

Министерство науки и высшего  
образования Российской Федерации  
Национальный исследовательский  
Томский государственный университет  
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АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ  
СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ НАУК  
(24–25 апреля 2020 г)**

**Материалы XXII Международной  
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## THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE IN TAOISM AND CONFUCIANISM

A.A. Vyatkina

Academic advisors: Ph.D. (Philos.) Yu.N. Kirilenko,

V.S. Nesterenko

*National Research Tomsk State University*

The first studies dealing with human values appeared both in the West and the East and later became the foundation of modern axiology. The essence of axiology is that it considers values and moral evaluations not in the object with its characteristics, but in the subject. It is in the East where the problem of the subject and its cognitive possibility come to the fore. The axiology of the Ancient East regulated the consciousness of man and gave him the opportunity to comprehend the ways of spiritual evolution and identity with the Tao, Brahman, Cosmos, etc. as with some universal higher values. In the historical and philosophical context, the epistemological aspect of this issue is of the greatest interest.

The value of knowledge is determined not only in the form of mystical Union of a person with the Tao, but also in the oral transmission of spiritual truths from Teacher to disciple, as well as in sacred books such as the Tao De Jing and LUN Yu. The difficulty of understanding such latent knowledge is, in my opinion, that this knowledge does not exist explicitly, it is concentrated in the sphere of our consciousness and not beyond it.

The main difference between systems of knowledge in the West and the East, I see in the following. In the West philosophy arises as the result of «reconciliation» of mythological constructions of the world and knowledge, thinking, where the main element of reconciliation is precisely the rationality. In the East we see the absence of relations between subject and object, and, consequently, the abolition of the philosophical system, since any system is a product of the mind. In Eastern philosophy, man is seen as a spiritual being that is unlimited in thought. In my work, I consider Chinese epistemology by giving the example of two schools of philosophy: Taoism and Confucianism.

In Taoism, there is no dialectic in the Western sense of the word; this teaching is outside of all rational thinking. Knowledge in Taoism is associated with a state of Nivangun, i.e., a critical state of our consciousness, where a person can grasp the whole understanding of the essence of things as if being in a meta - position above them. In Lao Tzu's understanding, knowledge is the Tao de Ching treatise, i.e. the ability to recognize the characters that comprise this treatise and play them together and this is possible only with the development of Niangua.

Taoist thinkers believe that because of selfishness and reluctance to follow the Tao in the minds of people, delusion arises that lead a person into an illusory world, dividing the world into separate particulars that are thought of as a kind of community. The origin of the misconception is also facilitated by language – a person begins to name each individual thing, i.e., if we say the language of Western philosophy: entities are generated without their necessity. However, in the Tao itself there is no division into particulars, as already noted above, the Tao is something unified, undivided, from which everything comes. For this reason, there is a certain relativism in Taoist teaching.

In Taoism knowledge is also impossible, a person can only constantly approach to knowledge, but he will never be able to fully know, because the Tao is not knowable.

In Confucianism, the Tao is meant as the good course of all social events and human life. The Tao here has the meaning of the moral path that everyone should follow: every person, society and state. The Tao is the path of truth. However, Confucius denies the possibility of the absolute comprehension of the Tao. As Confucius himself says, only the noble men of «Jun-Tzu» can comprehend the Tao. The Tao is created directly by Jun-Tzu and comes from them. In turn, Jun-Tzu represents a collective systematized image of people who have such qualities as: justice, modesty, truthfulness and so on.

Knowledge in Confucianism represents certain ideas that are given only to a select few. Later, they become great teachers who begin to teach this knowledge to others, to those who have not been given this knowledge. There is also a third type of people, those who do not have this knowledge and do not want to acquire it.

In Confucianism knowledge is a kind of elite system, where knowledge is given only to the chosen, hence the moment of knowledge, which is, that for many people the world is not knowable, except for the sages who have innate knowledge.

Epistemological analysis shows that, as in Confucianism, so in Taoism, distortions occur when a person begins to name objects. Confucius sees the solution to the problem in «correcting names» and returning the original meaning. And Lao Tzu believes that the only way to get rid of meaning distortion is through the Wu-Wei principle.

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