Chinese Islam between Confucianism and Daoism: A Cultural Orientation Approach

الإسلام الصيني بين الكونفوشيوسية والطاوية: منهج التوجّه الثقافي

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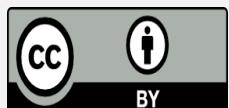
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☆ *Mr. Ma Zhili*

Abstract

This study investigates the interaction and intellectual engagement between Islam and the major indigenous traditions of China—Confucianism and Daoism—through a cultural orientation approach. Focusing on prominent Chinese Muslim thinkers of the Ming–Qing period, such as Wang Daiyū (1570–1660) and Liu Zhī (1664–1730), the research highlights how these scholars adopted Confucian concepts as the main framework for expressing Islamic theology and ethics. Their writings demonstrate a deep appreciation for the Confucian emphasis on moral cultivation, social harmony, and humaneness, while showing comparatively limited engagement with Daoist metaphysical ideas and mystical cosmology. Utilizing Thomas Kasulis' theory of cultural orientations of intimacy and integrity, the paper argues that Islam, Confucianism, and Daoism share certain affinities with the intimacy orientation, characterized by relational harmony and spiritual interconnectedness. However, Chinese Islam and Confucianism exhibit a stronger tendency toward integrity orientation, emphasizing structured knowledge, disciplined moral conduct, and the rational organization of faith. This theoretical framework helps explain why Chinese Muslim scholars found Confucianism a more compatible medium for Islamic expression than Daoism, despite Daoism's prominence in Chinese cultural imagination. The study concludes that the Confucian-Islamic synthesis represented not a compromise of Islamic principles but a culturally contextualized articulation that maintained the theological essence of Islam while integrating it within the Chinese intellectual landscape.

Keywords: Chinese Islam, Confucianism, Daoism, Cultural Orientation Theory, Wang Daiyū, Liu Zhī, Ming–Qing Thought.

Section One: Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology

Modern and contemporary studies of Chinese Islam began with a focus on the history of Chinese Muslim communities. Chen Huan (陈苑1880-1971) and Chen Hanzhang (陈汉章1864-1938), Isaac Mason (1870-1939) and Donald Leslie (1911-2004) focused more on the history of communities and individual biographies. Later, Francois Aubin (1932–2017), Jin Yijiu (1933-) Sha Zongping (1965-), Sachiko Murata (1943-) and others are more concerned with the cultural core and philosophical thoughts of this group. said: "Our own interest in the Han Kitab has less to do with historical context than with the intellectual content of the works. "[1]

Chinese Islamic studies are only beginning to explore some fundamental questions, first of all, what constitutes Chinese Islamic culture? This raises the question of the relationship

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[1] Murata, Sachiko. Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000. xxii.

between different cultures, as this article attempts to explore in relation to Confucianism and Taoism. In contemporary academic discourse, Chinese Islamic culture is often generally considered to be " interpreting the scriptures through Confucianism," a position that Chinese Muslim scholars themselves highly value. From a cultural comparative perspective, this naturally leads to the question of whether Chinese Muslim scholars highly recognize the mutuality between Confucianism and Islam , while Confucianism and Taoism are mutually exclusive.

However, Taoist culture largely represents the core of traditional Chinese culture. In his book, An Introduction to Eastern Doctrines, Rene Guenon argues that, while Taoism inherits and promotes the behavioral aspects of traditional culture, Confucianism inherits and represents the metaphysics of the Book of Changes, which emphasizes the central core and the principle of inaction. Izutsu Toshihiko even directly engaged in a Sino-Iranian cultural exchange between Islamic Sufi thought and Taoist thought, exploring the tension between the multiplicity and unity of these two traditions regarding holistic existence. This article attempts to examine this theory itself and the cultural orientations reflected in the cultural differences between Islam, Confucianism, and Taoism through the lens of cultural orientation theory.

I chose cultural orientation theory primarily based on two fundamental principles: first, it avoids attributing cultural differences to the degree of cultural rationality; second, it innovatively proposes cultural interdependence. The former, while avoiding the tendency toward cultural hegemony, addresses the issue of cultural differences from a fresh perspective. The latter points to another possibility of cultural differences and similarities, much like the yin-yang relationship in Chinese I Ching philosophy: while cultural differences are evident, they exist within each other. Cultural differences manifest themselves in their differing focus and amplification of the human essence. Conversely, cultural universalism ignores and negates cultural differences, while cultural relativism, conservative and blind, fundamentally denies the possibility of cultural mutual understanding.

Thomas Kasulis 's cultural orientation theory on cultural comparison and comparative analysis can be summarized as two types of relationships in knowledge construction: an integrate relationship in which individuals are independent and connected to the whole, and an intimacy relationship in which individuals are interdependent and form a whole. In Kasulis's view, the process of human beings understanding things and the world is a process of relationships and establishing relationships. What kind of relationship determines what kind of understanding and facts are established. In a culture dominated by an integrate relationship, the relationship itself is external, and any individual is internally independent and complete. The so-called society and the universe are just a form of external connection of independent individuals. Then the value of how one should behave is based on the recognition and respect for the independence and integrity of the individual. On the contrary, in intimacy orient culture, relationships are intrinsic; individuals exist within each other to form a whole. Society and the universe are composed of interdependent individuals. The foundation of values is that, since individuals exist within each other, their interactions directly impact upon themselves.

Confucian humanism is not only compatible with, but in fact coexists and interdepends with, the Daoist transcendental culture centered on the Way. This is a prime example of cultural orientation theory. If the interdependence of Confucianism and Taoism stems from their shared origins, then the case of Sino-Iranian communication is even more worthy of examination through the lens of cultural orientation theory.

Section Two: Knowledge in Cultural Orientation of Confucianism

Because Confucianism and Taoism together constitute the core of traditional Chinese culture, and both share a common origin in the I Ching, Confucianism is often more appropriately

considered alongside Taoism. In contrast to Taoism, Confucianism emphasizes a more immediate metaphor, beginning with the human heart and nature, and gradually understanding the meaning of existence and the transcendence of life's ultimate concerns. Mencius, drawing from the Confucian tradition, developed a transcendental approach, tracing the inner nature of man to the heavens. Later, Neo-Confucianism approached transcendence through the world, while the School of Mind grasped transcendence through the development of human conscience. These insights demonstrate that Confucianism, from its very beginning and foundation, also encompasses the ultimate concern for humanity and the exploration of the fullness of existence. Confucianism, renowned for its knowledge of culture, etiquette, and self-cultivation, also rests on a complete and fundamental understanding of the world.

Culture is how a culture constructs facts—that is, its worldview. From the perspective of cultural orientation theory, constructing facts is actually constructing relationships, because knowledge itself is the establishment of relationships. The first is the relationship between the subject and object of cognition, such as the relationship between the subject of consciousness and the object of cognition. Cultural orientation theory argues that this relationship can be divided into two categories. First, any object of knowledge, that is, all things, is a complete and independent individual, and the relationships between these individuals are external connections. Second, any object of knowledge, that is, all things, is interdependent and deeply interconnected, ultimately leading to the unity of all things. This section attempts to understand which cultural orientation Confucianism favors through an examination and analysis of the relationship between the world and transcendence.

2.1 Epistemology

Confucianism and Taoism both recognize the spirit of traditional Chinese culture as "the highest wisdom and the doctrine of the mean," which encompasses the balanced unity of inner sageliness and outer kingliness in the world of life and transcendence beyond. The doctrine of the mean prioritizes settling life, while the highest wisdom requires settling the heart. Confucianism holds that the ultimate meaning of transcendence lies within human nature and life, and therefore transcendence can be achieved in everyday human relations. From Confucius's view that the Dao cannot be separated for a moment (The Analects: 33, 7) and Mencius's view that by exhausting one's heart one can understand one's nature and, consequently, Heaven, to the later Confucian concept of the unity of the human heart and the universe, to contemporary Tu Weiming's explicit understanding of the core Confucian concept of benevolence within the network of relationships between humanity, nature, and transcendence, it can be said that Confucian metaphysics remains within the framework of the I Ching's holistic consideration of the entire existence. The Confucian path draws analogies from the nearest available source, starting and focusing on life and humanity. Confucius, through his clearly traceable trajectory of human growth, represents the path for the masses to realize the meaning of life. At age of 15, one is committed to the Tao; at 30, one is established; at 40, one is free from doubts; at 50, one understands the will of Heaven; at 60, one's ears are obedient; at 70, one can do whatever one wants.

While contemporary Chinese philosopher Cheng Zhongying argues that "Confucius emphasized the study of things and rituals, while Mencius focused entirely on introspection and self-realization ," it's important to note that while Confucius focused on compiling traditional texts and restoring traditional rituals, the scattered reflections of his disciples, such as "If I desire benevolence, then benevolence will be attained" and "The Way cannot be separated for a moment," clearly point to the inherent connection between human nature and

transcendence . This path of knowledge is "introspection within oneself, leaving no knowledge untouched."[2]It moves from the inner self to transcendence.

The core concept of Confucianism, benevolence, is shaped like two people. Its meaning is often interpreted as extending from two people to interpersonal relationships, directing its meaning toward outward values. Tu Weiming, a prominent figure in contemporary Confucianism, argues that benevolence, the core of Confucian culture, is primarily subjective and inward, yet simultaneously open to the community, others, the environment, and the transcendental concerns of ultimate concern, forming a network of relationships that encompasses the entirety of existence.

Tu Weiming argues that Confucius's " I desire benevolence, and benevolence is attained " emphasizes the inherent value of benevolence, something that can be acquired naturally, not learned from the outside. 3The Doctrine of the Mean states, "Only the sincerest person in the world can fulfill his heart; those who fulfill their heart can know their nature; those who know their nature can know Heaven." Sincerity explains and emphasizes the subjectivity and internality inherent in benevolence. Benevolence and sincerity within the human heart and nature directly demonstrate the ontological continuity between humans, others, and the transcendent Heaven. From its inception, the Confucian tradition embodied Wang Yangming's later development of the School of Conscience, which embodies the "unity of human mind and the Way of Heaven." Confucian philosopher Qian Mu (1895-1990) considered this to be Confucian culture's contribution to humanity as a whole.

2.2 Metaphysics

Metaphysics, as an understanding of the totality of existence, fundamentally concerns the relationship between humanity, the world, and transcendence. Mateo Ricci criticized Neo-Confucianism for blurring the lines between transcendence and the world. In contrast, Tu Weiming argues that Chinese Muslims possess an accurate and profound understanding of the core tenets of Neo-Confucianism. [4]This means that Chinese Muslim metaphysics also upholds the fundamental framework of the unity of heaven and man, namely, the unity of heaven and man. While Christian pastors seek to explain the transcendent heaven to the Chinese, emphasizing its radical transcendence , Chinese Muslims emphasize its relationship to humanity. This is precisely the core question of all philosophy and religion. It is also the mainstream of Chinese philosophical tradition, the question of the unity of the highest wisdom and the doctrine of the mean. In the words of metaphysician René Guenon , this is the relationship between transcendence and the world, both division and continuity, a primary concern in discussions of knowledge.[5]

Guenon sees Confucianism 's understanding of the truth of existence, or the spiritual realm and destination of transcendence, as merely a starting point in Daoism. He says, " In reality, this lowest of the grades in the Daoism hierarchy is identical to the highest grade in the Confucian hierarchy. It is the connecting link providing the continuity between Daoism and Confucianism and in just the way one would expect, considering that Daoism is the esoteric and Confucian the exoteric part of one and the same tradition. Here we see that Daoism

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[2] Cheng, Zhongying. Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Ontology. Shanghai: Shanghai Social Sciences Press, 2005. 16.

[3] Du, Weiming. "Ren of Confucianism as a Universal Value." Journal of Xi'an Jiaotong University (Social Sciences) 16, no. 1 (1996): 1–10. 5.

[4] Murata, Sachiko. Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000. ix.

[5] Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way* (),16.

begins where Confucianism ends. "[6]We will not discuss the question of which is superior, Confucian or Taoist. In fact , Guenon also explicitly points out that Daoism inherits the spiritual and ideological core of traditional Chinese culture through the principles of inaction, equality of all things, emptiness and tranquility, and observation of the Dao, focusing primarily on metaphysics. Confucianism, in contrast, influences society and history through benevolence and propriety.

Guénon argues that Confucianism has little understanding of transcendence. From a cultural perspective , Confucianism relegates the formal metaphysical inquiry into transcendence to the background, essentially ignoring it. At least according to Confucius's attitude of "If you do not know life, how can you know death?" and "Respect ghosts and gods but keep them at a distance," human society and its value order can and should be immediately of concern and focus as human beings. Precisely because "the Way is not far from man" and "If I desire benevolence, then benevolence will be attained," the richness of human nature and its broad, multidimensional relationships inherently contain a continuity and connection between humanity and transcendence. Therefore, from a Confucian perspective, there is no essential difference between self-cultivation and the pursuit of transcendence in itself and religious practice. During the Song and Ming dynasties , Confucianism understood the profound emptiness of Buddhism and Taoism and, drawing on this understanding, developed a neo-Confucian metaphysics and cosmology from within the Confucian tradition. This is a prime example of how different cultures can understand and appreciate their differences.

In Confucian metaphysics, the relationship between man and transcendence is that knowing oneself is knowing transcendence. If man originates from transcendence, then it is transcendence that has embedded within man the possibility of its own knowledge. Thus, man can understand transcendence through self-knowledge. Consequently, Confucian metaphysics, and even later Neo-Confucianism and the School of Mind, explicitly proclaim the unity of all things.

2.3 Ethics

Ethics are embodied in relationships between people and others, primarily within their relationships with themselves, others, the environment, and transcendence. Ren (ren) best embodies the Confucian values of these relationships. How one should treat oneself is the most central of all relationships, as it best reflects the core values of an individual or culture. In Confucianism, this translates to ren (ren). According to Tu Weiming, "ren, which considers heaven, earth, and all things as one, has truly become a foundation of the universe and ontology, not just a moral value."

Confucius praised his most respected disciple, Yan Hui, for his ability to "never violate benevolence for three months." Tu Weiming explains that benevolence is the most intrinsic, core, and long-lasting kind of free joy that liberates and brings true joy. According to this interpretation, from a Confucian perspective, achieving human fulfillment like Yan Hui does the best for oneself. According to the Confucian principle of extending oneself to others, the principle of mutuality must be to help them realize benevolence and attain that most core and lasting joy. In the relationship between humans and transcendent beings, the moral value of benevolence manifests itself in the relationship between the human heart and the Way of Heaven. The Doctrine of the Mean explains that when humans use their most sincere hearts to gradually reveal their true nature, they are praising the creation of heaven and earth. The manifestation of human nature is also part of the creation of heaven and earth, and therefore, they are participating in the creation of heaven and earth.

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[6] Guénon, René. Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2011. 125.

Section Three: Knowledge in Cultural Orientation of Daoism
3.1 Epistemology

Taoist thought, emphasizing the profound and the mystical, is often considered the source of ancient Shamanic religious mysticism. Sima Qian, in fact, described Zhuangzi as "his learning was all-encompassing," while Laozi was said to have been a Zhou Dynasty librarian. Therefore, while Taoist thought may have been rooted in personal spiritual insights, it also represents the inheritance and development of traditional thought and culture. However, the methods and levels of Taoist inheritance clearly differ from those of Confucianism.

The key words used by Taoists in constructing their worldviews often contrast with, or even contradict, those of Confucianism. While Confucius, a Confucian, revised, studied, and passed down traditional texts and culture, advocating " learning and constantly practicing " to increase knowledge, Taoists advocated "can one be like an infant?" "to be extremely empty and still," and "sitting and forgetting the mind in a state of mindlessness." Taoists even explicitly pointed out that the Confucian approach of learning increasingly diminishes the practice of the Dao. The stronger the cultural and social ideals become, the greater the obstacles to one's inner understanding of the world's truth. Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching appears to be a positive introduction and description of the Taoist understanding of the Dao, specifically the Dao's understanding of ultimate reality and the whole of existence. Zhuangzi, on the other hand , devoted considerable effort to criticizing the prevailing social and historical fixed perceptions and explaining the rationality of Taoist epistemology, and even the methods of this understanding.

Lao Tzu said, "All things are in motion, and as they multiply, I observe their return" (*Laozi* : 16). In the Taoist view, all things, under the influence of the movement of the Dao, are moving toward their roots. Returning to the roots is returning to destiny , ultimately moving from the dynamic world to the ultimate, true stillness of the Dao. From the perspective of the Dao, all individual existences are ontologically relativized by the absoluteness of the Dao. Therefore, Zhuangzi directly proposed the concept of the equality of all things, or the equality of all things.

Zhuangzi talked about using fictional characters to illustrate the Taoist knowledge methodology . Zikui describes the process of how to attain Dao: " With a concentrated mind, through teacher's enlightenment, in ten days, the talented disciple will be able to put all material things including physical world beyond him, in seven days, in next nine days, he will be able to put beyond his life, then he will have a clean and fresh mind. He thereby is able to discern Dao" [7]This is the stage of 'tranquility amid turmoil', 'a turmoil that has brought tranquility to perfection'. Man is Originated from Dao, but he now is in disturbance of the world. Tranquility is the state when man has realized Dao amid the world. Tranquility is the state when man has realized Dao amid the world . Tranquility is between man and the world, and he realizes Tao in his relationship with himself.

> *"Ultimate knowledge is to understand that Being and Non-Being are one and the same thing."[8]*

That is to understand the relationship between the transcendent and the world, without falling into dualism. Understanding two as one, is metaknowledge, which is out of language frame and even beyond. Knowledge.[9]

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[7] Zhuangzi, Zhuangzi. Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1999. 97

[8] Guénon, René. The Great Triad. Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1991.393.

[9] Raphals, Lisa. Knowing Words: Wisdom and Cunning in the Classical Traditions of China and Greece. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992. 70-71.

Daoist conception of Non-action/Wuwei as "a fully affective realization of the transcendent state", also addresses well this relationship as "an activity that is transcendent and altogether interior, non-manifested, in union with the Principle, and thus beyond all the distinctions and appearances that most people mistakenly take as reality itself."[10] It is an non-manifested interior union with Dao. Human can cross the multiplicity and realize a union with the Transcendent, Dao. In Zhuang Zi's word "by penetration, he reached the Immutable Truth. He let all things roll on according to their destinies, while himself keeps to the Immobile Center of all destinies…" Man is united with Dao and kept himself to Dao, while all things roll on according to their own destinies which means they by their nature return back and go home towards Dao.

3.2 Metaphysics

Daoism's primary concern is the ultimate truth of the world and an understanding of the whole of existence . The Tao Te Ching begins by discussing the Dao. However, the methods and approaches used to describe the Dao are essentially negative. This denies the ability of language and words to describe the ultimate truth of the Dao . The greatest function of language and words is to convey what the Dao is not , but not what it is. Lao Tzu even resorted to directly using the concepts of "nothingness" and "emptiness" to metaphorically represent the transcendence of the Dao. Chinese Muslim scholars have even questioned whether Lao Tzu's Dao resembles the Buddhist concept of emptiness, lacking any affirmation of the authenticity of the ultimate truth of the Dao . Liu Zhi begins his metaphysical work by stating , " Although the ultimate truth of existence is nameless and unattached, it is 'only this and that'."

Contemporary scholars of Taoist thought, such as Izutsu Toshihiko, argue that the Dao of Taoism is a substance, not a void, much less a purely philosophical concept. In his comparative study of Daoism and Islamic Sufi thought, he specifically compared and demonstrated the two schools of thought's discussion of ultimate reality. As previously mentioned, Taoist sages gradually approached unity with the Dao through three stages: 25 days , 360 days, and ultimately "entered the constant." This constant is rendered as "entering the constant . " Obviously, ' entering ' is a spiritual experience of individual existence entering into the whole existence, rather than just theoretical confirmation and belief.

Although the Daodejing 's exposition of the Dao and transcendence fundamentally negates language, even negating the knowledge structures formed by humans within society, history, and culture, just as transcendence manifests itself through the world, so too, the sage is compelled to express transcendental knowledge through language. " To force oneself to speak of the Dao is to be great " (*Laozi* : 25) speaks to this necessity. Therefore, language can only provide vague, symbolic hints.

> "The way is a thing impalpable, incommensurable;
> Incommensurable, impalpable, yet late in it are forms;
> Impalpable, incommensurable, yet within it are entities;
> Shadowy it is and dim, yet within it there is a force… (Laozi chapter 21)

All negative descriptions are about transcendence of Dao, but the notable is what other contrasting positive descriptions, 'forms', 'entities' and 'force' are all about. Though they should be understood symbolically, but it also should be safe to conclude that they indicate to the reality, truth, and being an entity of Dao having content. It might be worth of a comparison with Liu Zhi's "holding one but containing many"

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[10]Ibid.

While emphasizing the transcendence of the Dao and its indifference to the world, Taoism emphasizes that the Dao is the origin of the world and that all things, viewed from a fundamental perspective, return to their roots and destiny. In other words, the myriad things we see in the world do not exist independently but are entirely dependent on the Dao. Not only do they originate from the Dao, but their very existence also returns to the Dao. Because of this common origin, all things form a holistic unity through interdependence.

3.3 Ethics

Both Confucianism and Taoism view the unity of " the highest wisdom and the doctrine of the mean" and " the inner sage and the outer king " as the orthodox spirit of traditional culture and the highest ideal of life. This unity requires attention to the present moment of life and the social and historical order, while also fostering a fundamental and comprehensive understanding of existence itself and a profound concern for the meaning of life.

The ideal Taoist sage is both a sage within and a king without. He possesses a profound understanding of the whole of existence, entering its very center. At the same time, he responds to changes in the world, life, and society, and plays a role in the course of human history. He " acts in the spirit of Dao and predicts the various changes."[11] He has entered the door of Dao, having obtained excellent knowledge of the unchanging Eternal Dao. However, such a personality is still living in the world and a social life "predicting the various changes". Zhuangzi sighed "the proposition of the mysterious sages and wise men is dimmed." [12]So what he wishes to revive is Dao of inner sagehood and external wisdom. Inner sagehood is to enter into Dao, while external wisdom is implement of Dao. Sage take no act but left nothing, whereas Wiseman takes all acts, but no act is from himself , as "man follows earth, earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows Dao, Dao follows Self-so" (*Laozi* : 25)

The ethical relationship between people is much integrative than the intimacy in Daoism, because at the level of contingent, all individuals are of equally dignity of existence, therefore, just you insist on your own dignity, the others deserve the same. In a culture where intimacy relationship is dominant, since things and individuals are interdependent, ethics is based on the assumption that act upon other is act upon your self, therefore, people understand to do good to others. Now for Daoist ethics, man sees the highest value of Dao in everything and everyone, therefore, man gets an intimate relationship through the penetrating Dao with every other else. Therefore, intimacy relationship can also find place in Daoist ethics.

Section Four: Knowledge in Cultural Orientation of Chinese Islam

The term "Chinese Islamic culture" itself points to the interaction and exchange between the two cultures. Over more than a thousand years of interaction, a deep and substantive understanding has truly developed between them. Liu Zhi 's works on Islamic worldviews and values have been included in the official mainstream library. Chinese Muslims also clearly acknowledge Chinese culture : "Although Islamic teachings are contained in the books of Islam , they are not different from the scriptures of Confucianism."[13]

However, Chinese Muslims appear to have reservations about the commonalities between Islamic and Taoist thought. From a cultural orientation perspective, this suggests that Chinese Muslims have a clear understanding of the distinctive characteristics of Confucianism, Taoism, and Islam. Cultural orientation theory attempts to analyze differences in cultural

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[11] Zhuangzi, Zhuangzi. Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1999. 583.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Liu, Zhi. Tianfang Xingli: The Human Nature and Principle of Islam. Tianjin: Tianjin Classics Press, 1988. 20.

orientation. This understanding of cultural differences is aided by analyzing the tendencies between inherent continuity and fragmentation in the construction of facts . This author will attempt to analyze the tendencies of Chinese Islamic culture regarding these two relationships from the perspectives of epistemology, metaphysics, and values—the orientations described in cultural orientation theory.

4.1 Epistemology

Regarding the relationship between the world and transcendence, Liu Zhi concludes that it is "the stages of continuity and reintegration of the whole universe into the one."[14] From the perspective of epistemology, Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi, two important representatives of Chinese Islamic thought, both emphasized that the ultimate truth, the transcendent one, and the relationship between the one and the world are manifested through the one at three levels. First, the relationship between the world and transcendence is discussed within the unity of the One , regardless of its level. The multiplicity of individual things is dissolved and unified in the transcendent. The multiplicity of the world and the transcendence of the Transcendent are understood through the three levels of the One . First, the true One is absolutely transcendent, transcending language and even conventional knowledge. Here, all affirmation is without negation. Because its source transcends language and cognition, the world is unimaginable. Here, the relationship between transcendence and the world, like transcendence itself, is nearly impossible to describe or explain.

Only when the Real One reveals itself as the Numeral One does the world become a revealed transcendence. That is, the world is the manifestation of the True One and lacks its own independent existence. As part of the world, humans appear to be part of it, but because "the heavens and earth cannot contain transcendence, but the human heart can," they can fully represent the world, that is, the Numeral One itself. The True One is the master, the Numeral One is the servant. [15]Thus, humans can "bring things back to the One through human perfection. "[16]Bringing things back to the One is Embodied One. This is the way of Chinese Muslim knowledge, not logical, intellectual, or reasoning from one base to the other, but starting from perfection itself. Humans realize the unity of the world and the transcendence. It is embodiment, indicating, rather, it is cultivating the self, and humans will know the Real One.

4.2 Metaphysics

In Chinese Islamic thought, the ultimate truth is one. Hence the term "true one ," meaning there is only one. Clearly, then, neither two nor many are true. This refers to existence itself, the relationship between the existence of the world and the existence of transcendence. As Izutsu Toshihiko notes, nearly all philosophy and culture confronts the tension between the multiplicity of the world and the transcendental one . This tension refers to the dilemma of rationality: the question of how to unify the one and the many.

In Chinese Islamic thought, existence has never been a question of "plurality." What we call "plurality" is merely a dimension of the One in Chinese Islamic thought. Ultimate reality, and existence in its true and fully independent sense, has always been simply One . Just as

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[14] Murata, Sachiko, The Unity of Being in Liu Zhi's Islamic Neo-Confucianism. *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, (2004): 39-58. 56.

[15] Murata, Sachiko. Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000. 84.

[16] Murata, Sachiko, The Unity of Being in Liu Zhi's Islamic Neo-Confucianism. *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, (2004): 39-58. 57.

knowledge and cognition can be differentiated into different levels and degrees, such as the distinctions between knowing, seeing, and continuing knowledge, so too do people's understandings of the relationship between the world and transcendence differ. At the level of knowing and seeing, there is a chasm between the world and transcendence, and the continuity between the two is difficult to grasp and accept.

At the level of Embodiment One, all things return back and come home. That is from Real One, the Hidden Treasure, to the Numeral One, the manifestation, the treasure known. This coming home take place in man as an 'undifferentiatedly transformation'. Undifferentiation of the world and the transcendent because it is actually "the circling back of the Real One to the Real One".

> *"The Ones come home to the Root Suchness, and Heaven and humans are undifferentiatedly transformed. The things and the I's come home to the Real, and the Real One circles back to the Real. The things are not obstructed by the guises, and humans are not burdened by desire. The subtle meaning of each is disclosed and thereby the Root Suchness is seen. In the beginning is the True Guise. When the True Being is seen as Guise, the Seed and fruit are complete"[17]*

The Existence of the Transcendent is the original, and that of the world is: "not original beings at root, the existence of the world depends on the Real Lord's protection and nourishment. Ontologically, the world is the movement and quietude of the Root Act. The world ontologically is in complete dependence on the transcendent, because only the transcendent one is the true being, "only this is True Being, holding the One and containing the ten thousand."[18] "I am a treasure, hidden but love to be known."[19] So the transcendence contains the immanence. The relationship of the transcendent and the world reflects "the ontological tension between Unity and Multiplicity" which all philosophical traditions have to face.[20]

4.3 Ethics

In Chinese Islamic culture, values are still centered on the relationship between the world and transcendence. Liu Zhi's "The Way of Heaven and the Way of Man: Do All One Can"[21] suggests that the way of being human is to embody and realize the relationship between heaven and man. The connotation and meaning of being human is to realize the true relationship between heaven, man, transcendence, and the world, resolving the tension between the one and the many.

The Way of Heaven is the Five Pillars of Islam, and the Way of Man is the Five Cardinal Principles of Confucian Family Relationships. The unity of the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man is the Way of Man, the Way of Man. In the essence and meaning of man, transcendence meets and unites with the world. This is the most authentic and complete

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[17] Sachiko Murata, *the Sage Learning of Liu Zhi's Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms* (Cambridge：Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 150-152.

[18] Murata, Sachiko. The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009. 102.

[19] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995. 270.

[20] Izutsu, Toshihiko. Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. 473.

[21] Liu, Zhi. Tianfang Dianli: The Rites and Rules of Islam. Tianjin: Tianjin Classics Press, 1988. 116.

realization of inner sageliness and outer kingliness, the supreme wisdom and the doctrine of the Mean.

Section Five: Conclusion

If Confucianism is defined as humanistic because it emphasizes the subjectivity and immanence of human beings within the totality of existence, that is, transcending the inner self and the human, then we need to add the dimension of openness to transcendence that Tu Weiming reminds us of. In other words, while the human being is prominently positioned at the starting point and at the forefront in Confucianism, the ultimate concern for transcendence also underlies the background.

Taoist thought stands in stark contrast to Confucianism. Taoists approach the world from the outside in, first understanding the ultimate truth of the whole of existence. Only then can they gain an unbiased understanding of the world and human nature from the perspective of the Tao, the heavens, and ultimately find peace of mind.

Liu Zhi's comparison of the Five Classics of Human Relations with the Five Merits of Heavenly Dao represents the most profound acceptance and absorption of Confucian humanism. This absorption demonstrates that Islam, as a religious belief centered on transcendence, not only does not marginalize human existence, but rather, within Chinese Islamic culture, the Confucian concept of humanism and the Taoist concept of transcendence, becoming one and unified within the "one body," a unity of inner and outer nature. The Five Classics of Human Relations embody the transcendental significance of the Five Merits of Heavenly Dao, and the inherent meaning of the Five Merits of Heavenly Dao is reflected in the Five Classics of Human Relations.

Cultural orientation theory holds that any culture can only highlight one of the relationships between independence and continuity. However, Chinese Islamic culture places transcendence and humanism at the same level, perhaps proposing another possibility, namely, the possibility that both integrity relationships and intimacy relationships are at the forefront of a culture.

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