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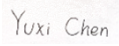
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**An Exploration of the Continuity Between
Tian and *Ren* in the *Dao De Jing***

《道德經》「天人關係」之探討

A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint

David

In fulfilment of the requirements for BA (Hons) in Sinology Degree

威爾士三一聖大衛大學

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Abstract

In the Laozi, there are many chapters and sentences dealing with the relationship between heaven and human (e.g. Chapter 9, Chapter 17, etc.). Laozi uses the metaphor of the 'opening bow' to describe the tension and relaxation of the Heavenly Way force, while the 'human way' is different. In Laozi's ideal 'relationship between heaven and human', people should follow the trend of the movement of the heavenly path. Therefore, the relationship between the 'Way of Heaven' and the 'Way of Man' in the Laozi is worthy of discussion and study.

Key words: tian, the way-making, the way of human beings, continuity

摘 要

在《道德經》中，有非常多涉及到「天」與「人」以及兩者關係的章句。老子以「張弓」喻天道運行的張滿與鬆弛；而「人道」則不然，在自我增強時容易在擴張累積的過程中通過侵犯外界人事物來積累自我。而老子理想的「天人關係」，應該是人能效仿天道運轉的趨勢。因此，《老子》中「天之道」與「人之道」的關係非常值得討論與研究。

關鍵詞: 天，道，人之道，天之道，天人關係

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
摘要	ii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Ancient philosophers' views	1
1.2. Modern research findings	3
2. The Definition of <i>Tian</i> & <i>Ren</i> in the <i>Dao De Jing</i>	3
2.1. The Implications of <i>Tian</i> in the <i>Dao De Jing</i>	4
2.2. The Implications of <i>Ren</i> in the <i>Dao De Jing</i>	8
3. The Understandings of the Continuity Between <i>Tian</i> and <i>Ren</i>	12
4. Inspiration for Human Society	14
4.1. Reflections on Personal Development and Spirituality	15
4.2. Reflections on Environmental Issues	16
5. Conclusion	18
Bibliography	20

1. Introduction

In the *Dao De Jing*, Laozi, the pioneer of Taoist thought, attached great importance to the relationship between *Tian* 天 and *Ren* 人, and many chapters in the text deal with the discussion of these two terms (and indeed all being things). More specifically, the concept of *Tian* is usually contrasted with *Ren*, which in the Taoist classics is concerned with the continuity between humans and *tian*. For Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 莊子 (and many other scholars and thinkers), humans cannot leave the way of *Tian* alone to contemplate the question of 'humanity'. When 'humanity' is detached from the Way of *Tian*, and moves towards a closed human self-recognition, human social behaviour and civilisation will often lead to self-inflicted closure or an untimely termination of the Middle Way. This kind of thought has had a profound and long-lasting impact not only on those interested in Taoist studies but also in the history of Chinese philosophy.

1.1. Ancient philosophers' views

Chinese philosophers throughout the ages have discussed the relationship between *tian* and humans with passion and seriousness. As the Song dynasty philosopher Shao Yong 邵雍 put it, 'If one does not accomplish the study of *tian* and humanity, one cannot learn enough.'¹ Among those substantial arguments, the most important figures to be mentioned in the discussion are Confucius and Laozi. Confucius and Laozi were the founders of Confucianism and Taoism respectively in the pre-Qin dynasty, and they are also the most representative icons of these two schools of thought. The views of Laozi are at the core of this dissertation and will be presented in more details below. Before doing so, let us take a brief look at Confucius' view.

In Confucianism, as represented by Confucius, '*tian*' has a deified image. Although Confucius spoke less about the concept of *tian* (43 references to it in the *Analects*, but only 11 in Confucius' own words), he nevertheless regarded it as an important ideological concept. In this conception, '*tian*' is not only the sky in the

¹ Hou Wailu 侯外廬, *Zhongguo Sixiang Tongshi* 中國思想通史 [A General History of Chinese Thought] (Beijing: Renmin Book Company, 1980), pp.122.

physical sense, but also the supreme sovereign of the virtue will. For example, in the *Analects*, there is a verse says, 'If one is sinned against by *Tian*, one has nothing to pray for.'² This phrase clearly conveys the divine character of *tian* in Confucianism. If Confucius had a reverence for *tian* that he did not dare to speak of, then Mencius' thought further bridged the gap between *tian* and humans. He said, 'Those who have fulfilled their hearts will know their nature; those who know their nature will know *tian*.'³ Mencius believed that '*tian*' is the highest moral spirit that humans can attain, and this is a deeper form of subjective mindfulness. On the other hand, the ideas of *tian* of Laozi and Zhuangzi is not so full of moral overtones and hierarchical distinctions, it is more akin to the *Dao* 道 described by Laozi, which is free from emotion and comments. Similarly, although pre-Qin Taoism valued the existence of humans, it did not consider humanity to be the center of the world. As the German sinologist Hans-Georg Moeller observed, 'Human beings are not only not rulers of nature, they are not agents with a special connection to existence, they are not even beings with cognitive priority.'⁴ This is a more expansive, macroscopic view of human beings and all things.

With the change of time, later scholars have been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by pre-Qin Confucianism and Taoism in their thinking about the continuity between *tian* and *ren*, regardless of the school of thought. For example, Xunzi 荀子 wrote a famous treatise *Tiandao Lun* 天道論, the Han Dynasty scholar Liu Xiang 劉向's work the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the Song Dynasty scholar Zhang Zai 張載's *Zhengmeng* 正蒙, and the Ming Dynasty scholar Wang Fuzhi 王夫之's work *Zhuangzi Tong* 莊子通, etc. all of which are crystals of the integration of pre-Qin Confucian and Taoist thought.

² He Yan 何晏, Xing Bing 邢昺, Lunyu Zhushu 論語注疏 [The Commentary of the Analects of Confucius] in the Shisanjing Zhushu 十三經注疏 [Exegesis of the Thirteen Classics], ed. by Committee for the Exegesis of the Thirteen Classics 十三經注疏委員會, Li Xueqin 李學勤 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000).

³ James Legge (the version is modified by myself), The Chinese Classics, 5 vols (Taipei: Nantian shuju, 2016) vol. I & II, pp. 448-449.

⁴ Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.75.

1.2. Modern research findings

Many modern scholars are still keenly interested in *tian-ren* relationship subject and attach great significance to it. For example, Qian Mu 錢穆 once remarked, 'The greatest contribution of Chinese culture in the past has been the study of the relationship between *tian* and *ren*.'⁵ Guo Moruo 郭沫若, for another example, wrote a book in the early twentieth century entitled *The Progress of the Pre-Qin Heavenly Way*, which generated much discussion and research. Scholars such as Feng Youlan 馮友蘭,⁶ Zhang Dainian 張岱年,⁷ Zhu Bokun 朱伯崑,⁸ Song Zhiming 宋志明 and Jiang Ritian 姜日天 etc. also gave their own perspectives in the philosophical field.

However, although the *tian-ren* relationship remains a popular topic, due to the gap in historical and cultural succession and the long interval of time, many contemporary studies have created certain misunderstandings and confusions about it. Therefore, this dissertation needs to clarify the various viewpoints and make an objective assessment. Although the focus of this dissertation is on the *Dao De Jing*, it is intricately linked to other schools of thought and should therefore be explored with a greater depth and breadth of vision, beyond the confines of time and position.

2. The Definition of *Tian* & *Ren* in the *Dao De Jing*

The *Dao De Jing* is the fundamental classic of Taoism, the most concentrated expression of Laozi's thought (there are various opinions as to whether the author was Laozi himself, which is an unresolved dispute.) It is divided into two sections, 81 chapters, and contains over 5,000 Chinese characters in total. There

⁵ Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhongguo Wenhushi Daolun* 中國文化史導論 [The Introduction to Chinese Cultural History] (Shanghai: Shangwu Book Company, 1994) · pp.455.

⁶ Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo Zhexueshi Xinbian* 中國哲學史新編 [A New Edition of the History of Chinese Philosophy] (Beijing: Ren Min Book Company, 2001) .

⁷ Zhang Dainian 張岱年, *Zhongguo Zhexue Dagang* 中國哲學大綱 [Outline of Chinese Philosophy] (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1982), pp.211.

⁸ Zhu Bokun 朱伯崑, *Daojia de Siweifangshi Yu Zhongguo Xingshangxue Chuantong* 道家的思維方式與中國形上學傳統 [The Taoist Way of Thinking and the Chinese Formalist Tradition] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2015) · pp.57.

are three surviving versions of the *Dao De Jing*: the version edited by Wang Bi 王弼, a scholar of the Jin dynasties;⁹ the version on silk unearthed in 1973 at the Mawangdui 馬王堆 Han tombs in Hunan Province;¹⁰ and the version on bamboo scrolls unearthed in 1993 at the Guodian 郭店 Chu tombs in Hubei Province.¹¹ Because of the clear structure of Wang Bi's edition, all discussions in this dissertation are based on Wang Bi's edited version and do not compare the text of the editions too much. As for the terms *tian* and *ren*(humanity), they appear very frequently in the chapters of the *Dao De Jing*, and it is therefore necessary to discuss them in their own proper context.

2.1. The Implications of *Tian* in the *Dao De Jing*

The term *tian* appears in 46 of the 81 chapters of the *Dao De Jing* (93 characters in total). The classification table is shown below.

The Terms	Number of Chapters Appearing	Contrast of Translation of the Terms ¹²
<i>Tian</i> 天 (the single character)	Ch.25/39/59/67/68/73	Rogar Ames' version: heavens/ <i>tian</i> (59/73)/nature ¹³ Lin Yutang 林語堂's version: Heaven ¹⁴ D. C. Lau: (the) heaven ¹⁵

⁹ Wang Bi 王弼, Lou Yulie 樓宇烈, *Laozi Daode Zhenjing Zhu Jiaoshi* 老子道德真經注校釋 [Explanations of The Commentary on the Genuine Daodejing] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2008).

¹⁰ Lao Jian 勞健, *Laozi Guben Kao* 老子古本考 [An Investigation into the Ancient Editions of the Laozi] in the *Laozi Jicheng* 老子集成 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011).

¹¹ Li Shuihai 李水海, *Boshu Laozi Jiaojian Shipping* 帛書老子校箋譯評 (Xian: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2014)

¹² There are many translations of the *Dao De Jing*, so here is a comparison based on the relevance of the contents and the three that I consider to be more accurate (the translations by Rogar T. Ames, Lin Yutang and D.C. Lau respectively).

¹³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004).

¹⁴ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Laotse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

¹⁵ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

<i>Tianxia</i> 天下	Ch.2/13/22/25/26/28/29/ 30/31/32/35/39/40/43/ 45/46/47/48/49/ 52/54/56/57/60/61/62/6 3/66/67/70/77/78	Rogar Ames' version: the world¹⁶ Lin Yutang's version: the world/ the earth/all things/the center/the universe¹⁷ D. C. Lau: the world/the empire¹⁸
<i>Tiandi</i> 天地	Ch.1/5/6/7/23/25/32	Rogar Ames' version: the heavens and the earth/the world¹⁹ Lin Yutang's version: Heaven and earth/Nature/ the universe²⁰ D. C. Lau: heaven and earth²¹
<i>Tian Dao</i> 天道/天之道	Ch.9/47/73/77/79	Rogar Ames' version: the way that <i>tian</i> works/<i>tian's</i> way/ the way-making of <i>tian</i>²² Lin Yutang's version: Heaven's way²³ D. C. Lau: the way of heaven/the Tao of heaven/ Heaven's way²⁴

Selected translations of important chapters and sentences below:

Chapter 2: As soon as everyone in the world knows that the beautiful are beautiful, there is already ugliness.天下皆知美之為美，斯惡矣。

Chapter 13: Thus those who value the care of their own persons more than running the world can indeterminacy be entrusted with the world. And those who begrudge their persons as though they were the world can be put in charge of the world.故貴為身於天下，若可以託天下矣；愛以身為天下，如可以寄天下矣。

¹⁶ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

¹⁷ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Laotse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

¹⁸ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

¹⁹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

²⁰ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Laotse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

²¹ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

²² Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004).

²³ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Laotse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

²⁴ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

Chapter 25: Way-making is grand, the heavens are grand, the earth is grand, and the king is also grand. Within our territories, there are four ‘grandeers’ and the king occupies one of them. Human beings emulate the earth, the earth emulates the heavens, the heavens emulates way-making, and way-making emulates what is spontaneously so. 道大，天大，地大，王亦大。國中有四大，而王居一焉。人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

Chapter 47: Venture not beyond your doors to know the world; Peer not outside your window to know the way-making of tian. 不出於戶，以知天下；不窺於牖，以知天道。

Chapter 79: The way of tian shows no partiality; It is really on the side of people who are good in their relationships. 夫天道無親，常親善人。²⁵

As the table demonstrates, the terms relating to *tian* in the *Dao De Jing* are basically divided into four main categories: *tian* (a separate Chinese character), *tianxia* (the world), *tiandi* (heaven and earth), and *tian dao* (the way of heaven). Apart from the vast majority of ‘*tianxia*’, which serves to define the scope of a statement, how the rest of the terms are to be understood reveals an intriguing aspect.

Generally speaking, scholars who have studied the *Dao De Jing*, both in ancient and modern times, have interpreted *tian* in the text as a natural, physical existence. For example, in Chapter 5 contains a sentence ‘Heaven and Earth are not partial to institutionalized morality’ 天地不仁，²⁶ the commentaries of Wang Bi 王弼，²⁷ He Shang Gong 河上公²⁸ and Su Zhe 蘇轍²⁹ all have the understandings of ‘letting nature take its course’. Chen Guying 陳鼓應 said, ‘It means that *Tiandi* (heaven and earth) are only natural, physical beings that do not have human-like feelings.’³⁰ Furthermore, according to Kouji Fukunaga 福永

²⁵ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: “Making This Life Significant” : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

²⁶ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: “Making This Life Significant” : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), pp.97.

²⁷ Wang Bi 王弼, Lou Yulie 樓宇烈, *Laozi Daode Zhenjing Zhu Jiaoshi* 老子道德真經注校釋 [Explanations of The Commentary on the Genuine Daodejing] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2008), pp.16.

²⁸ Heshang Gong 河上公, *Laozi daodejing heshanggong zhangju* 老子道德經河上公章句 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), pp. 18-19.

²⁹ Su Zhe 蘇轍, ‘*Daode zhenjing zhu* 道德真經注’ , in *Laozi jicheng* 老子集成, ed. by Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基 and Chen Hongxing 陳紅星 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), vol. 3, p. 3.

³⁰ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi: With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介英文版, ed. by Paul J. D’ Ambrosio, Xiao Ouyang (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020), pp.32-33.

光司, 'The natural rationale of *Tiandi* (heaven and earth) is a non-emotional place without human will and feelings, purposeful intent and sense of value. it is, after all, only a physical, natural existence.'³¹ Hu Shi 胡適 even considers this sentence to be the foundational viewpoint on which the ancient Chinese philosophy of nature was founded.³² However, the translation of *tian* reveals some problems here. As can be seen from the table, the majority of translators have adopted the terms 'heaven' and 'nature'. However, if considered carefully, both terms have their limitations and do not fully capture the meaning of *tian* as described by Laozi. The word 'heaven' has strong religious theological overtones. The Oxford Dictionary explains 'heaven' this way: 'A place regarded in various religions as the abode of God (or the gods) and the angels, and of the good after death, often traditionally depicted as being above the sky.'³³ It is obvious that this is not the meaning that the *Dao De Jing* was intended to express (It is somewhat similar to the Confucian concept of 'tian'). Roger T. Ames has thought deeply about this issue. He stated,

Tian is a term that we will not translate. The main reason is that we believe its traditional translation 'heaven' does not fail to evoke misleading associations with our Abrahamic heritage. Such theological associations are largely irrelevant to the Chinese experience, but Chinese cultural practice is often rewritten by this alien premise. Therefore, in order to gain a more accurate understanding of *tian*, efforts must be made to release this terminology from this misleading association.³⁴

The complexity of *tian* can be felt in this context, a characteristic that is difficult for scholars of the Chinese language to perceive, since the Chinese character *tian* can be easily found everywhere, but no one can really explain its meaning if they really try to do so. Ames asked a question: rather than elucidating the answer of 'what is *tian*', what would produce the most effective relationship between

³¹ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *The Annotated Critical Laozi: With Contemporary Explication and Traditional Commentary* 老子今註今譯及評介英文版, ed. by Paul J. D' Ambrosio, Xiao Ouyang (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020), pp.34.

³² Yan Kejun 嚴可均, *Laozi Tangben Kaoyi* 老子唐本考異 [Investigation into the Differences in Tang-Dynasty Editions of the Laozi] in the *Laozi Jicheng* 老子集成 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011).

³³ *Lexico*, <<https://www.lexico.com/definition/heaven>>, 26 March 2021.

³⁴ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

humans and their surroundings?³⁵ This is a very thought-provoking issue. It is clear from the above that the concept of a 'divine' heaven, which was prevalent during the Yin and Zhou periods, was gradually transformed into an impersonal concept in the *Dao De Jing*, which denoted the regular movement of nature. This was a very innovative discovery at the time. However, this is not the same as endorsing a purely physical concept of 'nature' as *tian*. *Tian* has a God-like character - Laozi did not deny this, but rather he stepped out of the prevailing view and saw the natural side of *tian*. This does not mean that the spiritual aspect of it is to be denied. Therefore, in conclusion, both the 'natural' and 'spiritual' aspects of Laozi's Heaven cannot be summarized purely, but should be seen in a more complex and inclusive light.

2.2. The Implications of *Ren* in the *Dao De Jing*

The term *ren* appears in 41 of the 81 chapters of the *Dao De Jing* (93 characters in total). The classification table is shown below.

The Terms	Number of Chapters Appearing	Contrast of Translation of the Terms ³⁶
<i>Ren</i> 人 (the single character)	Ch.12/20/23/25/30/31/ 33/36/42/50/53/57/58/5 9/60/61/68/76/80	Rogar Ames' version: People/the human being/ the common people ³⁷ Lin Yutang 林語堂's version: Men/the people/ ³⁸ D. C. Lau: (the) people ³⁹

³⁵ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

³⁶ There are many translations of the *Dao De Jing*, so here is a comparison based on the relevance of the contents and the three that I consider to be more accurate (the translations by Rogar T. Ames, Lin Yutang and D.C. Lau respectively).

³⁷ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

³⁸ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Lao-tse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

³⁹ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

<i>Shengren</i> 聖人	Ch.2/3/5/7/26/27/28/29/ 47/49/57/57/58/60/64/ 66/70/71/72/73/77/78/ 79/81	Rogar Ames' version: the sages⁴⁰ Lin Yutang's version: The sage⁴¹ D. C. Lau: the sage/sages⁴²
<i>Zhongren</i> 眾人/俗人	Ch.8/20/64	Rogar Ames' version: the crowd/most people/common people⁴³ Lin Yutang's version: The people of the world⁴⁴ D. C. Lau: myriad creatures/ Vulgar people⁴⁵
<i>Ren Dao</i> 人道/人之道	Ch.77	Rogar Ames' version: the way of human beings⁴⁶ Lin Yutang's version: man's way⁴⁷ D. C. Lau: the way of man⁴⁸

Selected translations of important chapters and sentences below:

Chapter 12: The five colors blinds the eye, the hard riding of the hunt addles both heart and mind. Property hard to come by subverts proper conduct, the five flavors destroy the palate, and the five notes impair the ear. It is for this reason that in the proper governing by the sage: they exert their efforts on behalf of the abdomen rather than the eye.五色使人目盲；馳騁田獵，使人心發狂；難得之貨，使人之行妨。五味使人之口爽，五音使人之耳聾，

⁴⁰ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

⁴¹ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Lao-tse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

⁴² D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

⁴³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

⁴⁴ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Lao-tse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

⁴⁵ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

⁴⁶ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

⁴⁷ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *The Wisdom of Lao-tse* 老子的智慧, 2 vols (Xinbei: Zhengzhong shuju, 2019).

⁴⁸ D. C. Lau, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

是以聖人之治也，為腹不為目，故去彼取此。

Chapter 33: To know others is wisdom; to know oneself is acuity. To conquer others is power; to conquer oneself is strength. 知人者知也，自知者明也；勝人者有力也，自勝者強也。

Chapter 49: Sages really think and feel immediately. They take the thoughts and feelings of the common people as their own. 聖人無常心，以百姓心為心。

Chapter 64: It is for this reason the sages in leaving off desiring, do not prize property that is hard to come by, and in studying not to study. Return to what most people have passed over. Although they are capable of helping all things follow their own course, they would not think of doing so. 是以聖人欲不欲，而不貴難得之貨，學不學，而復眾人之所過。能輔萬物之自然而弗敢為。⁴⁹

It is clear that Laozi is selective in his distinctions between different people. He divides *ren* into sages and the common people. Confucianism also has a very classical image of the sage, an ideal that is inseparable from both status and moral reverence. What is the image of the Taoist sage like? I was once curious about this: Is the sage in Laozi's view a ruler? Is this person the ideal personality of the Way of Heaven - and if so, is this another form of divine myth (or idolization)? The answer is not definite, but there must be something that separates the Sage from the common person. As Chen Guying 陳鼓應 explains, 'the sage is the highest ideal figure in Taoism, and his personality is different from that of Confucianism. In Confucianism, the sage is a moral person who is ethical and moralizing; in Taoism, the sage embodies nature, expands the inner world of life, and abandons all fetters that affect the free movement of mind and body.'⁵⁰ Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 said, 'The sage, as Laozi termed this, does everything within his power to perform the acts of *tiandi* (heaven and earth) without doing anything.'⁵¹ In other words, the sage is not the standard bearer here, not the perfect articulator, but certainly the one who understands and responds to 'the way-making of *tian*'. This

⁴⁹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004)

⁵⁰ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, Wang Yunwu 王雲五, *Laozi jinzhu jinyi ji pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), pp.288.

⁵¹ Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters*, trans. by Ronald Egan (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998).

is not the traditional image of a heroic leader, but more like a silent and sober observer - a sage who would never impose his will on any outside world. Yet he understood the causes and consequences. As Moeller stated,

The sage's equanimity in moral matters is of paramount importance because morality is so fluid. Moral judgements can easily turn into conflicts, which can often lead to arguments, even to armed or violent conflicts, and even to war. Moral judgements are potentially dangerous. In non-human nature, there are no moral principles that must be observed. It cannot be said that winter is 'eviler' than summer; it can only be stated that winter is colder. In the human realm, however, moral judgements can easily give rise to hostility. Thus, a complementary judgement can become confrontational. Morality thus poses a major threat to social stability. If sages are selfish, they can impede the smooth functioning of society, and the sages themselves can become hostile. They therefore refused to make moral judgements, to engage in moral discourse and to discuss right and wrong, and in this way the rulers could prevent the discourse from turning violent.⁵²

In this way, the greatest difference between sages and common people lies in whether they can completely leave behind their private positions. The sage is completely without self, and this 'selflessness' is not a slightly self-inspired kind of sacrificing one's own interests for the good of the masses, but a complete letting go of all the opposing views of good and evil, allowing all things to develop in their own way without judgement or interference. This is the hardest thing to find and the toughest thing to do.

In short, it is easy to see that in Taoist thought, *tian* is not the most supreme being. Like everything else, Heaven follows the laws of the *Dao* 道 - the way in which the opposite of what is extreme is true, the way in which one grows and the other falls. In a way, the Taoist sage is a successful obedient person, the maximum of human imagination that can be released from its fetters. However, the vast majority of ordinary people are not aware of these rules of growth, and so in the course of their own development, there is always a forced 'action' - it is better to relax than to do anything else.

⁵² Moeller, Hans-Georg, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp.143.

3.The Understandings of the Continuity Between *Tian* and *Ren*

The question of what kind of relationship between *tian* and *ren* presented in the *Dao De Jing* is actually a rather complicated subject. Chapter 77 is the only one in the *Dao De Jing* in which both the way of human beings and the way that *tian* works are mentioned, so I would like to focus on this chapter to present an analysis. Roger T. Ames translated this chapter as follow,

The way of tian is like archers drawing their bows.
To hit something high in the air, they pull the string downward.
To hit something lower, they pull the string upward.
When they have drawn the string too far back, they let some go,
And when they have not drawn it far enough, they pull harder.

The way of tian is also to let some go where there is excess
And to augment where there is not enough.

The way of human beings on the other hand is not like this at all.
It is instead to take away from those who do not have enough
In order to give more to those who already have too much.
Who then in having too much is able to draw on this excess to make an offering
to the world?
Perhaps only those who are way-making.
It is thus that sages act on behalf of things but do not make any claim on them,
They see things through to fruition but do not take credit for them.
It is in such a way that they refrain from making a display of their worth.⁵³

In this chapter, Laozi used the metaphor of 'drawing bow' to illustrate the rule of the way that *tian* works, which is to reduce the excesses and to make up for the deficiencies. In other words, there is no expansion of the universal rule to its fullest extent, when it (the energy and potential of all things) reaches the right level and should recede, the development of all creatures will naturally recede in accordance with this trend. However, the way of human beings mentioned here sometimes do not follow this way. The situation of human beings is divided into the way of sages who understand and follow the way-making; and the way of common human beings who 'sacrifice' what is not enough to serve. Those who fail to realize this will, to a greater or lesser extent, embark on the path of self-

⁵³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004).pp.266-267.

expansion and begin to develop in a way that deviates from the *dao*(way-making), and will eventually consume all spiritual and material resources and lose their original vitality. It should be remembered that all living things (include people) in the world have an interdependent relationship with each other, and that it is this sense of equilibrium without friction, that respects the totality of contextualized things and establishes a sense of balance between them, which is what enhances the relationship of mutual growth and development. As Zhuangzi described the sages' mind,

The stillness of the sages is not simply a matter of their saying: 'Stilling is good!' and hence they are still. Rather, they are still because none of the myriad things are able to agitate their hearts and mind. When water is still, it illuminates one's whiskers and eyebrows, and in its placidity, it provides a standard so that skilled artisans can take their measure from it. If the stillness of water provides illumination, how much more so one's spirit. The stillness of the heart-and-mind of the sage makes it mirror to the whole world and the looking glass for all of the myriad things.⁵⁴

In the philosophical thinking of Laozi and Zhuangzi, the concept of the continuity between *tian* and *ren* is actually meant to be integrated, mutually complementary and without distinction. If there were no separation and opposition, there would certainly be no need to speak of 'oneness', but the problem is that in reality (especially modern times), the relationship between *tian* and *ren* has become a state of twofold opposition due to historical transmission, different schools of thought, and so on. To the extent that it is necessary to speak of 'oneness'. In other words, *tian* and *ren* were united in their original state, but now they have become separate and have deviated from their original aspect, and there are various feelings of fragmentation, so the question of return needs to be raised, a return to the origin, to simplicity and to truth. The ultimate and final destination of Daoist *tian-ren* study lies precisely in how to realize and fulfil the task of returning to the origin. If one can let go of one's outward expansion and remain soft and humble, then one maybe re-enters a realm of unrefined, unintentional, supreme purity. This realm is the union of humans and the *Dao*, and also the unity of humans and *tian*.

In Laozi's view, human life is not isolated. Fundamentally, there are invisible

⁵⁴ Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Zhuangzi Jijie* 莊子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1999), pp.415.

and intricate links between life and nature, and connections between single life and all things. At the same time, life belongs to human society as a whole, and actually, human society is also a product of the natural world. Laozi extends the scope of human thinking from personal life to the entire universe, placing the individual, society and the universe within the vast system of the 'way of nature 自然之道', placing finite life, society and humanity within infinite time and space, placing tangible universal existence within the invisible *Myriad Nothing*, and harmonizing the two organically.

To conclude, *tian* and *ren* are in a complex, non-dualistic symbiosis. As Rogar Ames states,

Tian and human beings are a relational sphere that suggests a certain symbiosis and yet a hierarchical relationship: tian is shaped by human experience, and what makes man human is constantly reshaped by heaven. That is to say, heaven is not merely a natural world isolated from human machinations, but, on the contrary, it is a living, progressively accumulated regularity, both natural and that which is not only inseparable from human experience, but is also, to a large extent, the incubation of human experience.⁵⁵

This is the cosmogony of Laozi's concept of 'tian-ren relationship'. It rejects both egoism and egocentrism, not to mention the anthropocentrism (and arguably not humanism) of the traditional philosophical view. The profundity and richness of the idea of tian-ren relationship' in Laozi's *Dao De Jing* transcends time and space and can still be very wonderfully enlightening for contemporary society.

4. Inspiration for Human Society

Based on the previous descriptions, it is clear that the image of the Daoist sage can be referred to as the fulfiller of the way-making of *tian*. Specifically, the sage should follow the ways of heaven and earth (天地之道) and give a maximum space to all living things. They allow the greatest space for all things to flow into the adventure of its own vitality. In the same way, the sage also dilutes his/her self-will, his/her forced interventions, so that the sage do not seem to care for the people in particular (However, this is only what it appears to be, not what it

⁵⁵ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004).pp.76.

actually is, and it is not a negative action), and they can find the vitality to realize themselves. Let us bring the landscape back to the common creatures themselves, but the real protagonists are the creatures and the people. The lives of all things are in fact the main characters, and they have the potential and energy to grow and adjust by themselves. Heartlessness may enable every life to enter into a state of self-realization.

4.1. Reflections on Personal Development and Spirituality

Some scholars have the view that Daoism is obsessed with following nature, failing to see the role of human beings and even equating them with other animals. But actually, the *Dao De Jing* (and other Daoism classics) attaches great importance to the value of human beings. For instance, according to Laozi, there are 'four grantees' in the universe, namely, 'Dao is grand, Tian is grand, Earth is grand, and Human being is also grand'⁵⁶ In Laozi's view, human is as big as *tian*, earth and *dao*. Obviously, Laozi does not ignore the specialty of human. But at the same time, people are also reminded to put themselves in the right position, not to exaggerate this value too much. The relationship between human and all things in nature is not one in the master- dominated relationship. Human is indeed superior to other creatures, however, human is also not the only being in the nature. Here Laozi saw the specialness and importance of human, but at the same time recognized that humans have their own limits and scope, which is undoubtedly a very profound and reasonable statement.

In modern society, most people are obsessed with the ideas of rigidity, believing that it is the only way to bring about self-actualization. But Laozi reminded people that there is a limit to the expansion of this kind of strength, and that at times, the opposite will be true. It is a situational inter-regulation and a force of action and reaction. People should not apply the force alone, but rather learn to respond and retract when the counter force comes, to move in and out, so that there is flexibility and mutual transformation, becoming a symbiotic and mutually subjective form of mediation.

⁵⁶ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: "Making This Life Significant" : A Philosophical Translation* 道不遠人——比較哲學視域中的老子, trans. He Jinli (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004).pp.144.

In the *Book of Changes*, it is often said that when *yang* 陽 flourishes, it turns to *yin* 陰, and vice versa. The symbolism is also a turning point in worldly affairs. A turning point (another opposite trend) in human affairs, such as the extreme of joy and the extreme of negation(樂極生悲/禍福相依). For example, in Chapter 77 of the *Dao De Jing*, the phrase 'holding and filling cannot keep(持而盈之，莫之能守)' is symbolic of the opposite effect of over-filling. When the ego/desire is like a full cup, it becomes difficult to accept differences in others, and to be humble and tolerant. Similarly, being too sharp in daily lives may cause interpersonal stabbing and breaking. This can be a prominence of the ego. Laozi was not against this straightforward, but his emphasis was on the symbiotic existence between people, so a better action needs to form a reciprocal relationship of response. If there is too much sharpness in us, there are times when we encounter situations that can be self-defeating and hurt others making what was a harmonious mutual relationship turn into conflict. 'Gold inlay' represents the over-exaggeration of wealth and its importance as a symbol of ego power. Often when wealth becomes an extension of the desires, it is easy to indulge in materialism and power, creating feelings of jealousy and deprivation towards others. This is also true of wealth and pride. Fighting humility with wealth can lead to excessive arrogance. In this way Laozi reminded people that it is easy to become satiated by the temporary satisfaction of desires, to fall into a sharp, powerful ego, to fall into materialistic desires, to strive for displays of wealth and social status, but that such an over-satiation of the 'way of human' can easily lead to the opposite development.

4.2. Reflections on Environmental Issues

In the development of modern society, there is a situation in which nature spirit cannot co-exist in harmony in the relationship between humans and nature. From a historical perspective, for example, Chinese nation has been influenced by Confucianism and Taoism education since ancient times, and the people's reverence and appreciation for nature has been presented in their productive lives, for they know that only by following the rules of nature can they live in harmony with all other living things. However, in modern industrial society, material power is expanding while spiritual (cultural) power is shrinking. A

series of social institutions and regulations have invariably led to a change in people's values and indulgent behaviour. Some may find this a paradox, for most people, social norms are undoubtedly the cords that circumvent life. In Daoism, however, it is advocated that everything should be left to nature, that nothing should be changed artificially, and that if there are social norms, then they will restrict the naturalness of humanity and inevitably lead to unreasonable demands on nature and a disorderly life. In current society, people are restricted in their closeness to nature by various social pressures. In ancient times, people were so free and natural between *tiandi* (heaven and earth) with the sky as their cover and the earth as their bunk. In modern society, however, the only people who can 'enjoy' this are the beggars along the streets (to a certain extent this is true). The subject of the act has changed and the taste is naturally different. The way of human beings and the relationship between humans and nature, as learned from the Daoist study of *tian-ren* continuity and modern environmentalism, should together be the ultimate concern and the ultimate goal to be pursued by mankind. Believing that human and nature are an inseparable unity, it is emphasized that humans are part of nature and should follow the path of *tian* and maintain a harmonious relationship with nature. To promote the construction of ecological civilisation and sustainable social development, people should advocate respect for the *tian*, respect the idea of 'the unity of heaven and human' and create a good natural and human environment.

According to Daoists, this is due to the fact that the governance of society has made people tired of running around and behaving against human nature, causing disharmony between *ren* and *tian*. Should we therefore abandon the institutional norms of modern society and be purely 'natural'? In the course of thousands of years of history, human beings have changed, nature has changed, and society has changed. It is evident that humans have not only had external contact with nature, but has also created a rich spiritual and material culture, which inevitably requires the regulation of social institutions for orderly development. Zhuangzi advocated that humans should conform to nature, and his main goal was to return to the basics. He was opposed to all artificial creation, i.e.,

to all expressions of knowledge, emotion and intention.⁵⁷ Therefore, Zhuangzi's thought is that of the opposition between *ren* and *tian*, he believed that both the way of *tian* works and the way of human beings refer to nature.⁵⁸

Further, Laozi see that the ultimate cause of the crisis is the separation of man and nature. In Taoism, on the other hand, the dichotomy between heaven and man and the separation of Tao and man is not revealed with a great sense of responsibility and profound wisdom only after the violation of the unity of heaven and man and the unity of *Dao* and human. This is different from what modern environmentalists have pointed out. This is different from modern environmentalists who point out that the environmental crisis is caused by the abuse of reason and the expansion of materialistic desires by humans. The idea of the synergistic development of man and nature, with its emphasis on respect for all life and nature itself and on moral responsibility, has become the highest and universal ethical principle of modern environmentalism and is seen as the superior method and approach to solving modern environmental problems. And does not Daoism, which espouses Daoism as the precious truth of nature, the natural way of human, and the rule of nature as the precious truth, in a nutshell, natural inaction, the highest principle for dealing with the relationship between human and nature, provide mankind with the deepest and most effective method and path for solving environmental problems.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, *tian-ren* continuity is eternal because it is not in linear time; it is a circle without a beginning or an end. Its longevity is a sustainable longevity. Its true longevity is an infinite cycle of repetition. It does not think it can interfere or direct itself, so it allows all things in heaven and earth to nurture and transform with their own karma.

The issue of *tian* and *ren* has been a constant theme throughout the ages, and as time progresses and develops, the relationship between *tian* and *ren* is constantly being given new content and interpretation by many of scholars,

⁵⁷ Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Zhuangzi Jijie* 莊子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1999).

⁵⁸ Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Zhuangzi Jijie* 莊子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1999).

thinkers and philosophers. Laozi's idea of the relationship between *tian* and *ren* has been embodied and conveyed in the *Dao De Jing* clearly, and has had a profound influence on many other schools of thought in later ages.

Moreover, the relationship between *tian* and *ren* in the *Dao De Jing* is one of complex symbiosis, dissociation and return. Although Laozi's concept of *tian* is more naturalistic than that of Confucianism, it does not only refer to it in the physical sense, but is also concerned with the development of human society. For example, in comparing *tian* with social conditions and social forces, Pang Park emphasizes the human dimension of *tian*. And in doing so, he does not seek to integrate two otherwise separate aspects of experience, but rather to make the most of the possibility that shared experience is interrelated and interdependent. In the *Dao De Jing*, *tian* is a more naturalistic philosophical image. This is indeed a reminder to the modern civilized world thousands of years after Laozi's time that the universe is not human-centered, and that there are still many beings other than humans. There are still many other beings besides humans coexisting together. Human beings cannot destroy and over-consume the resources and environment that should be preserved for future generations in order to satisfy the selfish desires of the whole community. This is a profound reflection on the relationship between heaven and man in the *Dao De Jing*. People should be aware of this and reflect on it, so that they can withdraw their outward expansion and increase their profitability and return to their original state of harmony with heaven, pure as a baby. This is the practical significance of the heritage of Laozi's *Dao De Jing* and many other classics and research of study, which has profound significance.

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