

The Meaning and Characteristics of "destiny" in Zhuangzi

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Abstract: The theory of "destiny" is an important part of *Zhuangzi's* thought, which constitutes the focus of academic analysis and research. There are more than 80 raw materials related to the word "destiny" in *Zhuangzi*. Analysing of these more than 80 raw materials, focused on the dimension of philosophical usage, "destiny" has the basic meanings of "destiny as encountering", "destiny as heaven" and "destiny as disposition". The destiny of *Zhuangzi* is characterized by inevitability, contingency and naturalness. The so-called inevitability of "destiny" refers to its helplessness and necessity. However, from the point of view of the "destiny" itself, it is completely accidental. Inevitability and contingency are unified in naturalness. *Zhuangzi's* theory of "destiny" starts from the predicament of life, but it can also be extended to include the existence and content of any things that falls above the human body. In short, in *Zhuangzi*, "destiny" is generalized, and it can include all the encounters of a person, no matter what characteristic it maybe is.

1. Introduction

"Destiny" is an important category in Chinese philosophy. *Shuowen Jiezi* says: "Destiny: render. Follow orders from the mouth"^[1], "Destiny" is related to "order", which is a derivative of the latter. It mainly has the meanings of "order", "fatwa", "instruction" and "mission". According to the book *Zhuangzi*, there are more than 80 raw materials related to the word "destiny". Analysis of these more than 80 raw materials, among which "command", "longevity", "naming", "managing life", "teaching life" and "appointment" are widely used in daily sense, but they are mainly used in philosophical dimensions such as "destiny as encountering", "destiny as heaven" and "destiny as disposition"^[2]. This paper discusses the meaning and characteristics of "destiny" in *Zhuangzi* in those aspects in the philosophical dimension.

2. Destiny as Encountering

Confucius said, "Heaven is the only thing that matters", "Gentleman has three fears: fear of destiny, fear of officials, and fear of words of sages", and there is a saying in *Zi Xia* that "life and death have a destiny, wealth and noble are in Heaven". In Confucius's opinion, the so-called "destiny" is connected with "Heaven", and the meaning of "destiny" is heavier, but it also refers more to fate and destiny, so it is an inevitable existence that human beings can do nothing about. *Mozi's* chapter of "refute-destiny" said "The words of those who hold destiny say 'destiny will make rich if rich, will

make poor if poor. Destiny will make numerous if numerous, will make few if few. destiny will make order if order, will make chaotic if chaotic. Destiny will make long if long, will make dead if dead", so its "destiny" also mainly refers to a kind of forces which is relative to human power and determines people's wealth and poverty, etc. When discussing the thought of "destiny" in Chinese traditional philosophy, Mr. Zhang Dai-Nian pointed out: "What does Confucius mean by destiny? Generally speaking, it can be said that destiny is something that human beings can do nothing about. In a word, it can be said that destiny is the judgment of the environment on artificial effort. "He also said," Taoists speak destiny even more than Confucianism. Although Confucianism talks about destiny, it still does not abolish personnel effort, and it is actually based on doing everything possible; Taoism doesn't talk about personnel effort, but only talks about destiny. The so-called destiny of Taoism also means that human beings can't gain it and human beings can't do anything about it".^[3] Mr. Liu Xiao-Gan's comment on the "destiny" of *Zhuangzi* is that "we can understand the 'destiny' of *Zhuangzi* as 'the established situation'. This 'established situation' only describes what has happened and what can't be done by human's effort"^[4]. It can be seen that, similar to what Confucius and Mozi said, the so-called "destiny" in *Zhuangzi* mainly refers to an external coercive force and its restriction on human existence. This kind of external coercive force, in terms of the relationship between the individual and it as an established situation, is first manifested as "the encountering destiny" of the individual. For example, *Zhuangzi* said that "the so-called hermit in ancient times does not engaging in administrative practice, does not keep his words shut, and does not reveal or hide his knowledge. It's because the destiny of time is greatly bad." As a fact of the established situation, this "time" of "great bad" is called "destiny", which emphasizes the unchangeable and unpredictable characteristic of the external reason of his seclusion as a hermit. Simply put, the so-called "encountering diversity" refers to the "encountering" of internal and external environment, as well as their restrictions and constraints on human existence, and their determinations and judgments on human efforts^[5].

3. Destiny as Heaven

In *Zhuangzi*, "Heaven also means the change of things that people can't participate in or decide ... This change is beyond people's decision, so it is called Heaven, ... and it is the nature as the creator itself"^[6]. Accordingly, the so-called "destiny as heaven" is anything which falls on the human body by the endowing of "Heaven". For example, *Zhuangzi* said, "Gong Wen-xuan was shocked when he saw the right teacher: Who is it with? Why are you Jie(lame)? Because of heaven? Or because of human? Who is it with? the right teacher said: because of Heaven, not of human. It is heavenly born to be Jie(lame), and people is also heavenly born to be the healthy feet, so know the reason is heaven and not human." "Jie" refers to the punishment of having one foot cut off. Generally speaking, being punished for breaking the law is a humanly cause ("Who is it with?"), but further inquiry into this humanly cause will lead to endless tracing of the cause link, which will eventually be implemented in the ultimate existence of "Heaven". It is "natural" to be single-footed because of partial castration, and to compare it with "healthily feet", that is, the coexistence of two feet, which shows the aspect that "destiny" as a existence which human being can't choose and change. It can be seen that "Heaven" in *Zhuangzi* is a transcendental force that human beings can't control, and it determines all aspects of human beings. For Heaven and the changes from Heaven, human beings can only accept and adapt, but can't resist and change them. The so-called "destiny as heaven" means that the source of the "destiny" of a person's "encountering" is "heaven". Therefore, it has the mandatory color of command, and it can only be obeyed.

4. Destiny as Disposition

Regarding the origin and meaning of "disposition", *Zhuangzi* said, "In the beginning of great-grand

remoteness, there was Wu--no existence, and it was no name; As soon as it starts, there is the One but no shape. Being able to put forth to things is called De; Those who are not in shape are divided, and they are in harmony, which is called Destiny; Staying and flowing, and things have physiological property, which is called Shape; The body keeps the spirit, and each has its own rules, which means Disposition." "Wu" is "Tao", it is invisible and nameless, and it is the source of all things, but there is no difference between them. It can be called "the One". As a result, the shapeless "the One" falls, and things are born, which is called "De". It can be seen that "De" means that the "gain" of things comes from the aspects of "the One" and "Tao". Because "De" is related to "the One" and "Tao", and it is a kind of "division" in terms of "things", which means that things are divided and owned, but it is still in a state of no separation from "the One" and "Tao" at this time, which is called the "Destiny" of things. From the shapeless "the One" and "Tao", it goes through the stages of "De" and "Destiny" and then falls further. In this process, existing things coagulate, and all things flow into shapes. In the process of forming shapes, there are physiological and ritual principles, as well as spiritual aspects. This is the disposition of things. Obviously, "destiny as disposition" is the division of Tao and the One by things, and it is a limit of what Tao and the One are destined for when they fall into things, and its content is the so-called "rule of propriety". Therefore, destiny is similar to De and disposition, and they form a bridge between individual things with Tao and the One, which is based on the ontological theory in *Zhuangzi* that Tao and the One gives birth to all things. In the outer and miscellaneous articles of *Zhuangzi*, the thought that everything has its own "destiny as disposition" is highlighted, and it is endowed with the characteristics of simplicity, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction and self-adaptation. As far as the existence of all things and the relationship between things are concerned, "destiny as disposition" is normalized and stable, and it is also balanced and coordinated^[7]. In *Zhuangzi*, "destiny as disposition" is a value category.

5. The Inevitability of "Destiny"

The so-called inevitability of "destiny" refers to its helplessness and necessity. This is the passivity of people in the face of "destiny". the chapter of "The World on Earth" quoted Confucius as saying, "There are two precepts in the world: one is destiny, the other is righteousness. A child's loving his parents--this is destiny, and cannot be understood in his heart; Servants are loyal to the monarch-- this is righteousness, and there are no monarchs nowhere, and I can't escape it between heaven and earth....Those knowing that they can't do anything but settle down to the destiny, are being virtuous. Being a servant is inherently a last resort. " Because of the "last resort", it can be seen that it can only be followed passively, and it is impossible to take the initiative. "the love of a son is something that can not be understood in the heart" means, for a person ("son"), it is a "destiny" that cannot be explained or changed. It is something that can only be accepted. The change of people's life and death, just like the change of day and night, has its own inherent naturalness and inevitability. Their operation and change process can not be interfered and changed by human existence and efforts. For heaven, people still love it, let alone the "Tao" which is more outstanding than heaven. For the monarch, people are still dead for him, let alone the truer "Tao" than the monarchs. Therefore, people should be coincide with "Tao", be one with "Tao" and obey its arrangement completely; And "destiny", as a natural and unchangeable one, is the concrete manifestation of the operation of "Tao" in human beings, so the unity with "Tao" requires "being content with destiny". "Life or death, it is destiny", and people need to be completely resigned to it. It is the existence that people can't seek advantages and avoid disadvantages, and it is something that people can't transform or change, even though it falls on people's existence. This kind of inevitability, which people can't grasp cognitively and has no regularity, is a blind inevitability. This is from the perspective of the relationship between "destiny" and one's own life.

6. The Contingency of "Destiny"

However, from the point of view of the "destiny" itself, it is completely accidental." the chapter of "*De Chong-Fu*" says: "Shen tu-jia is an one-legged person he said that If you know that you can't do anything about the fact, you can treat it completely by De. Wandering in the center of a marksman--Yi 's arrow target, it is bound to be shot; However, it missed. This is destiny." As for the fact of only one leg, before being disfigured, there are many people who argue their own faults and think that they should not be mutilated; After being disfigured, there are few people who don't argue their own faults, but think that they shouldn't keep their shape^[8]. That is to say, "knowing what you can't do and being content with your destiny". Since Yi is a marksman, so, for anyone who is wandering in the middle of Yi's arrow target and is missed, it is absolutely accidental. It can be seen that, as far as the situation itself is concerned, this is the chance of realizing the contingency of "destiny". In *Zhuangzi*, the "helplessness" of "destiny", that is, the nature that manpower can't change it, is emphasized. In *Zhuangzi* 's view, the result of asking for the reason of one's own "destiny" is generally impossible to gain the end, so one has to attribute it to "destiny" and get a superficial explanation. The thought of destiny in *Zhuangzi* has a characteristic of contingency.

7. The Naturalness of "Destiny"

Inevitability and contingency are unified in naturalness. From the point of view that "destiny" is "met" and "accepted" by individuals, it has external compulsion and inevitability; However, from the point of view of the origin of "destiny" and "endowing" to it, in *Zhuangzi*, Whether it's "destiny as encountering", "destiny as heaven" or "destiny as disposition", the place where it is granted comes from the natural "Heaven" or the overall transcendent "Tao", and their existences are both no-willed and no-personality, and their operation and circulation are also not willpower^[9]. For example, the chapter of "*De Chong-Fu*" says, "Being ordered by the earth, only the pines and cypresses are right alone, in winter and in summer are all green; Being ordered by heaven, only Yao and Xun are being unique and being positive. " Pine's and cypresses' destiny as disposition is ordered by the earth, and the earth's granting of any disposition to anything is due to inaction and carelessness, and there is no intention or partiality in it. Therefore, it's natural for it to "endow" Pine and cypress the rightness of "green in winter and in summer". There is no inevitable reason for it, and it's accidental, so it's called "unique". As far as the pine and cypress itself is concerned, its "inheritance" and "acceptance" of that "destiny as disposition" are inevitable. They can't be chosen and escaped, also can't be evaded and changed, but can only be passively "received" and "endured". Similarly, Yao and Shun's "destiny as disposition" is also ordered by Heaven, but uniquely has its righteousness. However, the endowing of Heaven is natural and accidental, while Yao and Shun's acceptance is natural and inevitable. It can be seen that even on the issue of the endowment of "destiny as disposition", naturalness, contingency and inevitability are the same fact in itself. Mr. Wang Shu-min compiled the lost articles of *Zhuangzi*, which have two articles: "Heaven is natural" and "I don't know why, so it's called nature"^[10], and the chapter of "*Da Sheng*" also says "I don't know why I am, and it's my destiny". It can be seen that the "naturalness" meaning of "heaven" and "destiny" is deeply recognized by *Zhuangzi*.

8. Conclusion

In *Zhuangzi*, the meaning of "destiny" mainly refers to the external situation of difficult position, but it can also be extended, and it is applicable to the internal and external situations and lives of any nature that an individual "meets", which makes "destiny" in *Zhuangzi* a comprehensive concept because of its generalized understanding. The chapter of "*De Chong-Fu*" says that "death and survival, poverty and wealth, virtue and immorality, reputation and honour, hunger and thirst, cold and heat"

are all the changes of things, with the course of one's destiny, and this is also the course of one's life. Among them, "death\survival" and "hunger\thirst" belong to life problems, while "poverty\wealth" and "reputation\honour", "cold\ heat" belong to external circumstances, and "virtue\ immorality" belong to disposition problem. So in *Zhuangzi*, the scope of "destiny" includes not only external circumstances, but also internal nature and life aspects. In addition, the "destiny" and "events" include not only the aspects of death, poverty, corruption and ruin, but also the aspects of life, survival, prosperity, wealth, virtue, so the nature of "destiny" is not only negative and restrictive but also Positive and affirmative. As for "hunger/thirst, cold/heat", they are mainly neutral in nature. They are called "destiny" and "events" because they are personal encounters, so they should also belong to them. In short, in *Zhuangzi*, "destiny" is generalized, and it can include all the encounters of a person, no matter what characteristic it maybe is.

References

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