

VALUES AND LIMITATIONS OF LAO TZU'S DIALECTICAL IDEOLOGY ON THE WORLD

VALORES E LIMITAÇÕES DA IDEOLOGIA DIALÉTICA DE LAO TZU NO MUNDO

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Abstract: Taoist is a significant philosophical movement in the history of ancient Chinese ideology. It has a profound influence not only on the culture of China but also on the ideology and cultural traditions of many Asian countries. The formation and development of the Taoist school of philosophy are associated with the names of many great philosophers such as Lao Tzu, Duong Tzu, Trang Tzu, etc. which Lao Tzu is the ancestor of the Taoist school. Lao Tzu is a unique phenomenon in the history of ancient China philosophy. He is considered the “half-myth” ideologist of the world, the number one dialectician of the entire Eastern philosophy. His ideology is expressed in only about 5.000 words of the Tao Te Ching but has made a deep impression on many generations from now on. Researching ancient documents and scholarly studies over the past hundred years shows that Lao Tzu’s dialectical ideology about the world greatly values the development of Eastern ideology. Based on the analysis of ancient documents, the judgments and evaluations of scholars, especially the study of the Tao Te Ching, this study clarifies Lao Tzu’s dialectical ideology about the world, and determines the value of this ideology; at the same time, it points out some limitations so that readers

can have a more comprehensive view of Lao Tzu’s dialectical ideology in particular and Taoist ideology in general.

Keywords: Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching. Taoist. Dialectical ideology about the world. Values and limitations.

Resumo: Taoísta é um movimento filosófico significativo na história da antiga ideologia chinesa. Tem uma profunda influência não apenas na cultura da China, mas também na ideologia e nas tradições culturais de muitos países asiáticos. A formação e o desenvolvimento da escola de filosofia taoísta estão associados aos nomes de muitos grandes filósofos, como Lao Tzu, Duong Tzu, Trang Tzu, etc. Lao Tzu é o ancestral da escola taoísta. Lao Tzu é um fenômeno único na história da filosofia da China antiga. Ele é considerado o ideólogo “meio-mito” do mundo, o dialético número um de toda a filosofia oriental. Sua ideologia é expressa em apenas cerca de 5.000 palavras do Tao Te Ching, mas deixou uma profunda impressão em muitas gerações a partir de agora. A pesquisa de documentos antigos e estudos acadêmicos nos últimos cem anos mostra que a ideologia dialética de Lao Tzu sobre o mundo valoriza muito o desenvolvimento da ideologia oriental. Com base na análise de documentos antigos, julgamentos e avaliações de estudiosos, especialmente o estudo do Tao Te Ching, este estudo esclarece a ideologia dialética de Lao Tzu sobre o mundo e determina o valor dessa ideologia; ao mesmo tempo, aponta algumas limitações para que os leitores possam ter uma visão mais abrangente da ideologia dialética de Lao Tzu em particular e da ideologia taoísta em geral.

Palavras-chave: Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching. Taoísta. Ideologia dialética sobre o mundo. Valores e limitações.

1. Introduction

Lao Tzu was a great philosopher and ideologist, who had a great influence and importance on Eastern philosophy as well as later mankind. It can be said that he is comparable to Confucius and some other thinkers in the history of ancient Chinese philosophy; even, somewhat more (CAO XUAN HUY, 1995). Therefore, the doctrine as well as the ideology of Lao Tzu has an important position and has a great influence on specific ideology trends. Because, at all times, Lao Tzu was respected by the Chinese people, unlike Mac Tzu whose name was lost for two thousand years; somewhat more than Confucius because he has not been brutally slaughtered like the Confucian family in seven or eight decades; but since 165 (after the Han Dynasty) was still worshiped by Taoism as Thai Thuong Lao Quan, one of their three supreme gods (these three gods are Ngoc Thanh Nguyen Thuy Thien Ton, Thuong Thanh Linh Bao Thien Ton, and Thai Thanh Dao Duc Thien Ton. Thai Thanh Tao Duc Thien Ton is also Thai Thuong Lao Quan (VU HONG VAN, 2017; VAN, 2022). His temple is Thai Thanh Cung, according to legend built in the place where he was born, and is still in Ha Nam province (China) today; the scent of smoke may be cold by now, but his four-meter-tall statue may still be there (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 05).

However, he has a very complicated and ambiguous biography. Even many scholars and historians have put forward many theories that doubt the accuracy and existence of Lao Tzu. So, is Lao Tzu a half-historical, half-mythical figure? (A Japanese scholar named TAN DIEN TA HUU CAT – denies everything that Lao Tzu is a legendary man who does not exist! (CAO XUAN HUY, 1995, p. 06). That is why there are many traditions. The story of Lao Tzu with different folklore beliefs, somehow, people turned him into a different fairy with details such as: born smiling; his mother was pregnant with him 70 years he was born, so his hair was white when he was born; merged with Lao Lai Tu; he went to the western gate (China) to leave the Tao Te Ching and transcendence; lived in silence and have a life expectancy of over 200 years; in the Lao Tzu Minh of Bien Thieu, people say that Lao Tzu has existed for all eternity, he is the Man of Heaven; and in the transformation, Sutra, Lao Tzu is not only from eternity, that he is God, he has come down to earth many times to save the human body; there are even books that claim that the Buddha is the incarnation or disciple of Lao Tzu (NHAN TU NGUYEN VAN THI, 2015).

2. Literature Review

According to historical records of Sima Thien, Lao Tzu was from Khuc Nhan village, Huong Le, Ho district, Chu country (in present Nhan province); family name Ly, name Nhi, self-name is Ba Duong, name Thuy (name at death) is Dam; served as a historical official and kept the bookstore of the Zhou Dynasty. Until now, people are still vague about the year of his birth and death, only knowing about 580 - 500 BC, belonging to the Spring and Autumn Warring States period (around the end of Spring and Autumn to the beginning of the Warring States period), living at the same time as Confucius. Today we know this through the story of Confucius who met with Lao Tzu when he went to the capital of the Zhou Dynasty to learn about the ceremony. When he returned to the house, Confucius said to his disciples: “Điều ngô tri kỳ năng phi, ngư ngô tri kỳ năng du; thú ngô tri kỳ năng tẩu. Tẩu giả khả dĩ vi võng, du khả giả dĩ vi luân, phi giả khả dĩ vi tăng. Chí ư long, ngô bất năng tri kỳ thừa phong vân thượng thiên. Ngô kim nhật kiến Lão tử, kỳ do long da?”. Meaning: “The bird I know can fly; the fish, I know it can wade; beast, I know it can run. When you run, you can search, when you wade, you can catch a net, when you fly, you can shoot arrows; come like dragons, the time I cannot know; it rides the clouds to the sky. Today I met Lao Tzu, he really is a dragon”. This story is widely cited in books as well as research papers on the biography of Lao Tzu (THU GIANG, NGUYEN DUY CAN, 1974, p. 18; NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 7)

When learning about Lao Tzu's biography through reading and referring to documents, the writer himself also sees such confusion and complexity. But this, I think, can somehow be easily explained. That confusion and complexity are closely related and true to Lao Tzu's theory. Scholar Thu Giang Nguyen Duy Can say that, because of the ideology of “vô danh” (no name), “vô vi” (not doing), “thiện hành vô triệt tích” (go skillfully without leaving traces), and “vi nhi bất thị” (doing without relying on merit), so Lao Tzu deliberately concealed his identity and did not want his biography to be known to future generations and he succeeded (LY MINH TUAN, 2010, p. 06).

Besides, we need to see that: details about Lao Tzu such as his name, where he was born, legends or conceptions about him, etc. are not as important as learning and drawing. get the ideas as well as morality in his Tao Te Ching. All other things about Lao Tzu are secondary. Therefore, the writer does not want to go deeper into this issue, but to find the core content that his work leaves

for posterity. Because for one thing, the Tao Te Ching with about 5.000 words (about ten, or fifteen pages of the book) that makes posterity through so many generations have to wonder, spend their minds to learn and ponder like that, can be said to be unprecedented in history. This is the key and important thing! Because of this issue, we see that there will be a lot of things to discuss, even arguing about hometown, surname, title, life expectancy, Lao Tzu and Confucius meet or not. Did Confucius ask Lao Tzu about Ritual? Is Lao Tzu, Lao Lai Tzu, or not? Is Lao Tzu a crown Prince Dam or not?

Today, it is believed that the Tao Te Ching was written after the reigns of Hui Thi and Cong Ton Long (ie, after the 4th century BC), with the original name being Lao Tzu's book. Here, there are a few related issues, to be clarified: First, there is not necessarily a connection between Lao Tzu and the appearance of the book Lao Tzu (Tao Te Ching). Because, according to scholar Feng You Lan (Phung Huu Lan), there may have been an appearance of a figure named Lao Tzu in the Warring States period, but that does not mean that he was the author of the Tao Te Ching. Because many people believe that Tao Te Ching appeared later, not at the same time as Lao Tzu. Second, in the History of Chinese Philosophy, scholar Feng You Lan said that: The appearance of the Tao Te Ching was during the warring states period with his arguments. But later, in the brief history of Chinese philosophy, he denied that and said that the Tao Te Ching must have appeared after the reign of Hui Thi and Cong Ton Long. The writer himself, subjectively, thinks that this hypothesis is somewhat more accurate (PHUNG HUU LAN, 2013, p. 108-109).

The Tao Te Ching has 81 chapters, about 5.000 words long, consisting of two parts, the Upper and Lower Sutra. The Upper Sutra is the Tao Sutra consisting of 37 chapters, discussing the great Tao from which the universe was born. The Xia Sutra is 44 chapters of the Te sutra that deal with virtue - which is the energy of the Tao circulating in the universe.

The Tao Te Ching is written in long and short sentences, rich in tone, and reads like a free verse today: Concise, with no punctuation, no reasoning, no verbose proof. The form used is a short, short form of writing, with few words, and many ideas, easy to memorize but not easy to understand. Therefore, it seems only to suggest and force the reader to meditate, visualize, and listen to the echoes from his heart. Readers have many opportunities to continue the creative and thinking process, making the work vivid, ingrained, and developed forever with each reading (NGUYEN UOC, 2009, p. 362)

On the other hand, it is believed that the original part of the Tao Te Ching today is not quite like that. In a way, through the passage of time, this work must have had some addition, omission, or confusion. But whether this work is more or less original is not as important as the fact that the work still has an arrangement and a relatively orderly system according to each subject (CHI-YU JEN & CHAO-PENG CHUNG, 1991). In addition to the two main themes of Tao and Te (including the author's cosmology and epistemology), Tao Te Ching also includes many other topics such as the way of sages receive and behave in the right way ruling over the country, military tactics, astronomy, nursing (which in this essay will be mentioned a lot), etc. (NGUYEN UOC, 2009, p. 362).

3. Methods

Vietnam today, in order to study Lao Tzu's dialectical ideology about the world is mainly focused on the commentaries on the book Tao Te Ching by a number of scholars well versed in Chinese characters, which focuses on the Dao Duc Kinh translated and commented on by Thu Giang and Nguyen Duy Can be published in 1974 and the book Tao Te Ching was translated and commented by Nguyen Hien Le in 1998.

In addition, in order to learn more about Lao Tzu's dialectical ideology about the world, the author also researched a number of books by Chinese and Vietnamese authors who have studied Lao Tu's ideology such as Ho Fusan (1995); Cao Xuan Huy (1995); Phan Ngoc (2001 & 2002); Nguyen Uoc (2009); Ly Minh Tuan (2010), etc.

To analyze the basic contents of Lao Tzu's dialectical ideology about the world, the author also uses a number of research methods of the major such as analysis-synthesis; inductive-deductive; logic-history, etc.

From the research perspective of dialectical materialism, the author will make arguments, analyze and evaluate the values of Lao Tzu's dialectical ideology, and point out the limitations of this ideology. The studies in this article will certainly be controversial and will be clarified in future studies.

4. Results and Discussion

The conception of the origin of the world

First of all, Lao Tzu used “Tao” to refer to the origin of the universe, the ancestor of all living things. He calls it “the eternal Tao”, the “unnamed Tao” (HO FUSAN, 1995). Unlike anything else, the “permanent Tao” is the eternal, unchanging, substantive Tao, so it is difficult to say clearly about it. One can only use intuition to understand a part of it. The Tao is beginningless and endless, so “...you can’t see the head when you pick it up, you can’t see the tail when you follow it”. Lao Tzu is a very mysterious thing, out of the world, unable to use words and concepts to speak and perceive it, and is a supernatural, mysterious, incomprehensible, absolute spiritual entity (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 9).

In fact, according to Lao Tzu, Tao is the origin of the world (universe) and is still material, still real, not supernatural. He wrote: “Tao is something... profound and dark, but inside there is an essence, that quality is very real and very believable” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 10); “... can be considered as the mother of all things in the world, etc. (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 11). Author Phan Ngoc commented: “Nothing is here, according to the author’s interpretation fake, and at the same time the natural religion, etc. there’s nothing mysterious about it” (PHAN NGOC, 2002, p. 11).

So “ordinary Tao” is the name used to refer to the deep origin of the material world, just as Marxist-Leninist philosophy calls matter the philosophical category used to refer to objective reality (LENIN, 1980, p. 323). Lao Tzu says Tao is the “nameless”. Those with names, which are already concrete, are no longer the origin of the universe, but the manifestation, the form of the Tao is the essence of the universe. He called it “The way of the way” which had a name. We call these different forms of matter. It can be said that, by his genius intuition, Lao Tzu correctly conjectured that the origin of the universe cannot be attributed to anything concrete (“there is almost nothing like it”), just as we argued that matter could not be identified with any particular object, because “... electrons are as infinite as atoms, nature is infinite” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, P. 14).

These are some of the basic meanings of Lao Tzu’s concept of Tao. Accordingly, the ontological Tao is eternal and unchanging, and the concrete Tao is constantly changing.

In addition, in terms of use, Tao is also a universal law that governs all things and phenomena in the real world. Therefore, the Tao is the refuge of all things (because the way embraces all things), the precious treasure of the good people, the refuge of the bad people, and “although hidden, no one can despise it”. Here, in a sense, it is the same as saying that objective laws cannot be disregarded. Lao Tzu’s ideology of acting and ruling the country according to “Natural Tao” proves that Tao is an objective law.

In short, Tao in Lao Tzu’s philosophy is not something “mysterious”, not real, but a material origin like the original essence of the universe. It manifests itself in the natural world with a multitude of different things, phenomena, and processes; They interact with each other, creating objective laws that humans must follow to survive in the long run. Therefore, the abstraction of the origin of the universe into Tao here is an abstraction from nature itself, not from pure ideology as in Hegel (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel).

The dialectical relationship between “Tao” and “Te”

“Te” is understood as “virtue”. In ancient China, the word "virtue " was widely used and mainly used to refer to the virtues required in people such as virtue, faith, loyalty, filial piety, etc. Confucius said that the king must be five essential virtues: bow, patience, faith, motherhood, and wisdom. Later, Confucianism talked about the five virtues - benevolence, respect, gratitude, knowledge, and faith - in the same sense (PHAN NGOC, 2002).

In the Tao Te Ching, the word “Te” (Virtue) has a different meaning: Virtue is the inherent and natural nature of the Five Elements such as water is cold, flows down low, etc, fire is hot, rises high, etc. The word Virtue is understood in the most general sense as the basic and natural nature needed in all things in order for everything to be it, not something else. Depending on whether the object is a thing or a person, Virtue is understood as an inherent characteristic (of things) or moral (of people).

First of all, Virtue is the substance of things through which we know the existence of things. But things are the manifestation of the Tao in the universe, which is “Tao can be reached”, so Virtue is not separate from Tao. Therefore, it is Virtue that nourishes all things after they are born

by the Tao. For example, a fish that used to live in water but can no longer swim (due to injury or stranded) will sooner or later die (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, P. 14).

In humans, Virtue is morality (like the word Virtue in the four virtues of Confucianism), and is the expression of Tao in each person. Virtue is the essence, the most precious thing of man. He called the basic human virtues treasures, which are words, thrift, and not daring to stand in front of people (humility). On the other hand, Lao Tzu pays more attention to the virtues of saints - the virtues of those who have attained the path of “no-action”, impartiality, industriousness, and not relying on merit. He wrote: “Tao gives birth to all things, virtue surrounds, nurtures, nurtures and matures, protects all things, etc. but does not take possession of them, works without relying on merit, and lets all things grow on their without mastery, so-called magical virtue” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 23). In Lao Tzu’s ideology, a person with profound virtue is called a sage of wu-wei (nonaction), who does nothing intentionally, but only follows nature.

Thus, both Lao Tzu’s conceptions of Tao and Virtue clearly show their dialectical nature, which is the unity of opposites in one entity. The Tao is both very abstract because it is invisible, beginningless, and infinite, and concrete because it is the mother of all things. On the other hand, Tao is unchanging because it is the essence of the universe, the “no”, but also changeable because it is natural, the “yes”. Tao is both “doing nothing”, seemingly useless, and “doing”, extremely useful. In Lao Tzu’s ideology, Virtue is the unification of its concrete and abstract sides. When Virtue is the virtue of things and people, it is concrete. But when Virtue is ordinary Virtue, fanciful Virtue, it is very abstract because it is difficult to feel; you have to understand and follow the “no-action” way to know what is magical virtue.

Moreover, Tao and Te (Virtue) are two sides of a unified whole of the universe and everything. It is another manifestation of Lao Tzu’s dialectical ideology. Indeed, according to the above analysis, it can be understood that Tao and Virtue are two categories that are inseparable but are always linked (“Dharma comes from Tao”), just as we understand the specific law is a specific manifestation of the most general law. On the other hand, because the Tao manifests itself in a variety of things, and each thing has its virtue as an inherent ability to exist, the relationship between Tao and Virtue is like the relationship between the general and the particular.

For people, that unity is even more evident, because people with virtue are people with Tao and vice versa. It is the Tao of wu - wei with the following requirements: pure, simple, honest, not

pretentious, and carefree like nature. Human virtue is reflected in the practice of natural religion in life. The better the practice of Tao, the more virtuous people become, because “doing nothing” is the most beneficial method for people and things. Based on the nature of the Tao, Lao Tzu advises the rulers of the people to grasp the Tao and follow it in order to have virtue.

Heaven and earth all things originate from the Tao and return to the Tao. This shows that the biochemical process of things has no end from the point of view of nihilism but is a constant transformation thanks to the principle of internal contradiction. Objects with the same switch, objects with polar opposites. This is the law of counterbalanced balance - the principle of operation and change of things. Indeed, the Tao is a movement, constantly changing to give birth to the universe of all things. Perhaps that is why everything is by its very nature a constant movement. Or to put it this way, everything is in a state of motion, so it loses its balance, loses its balance, so it returns to find its balance.

If above, we understand the Tao as a principle that operates the universe non-stop and is the mother of all things, then here, we talk about the “movement” of the Tao, which is the way back or comes back of Tao (“Phản giả Đạo chi Động” – Returning to Tao’s action) (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998). This is one of the important points in Lao Tzu’s ideology, overcoming the dualistic learning of Yi and advocating the Tao (“Quy Chân phản Phác”). According to Lao Tzu’s ideology, all things move in two opposite directions: Going out, then returning. When talking about the Tao’s principle of creation and the way to create all things (or the use of the Tao), Lao Tzu also relies on Yi Hoc’s theory of “Tai Chi is born heaven and earth”. Lao Tzu said: Tao gives birth to First, First gives birth to Two, Two gives birth to Three, Three gives birth to all things meaning: Tao gives birth to First (ie the only position of the Tao, the great power of the divine or according to translation called Tai Chi). First gives birth to Two (ie, two qi of Yin - Yang or heaven and earth). The Two give birth to Three (ie, the qi pulse between the two forces of Yin-Yang and nowhere). Three give birth to all things (ie, the Eight-sign figure or the Eight Trigrams). In all things, there is nothing that does not carry Yin and Yang. Multiplying each other’s differences and making peace with each other (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998)

Thus, here the origin of the Tao is the “static” resource. In other words, static is the resource of movement, from being in the state of nothingness (static), everything is biochemical

(dynamic), and then back to void (the law of Phản Phục¹). Since then, Lao Tzu has advocated an unconditioned way of life, the purpose is to “Return to the resource to serve destiny”, and furthermore, to reach the Tao of “ordinary” (immutable, always right). Understanding and grasping this principle, human beings can somehow compare with heaven and earth (because in the hidden meaning of the Tao “ordinary” has already said that), and grasp all the clues of the universe of all things!

It can be said that the unity between Tao and Virtue is the theoretical basis for the unity between natural Tao and human Tao in Lao Tzu’s philosophy. This is also the core content throughout the Tao Te Ching and is the most basic thing he wants to leave for posterity. His ideology of Tao and Virtue (Te) actually contains dialectical ideas, reflecting the close connection between the aspects and components of things and the universe in general. It represents the very high level of abstract thinking of the ancient Chinese.

The concept of contradiction

Lao Tzu’s dialectic is the development of ideology about change in the “Yi Jing” (I Ching). According to him, the whole world is in a constant great transition. The term “long Tao” in Tao Te Ching is often synonymous with “Ching” which it is the transformation and change of all things. In that movement, that transformation is all relative, just one stage of an endless stream of transformation. The movement of things is not chaotic but obeys the inevitable laws of creation. These are strict laws, nothing is outside of that rule, including heaven, earth, and gods.

When reading the Tao Te Ching, we always encounter the image of Tao in the form of things and phenomena of the natural world; they are not immutable things, but always moving, changing, and transforming each other. He wrote: “All things in the world were born from yes, and from nothing, they were born” (THU GIANG & THAI DUY CAN, 1974, p. 17; NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 15).

¹ The laws of “Phản Phục” (reaction and submission) are immutable laws governing all changes in the world. Lao Tzu calls it “Thường” (Permanent), meaning that which never changes. The words “Phản” (reaction) and “Phục” (submission), also mean returning to Nature, returning to the Tao in oneself.

The transformation here is the “return to the origin” of things and is the inherent law of all things. Those are just processes that repeat themselves cyclically in the universe - rising and falling, full moon and waning, spring summer autumn winter, etc. Returning to the origin, according to him, is returning to destiny and is the natural law of all things. Knowing natural law is wise, not knowing it will cause harm.

It is the constant change of things that leads to the inevitable existence of opposites in each thing, for the thing is not necessarily just this or that, but at the same time, it is it and is not it follows the style of “in yang, there is negative, in yin, there is yang”, not according to relativism. Therefore, he wrote: “...yes and not produce each other; easy and difficult create each other; short and long clarify each other; high and low depend on each other; sound and sound harmonize; before and after follow each other” (THU GIANG & NGUYEN DUY CAN, 1974, p. 17). It is the conception of the inherent contrast in things, whose most common principle is the opposition and unity between “yes and no” (being and non-being). According to him, “nothing exists purely, apart from its opposite; in one opposite already contained the germ of the other and vice versa. Therefore, “yes” and “no” are of the same origin (Tao). Therefore, misfortune is the foundation of happiness, happiness is the hiding place of misfortune... happiness is not certain, etc” (THU GIANG & NGUYEN DUY CAN, 1974, p. 17).

It is on the basis of understanding the law of “being and non-being”, and being - nothing is “the same origin”, Lao Tzu has proven that not only “have” is useful, but also “no” has a place. He is indeed a man of dialectical thinking because he sees both the “yes” and “no” sides of things and the organic unity between them. Therefore, Lao Tzu is right when he advises people to settle for difficult things when they are easy, practice big things from a young age, as well as prevent problems from a young age, and treat chaos from an early age.

Thus, according to his concept, all things contain internal contradictions and development is the mutual transformation of opposites in things. However, here it can only be understood that one side transforms into the other, not the two sides move to a higher level to form a new contradiction in the development process. That makes his dialectical concept not yet thorough.

The Law of “Quân Bình”² and the Law of “Phản Phục”

The whole universe, according to Lao Tzu’s ideology, is governed by two universal laws: the law of “Quân bình” and the law of “Phản Phục”. The law of “Quân bình” is to keep the movement balanced without allowing anything to be excessive, biased, or inadequate. What is missing will be filled, what is curved will be straight, what is loose will be easily filled, and what is old will be renewed. That is the Tao of nature.

The symbol of the law of “Quân bình” is water. Water has a soft nature, it flows in when it meets an empty space when it is full, it flows out. It avoids high and seeks low. So it flows endlessly day and night, rising up into the rain that permeates all things, down below, it becomes rivers and creeks watering all living things.

It is thanks to the law of “Quân bình” that all things exist, constantly changing according to a certain, natural order. The law of “Quân Bình” opposes that which is excessively contrary to the harmony of nature. To fight the excess, it often uses softness to prevail, and weakness to overcome strength: “Standing up on your heels will not stand firm. If you split your legs, you won’t be able to walk. If you consider yourself bright, you are not bright. If you consider yourself right, it is not right” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p.15).

According to Lao Tzu, in the process of movement and change, the inevitable tendency of all things is to return to the Tao, to return to stillness and space according to the law of “Tao”. Lao Tzu called that law “Phản Phục”. According to Lao Tzu’s ideology, the law of “Phản Phục” has two meanings:

Reverence means that all things change and exchange for each other in a regular, successive, endless rhythmic cycle like the four seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter changing and are two sides of a unified whole of the universe and everything is always “blurred”, at birth, at death, at weak, at strong, at full, when empty... under the influence of the law of “Phản Phục”, whenever “When Yin reaches its climax, it gives birth to Yang. When Yang reaches its climax, it gives birth to Yin”, the moon is full, then the moon is waning, etc.

² The Law of “Quân bình” (Equilibrium) is the most universal law, it is present at all times and in all places. It governs all changes in the universe whether at the macroscopic level in the world of celestial bodies or at the microscopic level in the subatomic world. It governs all human behavior and activities.

“Phản Phục” also means to return to the Tao, naturally, unconditioned. Return to the Tao of Nature. “Vô vi” (Non-action) is to return to one’s nature, not excessive or inadequate. Thus, “doing nothing, but doing”. The return to nature, non-action, and stillness is inevitable because: “Heavy is the origin of light, static is the origin of motion”. “To the extreme, space is to remain firmly in the stillness”. “All things are born together; I see it returning to its origin” Oh, everything returns to its origin (THU GIANG & NGUYEN DUY CAN, 1974, p.15).

According to Lao Tzu, if you do not return to the natural Tao, Non-action Tao, and deliberately interfere with the natural nature of creation, you are doomed to failure: “If the sky is not clear, it will break. Unsettled land will fall. A cave that is not full will dry up. Things that do not live will come to an end” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 1998, p. 16)

Therefore, the return to the Tao means the integration, and identification with the quiet, rustic, simple, nature of the Tao. This also means that the Tao has been kept for a long time.

All things fluctuate and change, according to Lao Tzu, they have their origin in the things themselves. Everything is a unity of two opposites, both in harmony and in conflict, both in opposition and in relation to each other, mutually inclusive and indispensable. Lao Tzu wrote: “In all things, there is not a single thing that does not carry yin, carry yang, and merge into one another by mutual conflict”.

Just like “I Ching”, says: “All things are consonant and stormy”. Lao Tzu believes that the two opposites in things are both reconciled and inclusive but at the same time in conflict with each other, and in the midst of this conflict, they always obey a law of balance to harmonize each other (the impulse to harmonize). Thus, the idea of dialectical contradiction has reached a rather profound level and has become the core of Lao Tzu’s dialectic. He showed the true nature of all contradictions - the dialectical relationship between dynamic and static between unity and struggle of opposites. Because the dialectical relationship of opposites is the source of all movement and change. But opposites in things and phenomena can be transformed into each other.

According to Lao Tzu, in a cycle of development to the extreme, they will turn into the opposite of themselves. That’s why “the strong wind can’t blow all morning, the heavy rain doesn’t rain all day”, “pain is the foundation of happiness, happiness is the refuge of disaster”, etc.

However, according to Lao Tzu, the struggle and transformation of the opposites are not in the direction of development and emergence of new ones, but according to the cycle of the law of

“reverse”. Moreover, Lao Tzu does not advocate resolving conflicts through the struggle of opposites, but he advocates taking the static, the unconditioned, and the harmonized to create transformation. The transformation of opposites in Lao Tzu’s ideology is harmony according to the law of balance.

Values and limitations

Thus, the two common laws of Tao have allowed Lao Tzu’s dialectic to lose its vitality and become mechanical, repetitive, and cyclical.

Lao Tzu also built a series of contradictions in all fields of nature, society, morality, and social relations, to be resolved according to his policy of harmony and even raised the art of living as motion and stillness, heat and cold, low and high, softness and hardness, existence and non-being, existence and loss, life and death, good and evil, good and bad, rise and fall, etc. When the opposites go together, everything will be new and harmonious, and when they develop to their peak, they will turn into the opposite of themselves. Therefore Lao Tzu wrote: “If you want to collect it, you must open it; if you want to weaken, let’s make it stronger. If you want to get rid of it, cheer it up, if you want to take it, give it away. That’s called being a deep but bright, soft and strong win against hard, etc.” (THU GIANG & NGUYEN DUY CAN, 1974, p. 18).

Lao Tzu’s ideology does not seem to have logical arguments but often has a clear empirical intuition, but that does not mean that it has no scientific value. On the contrary, although it was primitive, his ideology reflected the nature of the objective world very well. That world exists naturally, independent of any supernatural force. It does not stand still but is always moving, changing according to inherent laws and due to its own causes, due to the movement and transformation of opposites inside all things. He always looked at the world from both sides, not one-sided, rigid. That is the scientific basis for the reasonable methods of human action in all social relations that he pointed out in his unconditioned way.

Although Lao Tzu’s dialectic is still at the level of innocence, simplicity, and intuitive feeling, he has presented many condensed but profound ideas about movement, law, and contradiction. Unfortunately, the essence of the dialectic is development, which Lao Tzu never

mentions, even when applying it to social life, he also condemns it as the source of all suffering and injustice.

However, due to the limitations of social history, he could not avoid exaggerations or succinct expressions that made it difficult for people to understand his true intentions. Since then, it has caused many controversies in the history of philosophy up to now. However, no matter how controversial, his ideology is still very unique and has great significance, worthy of being “the spiritual representative of the ancient Eastern world” (HO FUSAN, 1995).

5. Conclusion

Thus, through the content presented above, it can be seen that dialectical ideology is spontaneous, not radical but no less profound than Lao Tzu. Accordingly, the surrounding world exists naturally, independent of any supernatural force. That world does not stand still but always moves and changes according to certain orders, and the movement and transformation of opposites are inherent in all things. People want to live peacefully, they need to follow nature, and should not be excessively reformed to have a harmonious and peaceful life.

Lao Tzu's dialectical ideology on the origin and universal laws of movement of nature is presented by a conceptual system that is both intuitive and abstract; demonstrates a sharp way of thinking beyond the times. Although his ideology has not reached the level of radical dialectical materialism, it contains many valuable materialistic and dialectical elements. Especially his ideologies on opposites, the limits of things and phenomena, the continuity of cause and effect, good fortune, etc. Dialectical ideology is very profound, contributing to the treasure of dialectical ideology of the ancient East. In the past and present, Lao Tzu's ideology of living according to nature has had a significant influence on the perception, life concept, and motto of the Chinese people in particular, and the Eastern people, including Vietnam and some other countries.

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