.

⁶⁰ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.296, 298.

as the origin of life.⁶¹

4.3. The returning road of adults 成人的復歸之路

4.3.1. Adults who succeed in returning 復歸成功之成人

The children in Miyazaki's animation unconsciously awakened the memory of adult audiences and let people reflect on their own minds. Do children really have such magical power? Miyazaki once says,

The birth of my eldest son always reminds me of my childhood... The second son even reminds me to examine my reasons for choosing this job and the process of my character formation. He made me know myself better than before.⁶²

Therefore, children provide a valuable opportunity for adults to reflect.

In fact, whether adults can return or not, the key is,

whether they could let go of the expansion of the main power of themselves, be modest and tender like children and 'concentrate the Qi and attain tenderness', letting oneself be naturally accepted by the spirit of the natural world, and at the same time becomes the guardian of nature.⁶³

Adults should learn to untie themselves timely instead of putting on invisible shackles for themselves. The shackles such as power and desires will become the golden hoop on the head. When adults get nervous and fidgety, the hoop will become tighter and tighter, and even make it difficult for them to breathe.

In 'the Valley of the wind', Kushana is a typical representative of 'returning'. She used to be cruel and unkind, for example, after arriving at the Valley, she killed many innocent people indiscriminately. She even hoped the 'Giant Soldier 巨神兵' could help her rule the world, but when she was in danger, Nausicaä 娜烏西卡 did not give up rescuing her and saved her many times. This shocked her heart greatly, and

⁶¹ And this kind of maternal tender power is deeply related to *Laozi's* image of babies and the virtue of water 水德. Whether it is a baby, a child or the character of a mother, they will have a gentle appeal to the people around them and give them the most tender ethical concern.

⁶² Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979-1996*, p.148. Miyazaki says, '長子的出世總是讓我回想起自己的童年...次子甚至讓我審視自己選擇這份工作的理由, 還有我性格成形的過程, 他讓我比從前更了解自己.'

⁶³ Lai, Shi-San 賴錫三, '*Zhuangzi de tongxin youxi, Shidian zhuanhua, Lunli huhuan*' 《莊子》的童心遊戲、視點轉化、倫理呼喚, p. 78. The original quotation is, '能否放下(成人)權力主體的膨脹擴張, 謙卑柔軟而猶如孩童般地"專氣致柔(去自我化的柔軟身體)", 而讓自己被自然天地的氣韻所包容納受, 並同時成為自然氣韻生動的遊戲參贊者守護者.'

her kind-hearted nature was gradually revealed.

Sometimes the difficulties encountered by adults are not caused by external forces. On the contrary, they have fallen into a trap without knowing it, making themselves physically and mentally exhausted and unable to move forward. Therefore, the 'returning to babies' in *Laozi* tells people to return to chaotic virtues, seeking childlike innocence, eliminating one's own tact, and tenderly responding to others, so that they will not be hit, and will not revenge on others.

In 'Spirited Away', many people were moved by Chihiro's kindness and embarked on the road of 'returning'. For instance, with the help of Chihiro, the filthy River God regains a clean and comfortable body after bathing. After spitting out the dirt, the faceless man's pursuit of fame and desire also returned to peace, and he was relieved to work in Granny Qian's home. The employees in the Tangwu 湯屋 were originally only focused on profit, but when Chihiro rescued them from the faceless man's body, they were also very grateful. Granny Qian 錢婆婆 was very angry when she learned that Bai Long had stolen her seal, but Chihiro's sincere apology resolved the hatred in her heart.⁶⁴ While helping others, Chihiro also purified her heart and realized her return to her true nature, these are all based on mutual trust.

In 'Ponyo on the Cliff', Zongjie's mother Lisa 理薩 was very angry at first when she heard that her husband cannot go home to see them, but after hearing Zongjie's concern for Ponyo, she was awakened suddenly. She moved by Zongjie's worries and love for Ponyo, and cheered up again. From this, we can see that the power of children is incredible. It can even motivate adults, allowing adults who have always been self-conscious to break out of the stereotype of thinking, and learn to think and care about others like children.

In this film, Ponyo's father Fujimoto 藤本 hoped that through the power of magic, the era of the sea will come back to purify the world, because he hated humans who polluted the environment. However, this extremist mentality was finally moved by Zongsjie's pure love, so he says to Zongjie, 'I am sorry for everything before, May I shake hand with you?' As an adult, Fujimoto can reflect on himself and sincerely apologize to a five-year-old boy, it shows that his heart is also

⁶⁴ Granny Qian 錢婆婆 says to Bailong 白龍, 'I could overlook what you have done, but you must protect Chihiro carefully.'

purified by such sincerity.

The Granny Dora 朵拉婆婆 in the film 'Castle in the Sky' originally wanted to obtain the flying stone and had a very strong desire, but she gradually changed her opinions in the process of getting along with Pazu 巴魯 and Sheeta 希達. She was moved by their innocence and selflessness as well.⁶⁵ When the Castle was about to collapse, Dora did not immediately run away but waited for them to return, and worried about them. Miyazaki also says, 'The dedication, friendship and persistence of beliefs, courage and realization of ideals by the young people in the film are the common language that can move modern audiences.'⁶⁶ It is in the process of getting along with two children that Granny Dora gradually puts down her pursuit of desire, and became more calm and hopeful about her future life.

4.3.2. Adults who fail to return 復歸未果之成人

Also, in 'Castle in the Sky', Muska 穆斯卡 was a person who had not yet returned. He was full of tact and used the friendship between Pazu and Sheeta to achieve his own goals. Use the power of the army to go to Laputa, but after gaining strength and authority, he put them to death. Chapter 31 says, 'Do not regard them with delight, to regard them with delight, this is to enjoy the killing of men. 勝而不美, 而美之者, 是樂殺人.'⁶⁷ The rulers should take people's will as their own, being humble and modest, and then they can be called the sovereign of a country. What is more, 'Well, by enjoying the killing of men, one is unable to get what one wants in the world. 夫樂殺人者, 則不可得志於天下矣.'⁶⁸ Muska's final fate was also very painful. not only his eyes were injured, but also he fell into the sea. Why has Muska not returned? Actually, 'It is a difficult road for adults to return to their original nature, and they have to travel a long distance. Although it is not far away from life,

⁶⁵ Bazu says to Sheeta, 'Dora will not let me become a pirate. She's nature is much better than her appearance. When the war is over, she will definitely send you home.'

⁶⁶ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979-1996*, p.369. Miyazaki also says, '劇中少年對其他人的奉獻, 友情和堅持信念, 勇往直前, 實現理想的精神, 正是能感動現代觀眾的共通語言'

⁶⁷ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.78. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.68.

⁶⁸ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.78. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.68.

it is not an easy task.’⁶⁹ Adults have been affected by what they know and see for many years, and it is not a simple thing to let go of their inner attachment in a period. Only by making progress step by step, observing and waking up can we embark on the road of returning. Such a negative character image has also played a good role in alerting audiences.

5. The realistic significance of the concept of returning

Miyazaki's animated films are not made to follow the needs of the market and current trend. They often contain profound practical significance and have a deep sense of reflection and practical value to our society today. Most of his films are based on the role of a child protagonist. Except appealing to the returning of childlike innocent, we can also realize that different themes contain the same idea of ‘returning’.

5.1. Let go of greed and focus on the heart 放下貪慾，注重內心

Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司 considers,

The heart-mind of human beings is originally pure and perfect, but comes to be disturbed by all sorts of acquired desires and forms of knowledge. Consequently, a person must abandon desire and return to this original purity and perfection.⁷⁰

Therefore, ‘letting go of greed and focusing on the heart ’ is based on the perspective of the first returning thought mentioned above.

The theme of greed is very prominent in ‘Spirited Away’. For example, Granny Tang 湯婆婆 is a greedy boss who often observes gold or diamonds with a magnifying glass in her room. After the River God left, she hugged Chihiro 千尋, but the reason for gratitude turned out to be: ‘Well done! You helped me make a lot of money.’ She also asked all employees to hand in all the gold they picked up. Her way of dealing with things is based on profit first. Even if the faceless man 無臉男 had

⁶⁹ Lai, Shi-San 賴錫三, ‘Zhuangzi de tongxin youxi, Shidian zhuanhua, Lunli huhuan’ 《莊子》的童心遊戲、視點轉化、倫理呼喚, p. 104.

⁷⁰ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.130. Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司 considers, ‘人心原本清淨圓滿，因後天種種慾望與知識而被騷亂，故應捨棄人欲以復歸其原本的清淨圓滿’

eaten three people, Granny Tang still treated him respectfully so that she could get more benefits.

In 'Kiki's Delivery Service', Kiki 琪琪 firstly had a deep attachment to her appearance and the old magic broom she used, but her mother reminded her, 'The appearance is not so important, what matters is our mind.' In the film, Kiki lost her magic power for a while, and her original mind was lost. Encouraged by her friend Ursula, she regained her original mind, not only restored the magic, but also rescued others and brought happiness to others. This tells us, although life is full of hardships and difficulties, if we can experience the sublimation of self-worth after bringing happiness to others, it is actually a kind of satisfaction.

Bai Jing 白婧 believes that,

Laozi's 'returning to nature, unselfishness, tenderness' reminds people to learn to give up some selfish desires, to reflect more on themselves, to return to the essence of human beings, and to regain the tranquillity and peace of their mind, this is exactly the necessary compensation for the modern people's way of life.⁷¹

5.2. Maintain peace and oppose war 維護和平，反對戰爭

Regarding the theme of 'against the war', it is based on the perspective of the second returning thought mentioned above, which is to look at the present problems from a historical perspective and reflect on the consequences of what humans did in the past. War is cruel, and both nature and human beings are victims, so that we should think more about the significance of returning.

In 'Princess Mononoke', Ashitaka 阿席達卡 is the incarnation of justice. When he saw Huanji and Sang 桑 were fighting, he tried his best to persuade them: 'When a person's mind is full of hatred, it will be like this. The body will be corroded, and life is cursed by death. Let us stop letting hatred invade the soul anymore.' We can also see the fear sequelae left by the war in the films. For example, after the war,

⁷¹ Baijing 白婧, 'Qiantan Laozi "fugui yu yinger" dui xiandai shehui chushi fangshi de mibu' 淺談老子「復歸於嬰兒」對現代社會處世方式的彌補, *Nanfang lunkan* 南方論刊, 12 (2008), pp.86-87. The original quotation is: '老子的“返璞歸真、少私寡欲、貴柔守弱”，提醒人們學會放棄一些私欲，更多地反觀自身，回歸人的本質，讓自己重新找回寧靜，平和的赤子之心，這正是對現代人處世方式的必要彌補。’

soldiers squatted on the ground and hugged themselves, their faces were painful and trembling with fear; some soldiers were even bedridden, and more people have lost their homes for survival.



Picture6: from *Ghibli Roman Album*⁷²

Nausicaä 娜烏西卡, as a messenger of peace, was in sharp contrast with Kushana who was cruel. After occupying the valley of the wind, Kushanna killed the people wantonly, and Nausicaä had to compromise with her for the lives of villagers. In addition, with the hurt by the Dorumekian army 多魯美奇亞軍隊, people of Pejite 培吉特 were full of hatred, they even used a little king worm as bait to enrage king worm's family to attack the Valley of the Wind. However, they did not realize that every life is precious and could not be used and sacrificed in the war. Finally, Nausicaä used her life to resolve the conflict between humans and insects, and the people were also moved by her. As long as people have true sincerity, they can warm everyone's heart like melting the glaciers.

5.3. Get close to nature and live in harmony 親近自然, 和諧相處

Regarding the theme of 'being kind to nature', it is also based on the perspective of the second returning thought mentioned above. Facing the current problems of the greenhouse effect, ecological destruction and environmental pollution, people

⁷² Animage Editorial department, 'Princess Mononoke' in *Ghibli Roman Album* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company, 1997), p23.

should also review what they have done in the past. It is very important to minimize the harm to the environment and return to a state of living in harmony with nature.

Miyazaki's animation often reveals the destruction of the natural environment by the process of human civilization, and deeply remind people of the importance of living in harmony with nature. To purify this polluted world, the poisonous trees in 'the Valley of Wind' absorbed the poison into bodies and formed beautiful crystals, and then turned into sand and sank to the ground, while the insects are protecting the forest.⁷³ However, people did not know this, so they burned down the forest and drive out the insects. In fact, the forest and insects are the protectors of nature. We should realize that human beings and nature are a whole, and we must accommodate ourselves to heaven and earth, rather than against nature.

Miyazaki says, 'It is not like some conservationists who just blindly stand on the side of negating human society... Nausicaä regarded the life of insects as important as human life.'⁷⁴ Therefore, when she was dying, she moved all the king worms to stretch out countless golden tentacles to heal her wound. As *Laozi* says, 'Therefore the sage takes back his own person, and will personally be in the front. 是以聖人後其身而身先, 外其身而身存.'⁷⁵ Instead of considering her own safety, Nausicaä tried her best to prevent the invasion of king worms and resolve the conflicts between insects and humans.



Picture7: from Studio Ghibli⁷⁶

⁷³ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979~1996*, p.174.

⁷⁴ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979~1996*, p.448. Miyazaki says, '不像一些生態保育者只是一味地站在否定人類社會的那一邊...娜烏西卡把蟲的生命看得跟人類的生命一樣重要'

⁷⁵ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, p.62. Wang Bi annotated 王弼注, *Laozi daodejing* 老子道德經, p.17.

⁷⁶ Studio Ghibli 吉卜力工作室, <https://www.ghibli.jp/works/nausicaa/>, accessed 24 March 2021.

In 'Princess Mononoke', in order to gain divine power, people shot the head of the Mountain Beast God 山獸神 and snatched it away. After he became angry, plants all over the mountain withered immediately. Ashitaka 阿席達卡 and Sang 桑 made atonement on behalf of humans, retrieved the head and returned it to him, hoping that he could calm down his anger and forgive people. After the Mountain Beast God accepted the apology, new plants were growing on the barren mountain, this is the power of 'returning'. When people realize to correct their mistakes, nature will show kindness and acceptance in return.⁷⁷

If the 'Seven-Day Fire' in 'the Valley of Wind' implied nuclear war, and the scene of forest withering rapidly in 'Princess Mononoke' was a visual metaphor for a nuclear explosion, Miyazaki has always emphasized the important theme of symbiosis and co-prosperity between human and nature in his films, 'After the Fukushima nuclear accident, Miyazaki and Ghibli Studio publicly expressed their clear stand against nuclear power.'⁷⁸ They put up signs and walked on the streets to express their position that 'Ghibli films do not use nuclear power.'⁷⁹

In the film 'Spirited Away', they received a foul-smelling and muddy guest to take a bath. Everyone thought it was the God of decay, but it was actually a River God. Everyone worked together to pull out the garbage and waste furniture and so on, which were discarded by humans. It tells us that it was human pollution that made the River God foul-smelling and muddy. However, after the River God regains a clean and comfortable body after bathing, he gave Chihiro 千尋 a magic meatball to express his gratitude, which was also the appreciation from nature.

⁷⁷ Just like in the film 'the Valley of Wind', after the resentment was eliminated, the wind of the valley was restored, and it could continue to provide power for human production. All these tell us, the inner mind of humans and the external environment is closely related, and the truth and spirit in it can only be realized by human beings themselves.

⁷⁸ Qin Gang 秦剛, *Wind Catcher-Hayao Miyazaki: The Depth of Animated films* 捕風者宮崎駿：動畫電影的深度, p.260.

⁷⁹ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979~1996*, p.371. Many objects and materials in the films also reflect the concept of 'returning to simplicity and being close to nature.' The protagonist of 'Castle in the Sky' did not use electric lights, but oil lamps or gas lamps; there is no tap water, but the spring water and the water in the well are both clear. The vehicles are powered by wind. For example, Bazu's ornithopter and Nausicaä's hang glider are not aircraft made of steel and iron, but handmade products that integrate with nature.



Picture8: from *Ghibli Roman Album*⁸⁰

The so-called ‘Going back to the source is an eternal regularity, gaining knowledge of eternal regularity is called clarity. Failing to know eternal regularity and acting recklessly will lead to trouble. 復命曰常，知常曰明。不知常，妄作凶.’⁸¹When we get along with nature,

human beings must restrain their own perceptions and adopt a more comprehensive and objective way to understand the world... We should establish the idea of ‘returning’ and respect the reversion of nature, that is, circularity.⁸²

Therefore, humans should not condescend to ‘protect nature’, but rely on the great motherhood of nature and have a reverence for it.⁸³

6.Conclusion

Based on the content we discussed before, we can fully connect the concept of ‘returning to babies’ in *Laozi* and the concept of ‘returning to innocence’ in Miyazaki's animation. The characteristics of the baby image in *Laozi*: innocent and simple, tranquil and tender, unprincipled knowing and objectless desires and

⁸⁰ Animage Editorial department, ‘Spirited Away’ in *Ghibli Roman Album* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company, 2001), p61.

⁸¹ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介, p.124, 132.

⁸² Liu Weijie 劉偉傑, Yan Wenhui 閔文輝, ‘Laozi guanfu sixiang jiqi shengtai wenming yiyun’ 老子「觀復」思想及其生態文明意蘊, *Daojiao yu dangdai shehui* 道教與當代社會, 5 (2020), p.28. The quotation is, ‘人類有必要克制自己的知見，採取更加全面客觀的方式來認識世界...我們要樹立復歸思維，要尊重自然界的復歸性即循環性.’

⁸³ Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979~1996*, p.522. Miyazaki’s personal view on nature also makes us have a deeper reflection. He says, ‘If we only stop at calling everyone to protect nature, otherwise nature will disappear, that is actually an arrogant statement. I think nature should have a more terrible side...We must not forget, in the history of mankind, the power of forests had far surpassed us.’

vigorous are all manifested in different degrees in the child protagonists of Miyazaki's animation. Although they are very young, their sincere and gentle power is enough to make them face difficulties bravely and solve problems. They have the original mind to help others, rescue others, and sometimes even sacrifice their own lives without regret. These children, without the desire and intentions of adulthood, treat everything with sincerity and this is the essence of the concept of 'returning'.

By further expanding and sublimating the thought of 'returning to babies', we can find that *Laozi's* thought of 'Guanfu 觀復' is closely related to this. Fukunaga Mitsuji's views encouraged us to examine the thought of 'returning' from two perspectives. One is based on the human's original mind, observing whether one's mind has been affected by acquired desires and knowledge and is far away from simplicity and purity; the other is to return to 'the Dao of simplicity' from the perspective of history or time. When we combine these two perspectives with the realistic significance of Miyazaki's animation, we will find that among the three themes that Miyazaki calls for, the 'Greed Theme' belongs to the first perspective, while the 'Anti-war Theme' and 'Natural Theme' belong to the second perspective. They all have not only the thought of 'returning' as a theoretical basis, but also examples as evidence, allowing readers and audiences to have a bidirectional and holistic understanding of *Laozi's* content and Miyazaki's animated films.

However, we must know, *Laozi's* thought of 'returning' is not blindly backwards, but the 'circulate' concept of moving forward after returning. As for adults, they need to have the ability to discern and cope with the current complex environment, and be able to see through the essence of things. Nevertheless, they still have to keep an original childlike mind. Only in this way can they avoid subjective judgment, let go of tact, and face the world with an accepting heart.

Therefore, the concept of 'returning' should be understood as a dialectical or cyclical system of thought. Moreover, how to achieve a dynamic balance between 'returning to simplicity', 'improving oneself' and 'sustainable development' is of vital importance to every person, each group, and each country. If we can face and deal with problems with a simple, tender, and tolerant attitude, there is no doubt that nature and mankind can coexist and prosper harmoniously.

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Appendix

Picture 9: Ponyo and Zongjie in 'Ponyo on the Cliff'



Picture 10: Ashitaka in 'Princess Mononoke'

