

## 무언가의 수용(조화): 장자의 갈등 해소

### BEING COOL WITH SOMETHING (HE ZHI 和 之): CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE ZHUANGZI 莊子

Moeller Hans-Georg  
University of Macau

### 국문요약

본 논문은 (기원전 3세기까지 거슬러 올라가는) 초기 중국 문헌 장자(莊子)의 이야기를 분석하여 사회적, 심리적인 조화를 이루고 갈등을 해소하는 방법에 대한 도교적 생각을 소개한다. 원숭이를 기르는 사람과 애타타(哀駘它)라고 불리는 괴짜 정치인의 두 이야기는 옹고/그림의 구별을 긍정하면서도 축소시키는 “두 길을 걷는[兩行]” 도교식 기술의 실례로 볼 수 있다. 이 두 이야기는 규범적 독단주의와 이념적 사소함에 대한 비판인 동시에 결코 부정적이지 않은 역할을 수행한다. 경직된 옹고/그림의 고정관념을 해소함은 지적, 실존적 그리고 사회적 차원에 있어 치료적 기능을 한다. 이는 옹음 혹은 그림에 대한 주장을 보다 광범위한 관점에서 바라보고, 더 큰 맥락에서 보는 것을 가능하게 한다. 이를 통해 연속성과 관점의 한계를 이

해하고, 나아가 보다 심오한 방법으로 사고하도록 한다. 다양한 관점들과 “조화를 이루면서[和之]”도 그 관점들과 동일시하지 않는 것은 중요한 해석적 능력이다. 이러한 기술은 타인과 교류하면서도 의미없는 갈등을 피하고 재단하는 신념의 경화를 억제시킨다. 이는 규범의 범위를 넘어 갈등 해소를 위한 기회를 열어 준다.

### Abstract

This paper introduces Daoist ideas on how to achieve social and psychological harmony and to bring about conflict resolution by analyzing some allegories from the early Chinese text Zhuangzi 莊子 (dating back to the 3rd century BC). The two stories of a person feeding monkeys and a strange politician named Horsehead Humpback can be read as illustrations of a Daoist art of “walking two roads,” that both affirms and deflates right/wrong distinctions. While the two stories can serve as critiques of normative dogmatism and ideological trivialities, their function is by no means only negative. The dissolution of rigid right/wrong fixations has therapeutic functions on an intellectual, existential, and social level. It makes it possible

to look at assertions of correctness or incorrectness in a broader perspective and to see them in larger contexts. It enables one to understand contingencies and perspectival limitations and thereby to think in more complex ways. The capacity to “be cool with” various points of view while at the same time not identifying with them is an important hermeneutic skill. It allows for engagement with others through avoiding fruitless conflicts and eschewing the hardening of judgmental convictions. It opens up opportunities for conflict resolution beyond the realm of the normative.

“BEING COOL WITH SOMETHING (HE ZHI 和之):”

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## HARMONY AS A DAOIST VALUE

- “Harmony” (he和) is a highly positive and central notion in the Daoist tradition.
- The Daodejing 道德經 (core early Daoist text, ca. 4th century BCE) contains numerous passages commending harmony. Here it was understood
  - musically as harmony of “tones and voices” (yin sheng音聲, ch. 2)
  - visually indicating a balanced “light” or “shine” (guang光, ch. 4, 56)
  - socially indicating harmonious relations in a kinship group (ch. 18)
  - psychologically indicating a state without anger (ch. 79)
  - physiologically as harmony of the “vital energy” qi氣, or yin陰 and yang陽 (42)
  - cosmologically as harmony of the course of nature, or dao道 (ch. 55)

## HARMONY IN THE ZHUANGZI

- In the second major early Daoist text Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 3rd century BCE) Daoist ideas often appear in a different light.
- The Zhuangzi takes the vocabulary of the Daodejing, but tends to use it with a twist and to play with its ambiguity.
- This also happens with the notion of harmony.

## RIGHT/WRONG DISTINCTIONS: A SOURCE OF CONFLICT AND STRESS

- A philosophical theme in the Zhuangzi is a critical reflection on the human tendency to think and speak in terms of “right and wrong” (shi fei 是非).
- This tendency can cause social conflict between groups holding different values and mental stress when trying to conform to moral standards.
- The Zhuangzi attempts to diffuse such conflict and alleviate such stress
- It “deconstructs” right-wrong distinctions with allegories and paradoxes.
- This is part of a larger Daoist “medicinal” (Girardot 2008) framework.

## RIGHT/WRONG CONFLICT: AN ALLEGORY

When humans sleep in a damp place, they wake up deathly ill and sore about the waist—but what about eels? If humans live in trees, they tremble with fear and worry—but how about monkeys? Of these three, which ‘knows’ what is the right place to live? Humans eat the flesh of their livestock, deer eat grass, snakes eat centipedes, hawks and eagles eat mice. Of these four, which ‘knows’ the right thing to eat? Monkeys take she-monkeys for mates, elks mount deer, male fish frolic with female fish, while humans regard Mao Qiang and Lady Li as great beauties—but when fish see them they dart into the depths, when birds see them they soar into the skies, when deer see them they bolt away without looking back. Which of these four ‘knows’ what is rightly alluring? (Ziporyn 2020: 18-19, Zhuangzi 2: 11)

## FUTILE ARGUMENTS

- The allegory shows the futility of claims to know what is right or wrong, and the wisdom of abstaining from such judgmental attitudes.
- Humorously, it critiques normative claims about the basics of life: where to live, what to eat, and whom to have sex with.
- Humans tend to quarrel over such preferences, but “stupid” animals don’t. They sleep

where and with whom they prefer without disputing the “rightness” of it with other animals who have different preferences.

## **RELATIVITY AND TRIVIALITY OF “RIGHT”**

- In his “Lecture on Ethics” Ludwig Wittgenstein explains the relative and the trivial sense in which we judge something as right.
- In the relative sense, “right” means “coming up to a certain pre-determined standard.” (Wittgenstein 1965: 5) For example: A route to a place that leads to it faster is “right” relative to slower ones.
- Wittgenstein explains the trivial sense of “right” with a thought experiment of “a book on Ethics” that would contain only expressions of “absolute” rightness. If such a book would exist, he says, it “would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world.” Compared with “absolute rightness,” all human judgements about “rightness” (e.g. about the “right” place to sleep) are trivial.

## **RIGHTNESS IS “TRIVIAL:” IT IS NOT A MORAL TRUTH**

- The relativity of rightness indicates limited validity. The “rightness” of a road, or sleeping place, is valid only regarding a specific standard or perspective.
- The triviality of rightness indicates limited significance. The “rightness” of a road, or sleeping place, is insignificant compared with “absolute rightness.”
- The Zhuangzi, in the quoted allegory, is a “trivialist” rather than merely a relativist: Yes, certain ways of life are appropriate for humans, but not for other animals. But it is pointless, and dangerous, to glorify this properness as “right” (shi 是) and thereby to wrongly suggest that it indicates a moral truth.

## OVERESTIMATING RIGHTNESS

- People tend to get easily excited about what they believe is right or wrong and to blow up the significance of such judgments beyond proportion.
- Arguments about which route, or which way of life, is right, can easily become heated. Daoist philosophy highlights the triviality and pettiness of an all-too confident normative attitude.
- Daoism cultivates an awareness of the incongruity between the significance of one's judgments and the ferocity with which they are sometimes defended.
- This awareness is medicinal, not epistemological. It subverts emotional over- investment in right/wrong distinctions. Often with humor, the Zhuangzi shows how trifle human knowledge can be—and how it can become dangerous when people start fighting about different values they hold to be true.

## THE MONKEY TRAINER

Once, a monkey trainer was distributing chestnuts. He said, “I’ll give you three in the morning and four in the evening.” The monkeys were furious. “Well then,” he said, “I’ll give you four in the morning and three in the evening.” The monkeys were delighted. This change brought them no loss either in name or in fact, but in one case it brought anger and in another delight. He just went by the rightness of their present ‘this.’ Thus, the sage harmonizes (with) others on the basis of what is right or wrong for them, and yet remains at rest in the middle of Heaven the Potter’s Wheel. This is called “Walking Two Roads.”

(Ziporyn 2020: 15-16, Zhuangzi 2.6, translation modified)

## WALKING TWO ROADS: AFFIRMING RIGHTNESS AND TRIVIALITY

- This story highlights the incongruity between the monkey’s anger and the triviality of the difference between what they hold to be right and wrong (three in the morning and four in the evening vs. the other way around)

- This incongruity makes the story humorous—and philosophically relevant.
- The monkey trainer can easily agree with the monkeys. However, by agreeing with them he also exposes the insignificance of their right/wrong distinctions.
- “Walking two roads” is: Agreeing with “rightness,” while showing its triviality.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION: BEING COOL WITH SOMETHING

- The monkey trainer is like a “sage” (sheng ren 聖人) because he is capable of “harmonizing (with) others on the basis of what is right or wrong for them” (he zhi yi shi fei 和之以是非).
- First, the monkey trainer “heals” the anger of the monkeys and gives them peace of mind. In this sense “he zhi” 和之 means “to make them emotionally harmonious,” or “to calm them down.”
- Second, it means that he affirms what they hold to be right or wrong. In this sense he zhi 和之 means “to agree with.”
- In English “to be cool with something,” can translate he zhi 和之 here, because it combines the two meanings—indicating both peace of mind and agreement.
- Daoist conflict resolution is: Making people be cool with something (in two senses).

## CONCLUSION

- The dissolution of rigid right/wrong is therapeutic: intellectually, socially, and existentially
- It makes it possible to understand the limited significance of “rightness” and to see things in a broader perspective.
- The capacity to “be cool with” various points of view while at the same time not identifying with them is an important skill. It allows engagement with others through avoiding fruitless conflicts and eschewing being judgmental.
- It resolves conflict and opens up resonance with others by avoiding the often problematic desire to “get it right” and to eliminate what is “wrong.”

(See Moeller and D'Ambrosio, 2017, and Moeller forthcoming)

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