



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

<i>Student Name: Ruisi Wang</i>	
<i>Module Code: SICH4007</i>	<i>Student number:2000458</i>
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Implications for modern environmental protection of the thought “Disciplining the desires”

Nowadays, the world is facing a serious environmental condition, such as Greenhouse effect, climate change, loss of biodiversity, air pollution, etc. We are facing seriously environment problems. On a cursory thought, environmental protection seems to have little to do with us. But it is a wrong thought.

withdrawal of fluid lava from beneath a solidified crust of rock; mining; pumping of subsurface fluids, such as groundwater or petroleum; all can cause subsidence

Supported by modern environmental research and theory, we have done many kinds of effects to protect the environment. But there are still some issues that we can't do anything about. So can we learn from the experience of other civilizations in order to go further in environmental protection?

Why we should learn wisdom from *Daodejing* from ancient Chinese?

First, Ancient China was an agrarian society, and agriculture has been the foundation for 5,000 years. Therefore the ancient Chinese had to live in harmony with nature. They had a wealth of experience in this regard.

Secondly, ancient Chinese people used traditional wisdom in their daily lives ~~as a way of life~~, not just on an academic level. This wisdom is the guiding spirit in every family's life and production activities and has practical value.

Why should we learn from *Daodejing*?

The thought of "harmony between nature and human" in the *Daodejing* is suitable to our needs.

What is “天人和諧”

Laozi thought: Human beings are a part of nature, and all human behaviors should follow the laws of nature. Nature is the external environment and conditions on which human society relies for its survival and development, and human beings are closely related to nature and get along with it at all times. Therefore, for the survival and development of human society, it is

necessary to get the harmony between human and nature.

见素抱朴

The idea of harmony between heaven and man has expressed during the whole text of Laozi, and it is difficult to explain it all clearly in 10 minutes. Therefore, I have chosen a part of the whole thought, which is 见素抱朴 as the main content of my explanation today.

What is 见素抱朴?

Disciplining the desires is a thought from Chapter 11 of the Daodejing. The Chinese characters are “見素抱樸”. “見” means see. “抱” means the act that hold something in the arms, and also have the meaning of maintain. “素” is the filament without any color.

“樸” is the wood without any sculpture. Although 素 and 樸 is two different kinds of things, Laozi put them here together to typify the condition without much human involvement. So discipline our desires means maintain such condition, this condition is infinitely near the "Dao". In Laozi's view, "Dao" is the substratum of all things. If we recognize the substratum, we can also recognize all things. If we recognize all things, then hold their substratum "Dao" as our living state, then we can not meet any dangers.

We have known what “見素抱樸” is, but why should we do like this? Using this thought in environmental protection, we can understand clearly that the nature resources of our planet are finitude. If we realized this truth and take it as the substratum of using resources, then we will use resources carefully, then we will not face the desiccate problem of nature resources as fast as nowadays. The thought of disciplining desires is showed as knowing what is enough in our daily life. If we want to be able to moderate the thought in our lives, we need to be content and stop.

How did people apply this idea to their lives in ancient China? Here is a story. During the Spring and Autumn Period, there was a king of the state of Lu, Duke Xuan of Lu, who had a minister named Li Ge. In the summer, when fish were breeding, Duke Xuan went to a waterhole to fish with a net. When Li Ge saw this, he cut his net and reasoned with him that when fish breed, they should not be replenished, and when trees are cut down, new branches should not be cut down, for the sake of the reproduction of all living things. The officials who are in charge of fishing and hunting usually ask the people of the country to do the same, so you should do the same. After hearing this, Duke Xuan of Lu lamented, “It's great that there is someone to correct me when I make a mistake.” However, in ancient China, this idea was not found only among the kings and ministers. Rather, it was made into a law that all people were required to follow together. These laws are all about people moderating their desires and

knowing when is enough and when to stop. Let people not disturb the rhythms of life of things in nature for the sake of momentary convenience and simplicity.

how can we follow this thought nowadays?

Make agriculture sustainable : Agricultural businesses can develop climate-resilient crops, harness Indigenous knowledge to develop sustainable farming methods and better manage the use of pesticides and fertilizers to avoid harming soil health. Consumers can embrace regional, seasonal and plant-rich diets, and include more soil-friendly food in meals, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas and peas. Countries could adopt a life-cycle approach to redesign plastic products to ensure they can be reused, repurposed, repaired, recycled – and ultimately kept out of the ocean.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is important that 見素抱樸 can provide methods for modern environmental protection. It can provide experience for modern environment protection events. I hope we can draw on the wisdom and experience from ancient peoples. To promote environmental protection further and to protect our home.