

Comparison of the Differences and Similarities Between the View of "Harmony Between Man and Tian" in the Analects and the Tao Te Ching

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Abstract: The concept of the harmony between man and Tian is an ideological core and spiritual wealth of Chinese culture, and this paper traces the interpretations and attitudes of Confucianism and Taoism towards the connotation of the harmony between man and Tian (refers to “sky”, “nature”, or “earth”) respectively. This paper compares the idea of the harmony between man and Tian in the *Analects* and the *Tao Te Ching* in terms of the object of emulating Tian, the understanding and interpretation of Tian, and the path of the harmony between man and Tian. Confucianism focuses on Tian's order and human relationships, emphasizing that man should achieve harmony between man and Tian through moral cultivation and the practice of Tian's order, whereas Taoism focuses on the way of Tian, advocating the rule of inaction and the practice of simplicity, and the harmony between man and Tian and earth in a way that conforms with Tian. Analysis of the Confucian-Taoist idea of the harmony between man and Tian can reveal this idea's far-reaching influence on Chinese traditional culture and enhance cultural confidence.

Keywords: Confucius, Laozi, Analects of Confucius, Tao Te Ching, Tian and Man

1. Introduction

The harmony between man and Tian is a unique concept of Chinese civilization discussed by many ancient thinkers. In Confucianism and Taoism, the harmony between man and Tian, although expressed in different ways, is explored in the context of how to achieve harmony and unity between man and Tian and the earth. Confucianism, represented by *The Analects of Confucius*, stresses the mandate of Tian and human relationships, and believes that man should realize the harmony between man and Tian in moral cultivation and mission fulfillment; while Taoism, represented by *Tao Te Ching*, advocates conforming to Tian and doing nothing to achieve the state of harmony between man and Tian. The purpose of this paper is to explore the different embodiments of the idea of harmony between man and Tian in Confucianism and Taoism and to analyze its far-reaching influence on traditional Chinese culture.

2. What is the harmony between man and Tian

Since ancient times, Tian has had a very high status in Chinese culture, mainly reflected in the legitimacy of the regime's kingship and the basis of people's lives in the agricultural civilization. The emperors of all dynasties liked to call themselves the Son of Tian, "matching Tian with virtue", and

sacrificed to Tian when they ascended to the throne or when they had something important to do. Tian, as an existence above the kingship, was able to give the emperors orthodox identities and powers. As a farming civilization, the Chinese people's daily life is also closely related to the sky; the ancients formulated the 24 solar terms to comply with the time of the day, often "God" on the lips. It can be seen that the ancient people had a close relationship with Tian, conforming to "Tian" and depending on "Tian".

The idea of the "harmony between man and Tian" originated in Chinese agricultural civilization and developed along with the formation of the concept of "Tian". The "harmony between man and Tian" has developed from the combination of force and divine power in the early days to the various forms of Confucian moral practice, Taoist natural inaction, Mohist natural will, law, and order, and finally formed the cosmic mind theory of "all things are one" in the Song and Ming philosophies, which has become one of the core spirits of Chinese civilization [1]. By tracing the historical lineage of the harmony between man and Tian, we can make it clear that the word "Tian" in the harmony between man and Tian is not the Tian we usually refer to in a narrow sense, but it has a triple meaning: first, the highest existence and the power of creation. Nurture all things and always with all things, provide the basis for the growth of all things without dominating all things; second, the vast natural universe itself; and third, the way of Tian, the most essential laws of Tian, the most primitive and basic general law of all things, and the "Tao" is synonymous with the same meaning [2,3].

On the one hand, there is a relationship between human beings and the Mandate of Tian; every human being has a Mandate of Tian given by Tian; the Mandate of Tian is not separated from life; the Mandate of Tian is in life, and the meaning of life is to fulfill the Mandate of Tian, and the two are thus merged into a unique relationship between Tian and man [4,5]. On the other hand, it is man and Tian; a man should follow the example of Tian and the earth to comply with Tian. When people live and do things according to the laws of Tian, or combine the natural Tian of human Tian, i.e., conscience, with the natural principles of Tian, then they reach the realm of the two merging into one.

2.1. The harmony between man and Tian in the *Analects of Confucius*

Confucius said "Learning from time to time" and "述而不作" are familiar phrases in the *Analects of Confucius*, and in fact, they are also related to the idea of the harmony between man and Tian, kind. It is an interesting coincidence that, due to the problem of recognizing the writing style of the small seal script in ancient Chinese, the ancients might have confused the characters "Tian" (天) and "Er" (而). If the character "Tian" (天) had been used here, the semantics would have been clearer or extended. That is to say, Confucius advocated learning the virtues of Tian and the laws of Tian, and often reviewing them, which is a typical manifestation of the harmony between man and Tian. Similarly, if the description of the sky is understood as the description of not making, that is not consistent with the words and deeds of Confucius, who created some innovation, such as "benevolence, righteousness and propriety, teaching without class, according to the material to teach" are the original concepts of Confucius. Moreover, we can find the words "Tian", "Natural order" or "Tao" appearing frequently in the *Analects*, which can be mainly attributed to the belief in, understanding of, reverence for, and practice of Natural order.

Believing in fear of natural destiny, Confucius believed that human beings have an innate mission and that human beings should spare no effort to fulfill this mission. Fulfilling the mission given by Tian or sparing no effort to fulfill it is the embodiment of the harmony between man and Tian. Confucius said, "A gentleman has three fears: fear of Tian's order, fear of adults, and fear of the words of sages. The villain does not know the fate of Tian without fear, and is apathetic to adults and insults the words of sages."

In Confucius' case, knowing and respecting the fate of Tian is an important and necessary criterion to become a gentleman. If a person does not believe in and respect the fate of Tian, he cannot do what Confucius said, "not complaining to Tian, not by others", because the success or failure of a thing depends on the fate of Tian after you have tried your best. But if you don't believe in fate, you will naturally blame God, and complain about your luck. One can be more open-minded by holding this outlook on life, but this does not mean that one can get something for nothing, or not make any effort because things are destined to fail. As the saying goes, only when one has done all one can do, to the point of being unable to do anything about it, the success or failure of things is left to be decided by Tian. However, Sages like Confucius could only understand at the age of fifty, and success is not success in the secular sense, but the fulfillment of the Mandate of Tian. As Confucius spent his whole life, whether traveling around the world to assist kings or educating disciples to revise the ancient books, he practiced the Mandate of Tian: "People can promote the Way, but not the Way to promote people", and the Way has to be promoted by human beings, although no monarch adopted his advice during his lifetime. Although no monarch adopted his advice during his lifetime, his life did make indelible contributions to the restoration of the Zhou rituals [6]. Thus, Confucius believed that if something is the destiny of Tian, there will be no difficulty that can stop it, and likewise, if it is not the destiny of Tian, it is useless to make any effort at all. For example, all of these statements occurred when Confucius was in danger or under siege, and whether it was Huan who was trying to bring Confucius to his death or the Kuang people who were besieging him, Confucius was calm and relaxed.

Confucius was so candid because, firstly, he had clearly understood and firmly believed that his destiny lay in this ("Fifty and Knowing the Destiny of Tian"). For example, when Confucius left the state of Wei to go to the state of Chen and passed through the state of Song, he and his disciples were rehearsing their rituals under a big tree when Huan wanted to kill Confucius and cut down the tree, so Confucius left. When his disciples urged him to run away, Confucius said, "Tian has given me the mission of promoting virtue; what can Huanzi do to me? Similarly, when Confucius was besieged in Kuangdi, he said, "After the death of King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty, isn't the ritual culture of the Zhou Dynasty embodied in me? If Tian wants to destroy this culture, I can't master it; if Tian does not destroy this culture, what can the people of Kuang do to me? From here it can be seen that Confucius has concluded through logical reasoning that he will be blessed by Tian for his natural destiny. Secondly, he has done his best to fulfill his natural destiny by arguing that it is the will of Tian if the Way can be carried out in the world, and it is also the will of Tian if the Way cannot be carried out in the world.

2.2. The harmony between man and Tian in *Tao Te Ching*

The classic "*Tao Te Ching*", written by Lao Tzu, is familiar to the world. "Tao" represents the general law of the universe and Tian, the source of everything, and "virtue" means that people follow such a law to do things and follow the laws of Tian, which itself is the embodiment of the harmony between man and Tian [7]. Lao Zi advocates that all things follow the Tao and are noble in virtue. Lao Zi said, "All things follow the Tao and are noble in virtue", which advocates that people should follow Tian and live according to the Tao. It is the operation of Tian that does nothing, but the cycle of seasons, and the change of dynasties, and everything in the world is dependent on the Tao to survive and develop, yet the Tao does not interfere with the domination of all things [8].

First of all, Lao Tzu gave a detailed description of Tian, the Tao itself. Laozi found that everything in this world has a general source and a general law and named it "Tao" for the first time, which "can be the mother of the world", in other words, he called the power of creation and the laws of Tian "Tao". In the *Tao Te Ching*, it is said, "Things are mixed, and Tian and earth are born first. Silence and loneliness, independence without change, circumspection without danger, can be the mother of the world." Lao Zi further discusses the characteristics of Tian and Earth: "Tian and Earth are not

kind to all things", which means that Tian and Earth do not have any feelings and favoritism, but treat all things equally, and let all things grow freely on their own. However, Lao Zi also said that "Tian has no relatives and always favors the good", which means that Tian only favors the good. Lao Zi also said that the Tao always does nothing, but does not do anything. The Tao seems to do nothing, and people do not feel its existence, but it does everything, and everything is essentially done by the Tao. This is what Lao Tzu means by "the sages of Tian and earth are not benevolent"; "I do nothing, but the people are transformed by themselves". Once one takes the initiative to be benevolent, to interfere with the free development of all things, and to make them feel something, to make them appreciate something, this is, in Lao Tzu's view, an unnatural practice for the Tao.

Based on the description of Tian itself, Laozi also discusses the relationship between Tian and man, that is, the interpretation of the Tao of Tian and the Tao of Man. Tao begets one, one begets two, two begets three, and three begets all things; human beings originally come from Tao, and Tian also comes from Tao; they are originally born from the same source and are originally in the realm of unity between Tian and man, who rely on Tao to be united [9]. "Therefore, the Tao is great, the sky is great, the earth is great, and man is also great. There are four great domains in the universe, and one of them is a human being". As the only species in the universe that can be called "great" besides Tao and Tian, human beings are different from everything else in that they have free will and creativity, and they can survive not only by instinct and natural laws but also by following the laws of Tian, just as plants and animals do. Not only can we rely on our instincts and the laws of Tian to survive like animals and plants, but we can also act according to Tian, and adjust to the natural play of creativity in the harmony between man and Tian. But because human beings are special, they tend to act against Tian, for example, staying up late in daily life, having too many desires, etc. Lao Tzu said, "The way of man is not the same, not enough to be able to serve more than enough. "The Great Way is very barbaric, and people are good at paths", so Lao Tzu advocates for learning more and more, and reverting to infancy, i.e., breaking down the artificial factors of the acquired Tian.

3. Confucius versus Laozi

What Confucius and Laozi have in common is that they both respect and imitate Tian, but the object of their imitation is different. Confucius emulated Tian by using the Qian Dao of the I Ching as an entry point, which embodies the idea that Tian moves in a healthy way and that a gentleman should be self-improving. For example, Confucius said "The spirit of self-improvement embodied in the Three Armies can take away the marshal, but not the will of the horseman", and "Do not complain to Tian, do not blame others", together Confucius robust certainty in knowing that he could not do anything despite the storms and ups and downs in his life, can reflect his virtue of learning from Tian. And Lao Zi to the ground, reflecting the Kun Dao of the earth's potential Kun, the gentleman to the virtue of carrying things (I Ching Kun) [10]. As Laozi preaches that man follows the law of the earth, the law of the earth follows the law of the sky, the law of the sky follows the law of the road, and the law of the road follows the law of Tian. *Tao Te Ching* Chapter 25 emphasizes the need for man to emulate the earth's generosity of virtue, in the same way Lao Tzu says that the goodness of water is like water; water is good for all things but does not contend for them, and is in the place of all the people's evils, and is, therefore, several times more than the Tao. Water is also the embodiment of the earth, and likewise, Lao Tzu repeatedly emphasizes the idea of being underneath it, carrying and embracing all things as the earth does, as is the practice of sages and great nations [11].

Another difference lies in the fact that Laozi has directly depicted and explained "Tian", such as "Tian and earth are not benevolent" and "Tian has no relatives, but is always kind to those who are good". Throughout the whole text of the *Analects*, although Confucius constantly advocates and emphasizes that people should learn from Tian and believe in it, he does not elaborate much on "Tian" itself. Zi Gong said, "The writings of Confucius can be heard and heard, but the words of Confucius

about Tian and the way of Tian cannot be heard and heard." Confucius's Way of Tian was not transmitted by words but by example, and qualified disciples were able to comprehend its subtleties. In the *Analects*, there are many sentences about Tian, but Confucius did not give a direct explanation of "Tian". For example, in the matter of sacrifices, Confucius said, "the strange power of the gods is confusing to the gods", but why did he advocate, "Sacrifice as if it were there, sacrifice to the gods as if they were there." But why did he advocate "Sacrifice as if it were here, sacrifice to the gods as if the gods were there"? The fact that Confucius was aware of "Tian" but did not describe it and that he was familiar with ghosts and gods but did not mention them, suggests that Confucius had a habit of not discussing certain topics even when he was well-versed in them. In fact, it is not that Confucius did not elaborate on "Tian", but rather on the extension of "Tian" in human society.

Laozi, on the other hand, focuses on the Tao of Tian itself. First of all, some expressions in the *Analects* and the *Tao Te Ching* prove the similarity between Confucius' and Laozi's understanding of Tian, as shown in the *Analects*: "What does Tian say? When the four seasons are in motion and all things are born, what does Tian say?", "Cultivate yourself to be honorable, cultivate yourself to be at peace with others, cultivate yourself to be at peace with the people." Laozi's "Tao seems always does nothing, but does anything", and "I do nothing, but the people are transformed by themselves" are one and the same. But in addition to this, the *Analects of Confucius* have no more direct description of the sky; it turns out that Confucius is talking about the extensions of the Tao of Tian, while Laozi is talking about the Tao of Tian itself. Lao Tzu says, "Therefore, if we lose the Way, then we will have virtue; if we lose virtue, then we will have benevolence; if we lose benevolence, then we will have righteousness; if we lose righteousness, then we will have propriety". We can understand that virtue, benevolence, righteousness, and propriety are all extensions of the Tao, and have a diminishing relationship. This is what Laozi focuses on in his discussion of "virtue" and "benevolence, righteousness, and propriety". All these virtues are formed by human society by the laws, only the scope of action is getting smaller and smaller, more and more "deliberate", "unnatural", more and more away from the way of Tian. We can also find in the *Analects of Confucius* that it is Tian that gives people their moral mission and that Tian is the ultimate basis for morality and order. Laozi also criticizes the extension of the Tao when he depicts it ("The Great Tao is abolished, and there is benevolence and righteousness", "Rites are the thinness of loyalty and trust, and the first of the chaos".)

However, it is not true that Confucius did not understand this reasoning, so there are two possible reasons why Confucius still had to preach benevolence, righteousness, and propriety: Firstly, Confucius entered the world, restored the Zhou rituals, restored the Way of Tian, and Lao Zi came out of the world, so the advocates of Lao Zi did not need to conform to the social background of the time, but only needed to reveal the correct essence of the unity of man and Tian and to explain it to be used for the learning of future generations. However, Confucius was in a society where the rites and music were in ruins, and even the minimum requirement of the Tao, "Rites", no longer existed in this society, so Confucius could only construct the Tao from the bottom up, and naturally, he could only start with "Rites" and slowly move on to "Tao". Confucius could only construct "Tao" from the bottom up, and naturally, he could only start from "Rites" and slowly move on to "Righteousness" and "Humanity", and it was impossible to talk about "Tao" and "Virtue" directly in that society. The second reason is that their audiences are different. The audience of *Tao Te Ching* is mainly people with higher intelligence, and the content is more mysterious and subtle, while the audience of Confucius is the general public with middle intelligence, and the content is more understandable. Therefore, as mentioned above, Confucius let his enlightened disciples feel the essence of the Way of Tian directly by teaching them through example. Even wisdom such as Lao Zi, before describing the Tao will say, "I do not know its name, strong word said Tao, strong for the name is great. I do not see its head when I welcome it, and I do not see its back when I follow it. The Tao is often nameless. Tao can be very Tao", and so on. They all show that because the Tao is too big for human language

to describe, it is easy to cause misunderstanding so that we can rely on words to understand rather than clinging to words because words have limitations. It is necessary to rely on higher wisdom, so Confucius' audience may be difficult to understand, and even cause misunderstanding, so Confucius did not choose to explain the esoteric origin of the Tao.

This, in turn, explains the difference between the two in terms of how to achieve harmony between man and Tian. Lao Tzu advocates that the Way of the Tao is always losing and that by "seeing vegetation and embracing simplicity", we can break down the artificiality of the latter, and finally return to the Tian of the baby, to achieve the unity of the Naturally and the human, which is what Lao Tzu means by "doing nothing", i.e., not going against the Tian. However, Confucius also understands this and opposes going against Tian (to be offended by Tian, and to have nothing to pray for). The methodology given by Confucius is slightly different; one is to achieve self-restoration through ritual and music indoctrination, to achieve unity between Tian and man in a proactive stance, and to unite with the extent of the natural way, but it is also essentially to break down the greed of the post-human. What is another, more specific form of the way? In contrast to Laozi's reversion to the infant, Confucius focused on the practice and attainment of the Mandate of Tian to achieve unity between Tian and man, which was also advocated by Confucius, who concluded his discourse by saying that "without knowing the Mandate of Tian, one cannot be a gentleman", whereas Laozi, perhaps tacitly accepting that his audience was aware of the Mandate of Tian and that the Mandate of Tian was an epithet of the Tao, did not address it much in the *Tao Te Ching*.

Table 1: Comparison of Laozi's and Confucius' views on the unity of Tian and humankind

	Objects of emulation of Tian	Focus of discussion	the original intention of the creation	target audience	Methodology for the integration of Tian and man
Confucius	Days.	The Extent of the Word.	Promote culture and change the society of the time.	Medium Wisdom.	Rituals and music educate, restore oneself to the rites, and practice the Mandate of Tian.
"I, your father" (in anger, or out of contempt)	Ground.	The Origin of the Way.	To set the record straight and reveal the mysteries of the Word.	Higher Wisdom.	Seeing vegetarianism and embracing simplicity, the road for the day loss, return to the baby.

4. Conclusion

Confucius and Laozi are talking about the same set of perceptions of the celestial system. Although it seems that Laozi discusses "Tao", and "virtue", and Confucius discusses "benevolence, righteousness and propriety", they are essentially promoting the Way of Tian, discussing how to unite people with the Way of Tian, and giving different methodologies to different people. But they were all essentially promoting the Way of Tian, discussing how to unite people with the Way of Tian, all of which were essentially following Tian and eliminating the artificial desires of the acquired Tian. Their differences are only different in dimension, but in meeting the needs of different people. Through the harmony between man and Tian, Confucius accomplished realistic guidance to the general public, including the construction of the concept of natural destiny, and the construction of social human ethics with the help of the outreach of the natural way. Laozi, on the other hand, explains the core mystery of the Way of Tian, answers the questions of those who want to seek further, and points out that the highest pursuit of human society should not only stop at the existing social norms but also pursue the realm of "Tao" and "virtue". Combined with the comparative study of this article,

we can find that the root of social ethics is the laws of Tian, and compliance with both can be called "harmony between man and Tian". Looking at history, Confucianism and Taoism have become an important ideological resource of traditional Chinese culture, influencing later generations of the theory of "celestial induction", Cheng-Zhu theory, Yang-Ming psychology, and other important doctrines. Painting, architecture, and other forms of art have also had a far-reaching impact [12-14]. At the same time, the unity of man and Tian has a vital role in the cultural self-confidence of contemporary Chinese people; only when we understand the unique core of our own culture do we have more confidence in cultural exchanges. At the same time, modern people need to rethink the relationship between man and Tian, and how to give full play to the creativity of man under the premise of conforming to Tian and the advantages of science and technology, and protecting the ecological environment to achieve sustainable development with important guiding significance and inspiration [15].

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