

論述道家(教)之和諧於服務社會

Harmony in Serving a Society: A Review of *He Xie* in Taoism

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摘要

本文引介道家(教)主流思想之老子哲學經典《老子》亦稱《道德經》，「和諧」理念，對實現和遂行服務社會，僅供例言論述。「和諧社會」語義意謂著理解的藝術，不在於曾經悟道顯現與否，然以中國主要思想學派，例如，道家(教)、儒家、墨家等學說的分析做為回應。參引《道德經》第二十五章云：「人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。」當人類的行為順應自然和諧時，透過對道的理性認知，人可以轉化天性的「善」，以和諧的態度和行為對待他人，亦使全人類都能生活在平衡和進步的和諧社會。這不僅使人能夠系統性地，對和諧社會的這些理念有深刻理解，進而以和諧於服務社會，提供了一個參照框架。

關鍵詞： 和諧，老子，《老子》，《道德經》，道，道家(教)

Abstract

This present article provides an introduction to “*He Xie*” (Harmony), the idea of Lao Tzu, Taoism’s mainstream thought, is of use in the classic *Lao Tzu* also known as *Tao Te Ching*, in achieving and satisfying in serving a society. The “Society of *He Xie*” has the semantic meaning as the art of understanding, and not the presentation of what already has been enlightened, with responses to analyses of ideas among main School of Chinese thoughts, like, Taoism, Confucianism, Mohists. It refers to the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 25 mentioned: “Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao; The law of the Tao is its being what it is.” When humanity’s actions are harmonious with Nature (Self-so), through well-reasoned awareness of Tao, humans can transfer human nature “Good”, being with harmonious attitude and behavior to toward others, and it is all humanity can be living in balance and progress society of *He Xie*. It will be systematically not only enabling humans to have a profound understanding of these ideas for a harmonious society, but also offer a frame of reference for *He Xie* (Harmony) in serving society.

Keywords : *He Xie*, Lao Tzu, *Lao Tzu (Tao Te Ching)*, Tao, Taoism

Introduction

Taoism is an ancient Chinese philosophical tradition, the first actual written scripture, the *Lao Tzu* 《老子》 (*Tao Te Ching* 《道德經》 *dàodé jīng*), to promote Taoism outlook and were attributed to the legendary Taoist sage, Lao Tzu. “Taoism’s main principle is that all life, all manifestation, is part of an inseparable whole, an interconnected organic unity which arises from a deep, mysterious, and essentially unexplainable source which is the Tao itself.”¹ Taoism views the universe, and all of its manifestations as operating according to a set of unchanging, natural laws, as an inseparable part of the Tao, aligning human with these principles provide a universal perspective and allows life to be lived in harmony with the Tao. Taoism exhibits its greatest appeal for not only does it represent a way of harmony and balance, but it also states that all life forces tend to move toward harmony and balance with excellent counsel, union with the Tao in its nature to do so. Taoism flourished in China during the period of the Warring States (戰國 *zhànguó*) that is 5--4 century B.C. There are two kinds of Taoism: the philosophical Taoism, also called *Tao-chia* (school of Tao 道家 *dàojiā*), and the religious one called *Tao-chiao* (the mystical way 道教 *dàojiào*). The term *Tao-chia*, philosophical Taoism, was first used in the Han (漢 *hàn*) dynasty, it designates a group of philosophers and their ethic-moral beliefs centering upon speculations on the nature of Tao, regarded as a unique, uncreated principle of the universe. All these beliefs were in contrast with the pedantry of the ethical philosophy of Confucius and excelled in nihilist and hedonist attitudes concerning the relation of the human being with himself and with the universe. The term *Tao-chiao*, religious Taoism, seems to be in fashion even today within the westerners. Its ideal is reaching immortality and the means differ from one school to another. The opinion of Chinese is that these two streams, *Tao-chia* and *Tao-chiao*, cannot be really separated. The philosophical Taoism and the religious one exist together with the ancient religious conceptions of antique China.

“Taoism is a way of life which tries to accommodate the predisposition of nature (self-so), but it is not restricted to this alone. Rather it is a life philosophy and wisdom acquired by simply observing the flow of natural events.” (Koller, 1985, pp.283). Taoism is an umbrella that covers a range of similarly motivated doctrines. The term Taoism is also associated with assorted naturalistic or mystical religions. The concept of Taoism as a theme or group did not exist at the time of the Taoists, having some reasons to suspect the communities focusing on the *Tao Te Ching*. The classic shared some figurative expressions and themes, an ironic detachment from the first order moral issues so hotly debated by the Confucians and Mohists preferring a reflective on the nature and development of Tao. Pointing to this philosophical branch of Taoism, Alan Watts, perhaps the most critical western author who studied Taoism, says:

Taoism [is] the way of man’s cooperation with the course or trend of the natural world, whose principles we discover in the flow patterns of water, gas, and fire which are subsequently memorialized or sculptured in those of stone and wood, and, later, in many forms of human art. (Watts, 1975, p. xiv).

Tao (道 *dào*) and Te (德 *dé*) is a precept for living relevant to all times; its essence is in realizing the greatness of nature and living in harmony with it, its epithets strive to achieve this goal, either directly or indirectly. Thus, The Taoist observes temperance and does not disturb the natural setup of things, as the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 51 mentioned:

All things are produced by the Tao, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.jadedragon.com/archives/march98/tao1.html> 03/03/2019

according to the circumstances of their condition.

Therefore all things without exception honor the Tao, and exalt its outflowing operation. This honoring of the Tao and exalting of its operation is not the result of any ordination, but always a spontaneous tribute. Thus it is that the Tao produces (all things), nourishes them, brings them to their full growth, nurses them, completes them, matures them, maintains them, and overspreads them.

It produces them and makes no claim to the possession of them; it carries them through their processes and does not vaunt its ability in doing so; it brings them to maturity and exercises no control over them; this is called its mysterious operation. (Legge, trans., 1962, *Tao Te Ching* chapter 51)

道生之，德畜之，物形之，勢成之。是以萬物，莫不尊道而貴德。

道之尊，德之貴，夫莫之命而常自然。故道生之德畜之，長之育之，成之熟之，養之復之；生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰，是謂玄德。（《老子》，2006, p.138)

Taoism as a philosophy of secularization, in fact, replaced theology with ontology, it is a philosophical approach to life-based on the observation of nature mainly presented in the classical Taoist works, as an appropriate way of life.

1. Taoism's idea of Tao with *He Xie* (Harmony)

In terms of Taoism and Lao Tzu's ideas of "*He Xie*" (Harmony) and its universal value, proving to the philosophical concept, is undoubtedly one of the important features of Eastern civilization, especially, it is the fundamental value and spirit of Chinese cultural tradition, and the ideal realm of unremitting pursuit from the Pre-Qin (先秦 xiānqín) period. Taoists elaborated on this core value, dealing relationship with mankind and nature, people and society, the idea of harmony has been fully expressed. In the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu gave explanatory notes about the beings (or phenomena), that is wholly in harmony with the Tao behave in an uncontrived way. The goal of spiritual practice for the human being is, according to Lao Tzu, the attainment of this purely natural way of behaving, as when the planets revolve around the sun, the planets effortlessly do this revolving without any sort of control, force, or attempt to revolve themselves, thus engaging in effortless movement is *He Xie* (Harmony). *He Xie* is a concept of the unity of opposites and a unique form of mutual relations between two contradictions; and there can be no harmony without the opposite of "infuriating" and "running in." Accordingly, concerning harmony with Nature (Self-so, Always-so, 自然 zìrán) as being universally all-pervading eternal.

To understand such harmony is to understand the always-so, to understand the always-so is to be illumined, but to fill life to the brim is to invite omens, if the heart makes calls upon the life-breath, rigidity follows, whatever has a time of vigor also has a time of decay, such things are against Tao, and, whatever is against Tao is soon destroyed. (Waley, 1999, p.119)

It is the principles of the universe that human beings can retain their own subjectivity, therefore Tao is a precept for living relevant to all times, its essence is in realizing the greatness of Tao and living in harmony with it. Lao Tzu's philosophy about Chinese outlook and living, it shows how Lao Tzu's idea of "*He Xie*" (Harmony) through the use of metaphors, namely as a way of life in the book *Tao Te Ching* applied to a harmonious society. The development of Lao Tzu's ideas of "*He Xie*", will confine to an exposition of the most stimulating and fruitful

features of his mature thought, which contain all the problems that were to set in motion the further history of Chinese society. Taoism teaches that Tao, the great way of Nature (Self-so), has no selfish motive for doing natures and nourishing Ten-thousand-things (萬物 wàn wù), without claiming anything in return. Learning from this cosmic virtue is the ultimate guarantee for a life of happiness and contentment, this phenomenon is temporary of the universe; stating of “Harmony” in the world, it should be maintained and handled well.

The Great Harmony is called the Tao. It embraces the nature which underlies all counter processes of floating and sinking, rising and falling, and motion and rest. It is the origin of the process of fusion and intermingling, of overcoming and being overcome, and expansion and contraction. At the commencement, these processes are incipient, subtle, obscure, easy and simple, but in the end they are extensive, great, strong and firm. It is ch’ien (乾 heaven) that begins with the knowledge of change, and k’un (坤 earth) that models after simplicity. That which is dispersed, differentiated. And discernible in form becomes ch’i (氣 vital energy), and that which is pure, penetrating, and not discernible in form becomes spirit. Unless the whole universe is in the process of fusion and intermingling like fleeting forces moving in all directions, it may not be called “Great Harmony. (Chan, 1969, pp.500-501)

Whether it is the metaphorical mode of knowing that directs Chinese society to perceive the cosmos as an organismic processor, it is the ontological vision of the continuity of being that informs Chinese beliefs. Taoism focuses on proactive coping its ideal, not likely to become a reality, taking “Naturalism” (自然主義 zìrán zhǔyì) as its purpose, taking “Inaction naturally” (自然無為 zìrán wúwéi) as its guideline, and empowering people as its goal to achieve social harmony and life ideal. In the Lao Tzu’s ideas, “inaction” also means that people take action in a spontaneous, effortless way, and avoid imposing subjective thinking and beliefs on others. In accordance with Lao Tzu’s principle, *He Xie* (Harmony) is to be the core contents of Taoism, Taoists believe that harmony is the norm of all things in heaven and earth, and discord is temporary. Disharmony in social life and disharmony between humans and nature, people and society, is mainly caused by human society misconduct. According to Lao Tzu mentioned in the *Tao Te Ching*, dictatorship is doomed to failure because the dictators, interfering too much, violates the principle of *He Xie* and causes disharmony (often disguised as harmony) within the life in human society. Taoists believe that *He Xie*, is the norm of all things in heaven and earth, and discord is temporary, disharmony between human and nature, in social life, and society are mainly caused by human misconduct.

3. Philosophical Concepts of *He Xie* (Harmony)

3.1 Signification of *He Xie*

More than 2,500 years ago, Confucian thought laid an emphasis on the core values of benevolence, “Ren” (仁 rén), is the main concept of Confucian philosophy. Which was coined by Kong Tzu (Confucius 孔子 kǒngzǐ), an ancient Chinese philosopher whose ideas encouraged justice and peace by teaching social and moral principles which had a great influence on Chinese society. Showing respect for people’s dignity, pursuing the goal of realizing, attaching an importance to morality, and depicting in a harmonious society. Confucius formulated the thoughts about “The Age of Grand Harmony” (Common-wealth world 世界大同 shìjiè dàtóng) which expressed even today the ideal thought described in

traditional Chinese culture, it refers to “*Confucius, the chapter of Great Harmony*” 《孔子·禮運篇大同章》 (lǐ yùn piān dàtóng zhāng)² mentioned as follows:

When the Great Principle prevails, the world is a Commonwealth in which rulers are selected according to their wisdom and ability. Mutual confidence is promoted and good neighborliness cultivated. Hence, men do not regard as parents only their own parents, nor do they treat as children only their own children. Provision is secured for the aged till death, employment for the able-bodied, and the mean of growing up for the young. Helpless widows and widowers, orphans and the lonely, as well as the sick and the disabled, are well cared for. Men have their respective occupations and women in their homes. They do not like to see wealth lying idle, yet they do not keep it for their own gratification. They despise indolence, yet they do not use their energies for their own benefit. In this way, selfish scheming are repressed, and robbers, thieves and other lawless men no longer exist, and there is no need for people to shut their outers. This is called the Great Harmony

大道之行也，天下為公，選賢與能，講信修睦。

故人不獨親其親，不獨子其子，使老有所終，壯有所用，幼有所長，矜、寡、孤、獨、廢疾者皆有所養，男有分，女有歸。

貨惡其棄於地也，不必藏於己；力惡其不出於身也，不必為己。

是故謀閉而不興，盜竊亂賊而不作，故外戶而不閉，是謂大同。

Confucian philosophy not only pave an emphasis on understanding others, tolerance of and compromise with each other, and on showing sympathy to others, it also claimed the conscience of human beings, social harmony, moral educational functions, social order and creativity. “It also has been a major cultural value in China since Confucius made ‘He’ (和 hé) or ‘Peace’, a central role in his social philosophy about 2500 years ago” (Chen, 2001 & 2002, p.55). “He” (和 hé) a richer connotation, including such meanings as “on good terms with each other” “gentle, mild”, and “peace” (A Modern Chinese-English Dictionary, 1988). The importance of harmony to Chinese society is also reflected by the numerous traditional Chinese sayings with a harmony theme, including “Harmony is valuable” (和為貴 hé wéi guì) and “Family members live in harmony, all affairs will prosper” (家和萬事興 jiā hé wànshì xīng). Harmony is also one of the essential values in East Asian societies that have been under the influence of Confucianism. “Given the prominence of harmony in Chinese cultures, it is not surprising that Chinese approach interpersonal disagreements and social clashes with a harmony perspective” (Gabrenya & Hwang, 1996, p.174).

Pre-Qin classic the *Shangshu·Kangxi* 《尚書·康誥》 (shàngshū kāng gào) has the record of “only the diligent people are harmonious” (惟民其敕懋和 wéi mín qí chì mào hé). According to Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius* 《論語·學而》 (lúnyǔ·xué ér), it is the highest goal to pursue social harmony, the Master said, “In carrying out the rites it is the harmony that is prized.” (lǐ zhī yòng, hé wéi guì 禮之用, 和為貴). Here, harmony refers to a relationship between the body and heart of human beings, between human and human, between human and society, between human and nature (or the natural world). And the *Zuo Zhuan* 《左傳》 (zuǒ chuán) in the “real creatures peacefully, the matters being continued” (和實生物, 同則不繼 hé shí shēngwù, tóng zé bù jì). In these ancient classical discourse, there is both the meaning of “peace” and the meaning of “harmony”, the former is “peace” from the perspective of social and interpersonal relationship, while the latter is “harmony” from the perspective of natural

² Retrieved from http://www.feu.edu.tw/adms/lc/kite_news/viewtopic.asp?id=115 03/03/2019.

phenomena.

In the *Tao Te Ching*, the word “peace” is seen in eight different chapters, and in the word “harmony”. Such as “that the musical notes and tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another; and that being before and behind give the idea of one following another” (音聲相和, 前後相隨 yīn shēng xiāng hé, qiánhòu xiāng suí). “attemper one’s brightness, and bring one into agreement with the obscurity of others, this is called the Mysterious Agreement” (和其光, 同其塵, 是謂玄同 hé qí guāng, tóng qí chén, shì wèi xuán tóng). That inner harmony called the “constant”, to know that harmony called “peace being constant, knowing peace being wise” (和曰常, 知和曰明 hé yuē cháng, zhī hé yuē míng). “When peace is made between great enemies, some enmity is bound to remain undisputed; how can this be considered perfect” (和大怨, 必有餘怨, 報怨以德, 安可以為善 hé dà yuàn, bì yǒuyú yuàn, bàoyuàn yǐ dé, ān kěyǐ wéi shàn). “The myriad things bear shadows and embrace radiance, are infused with the breath of life to achieve the harmonized trinity of darkness, light and soul” (萬物負陰而抱陽, 衝氣以為和 wàn wù fù yīn ér bào yáng, chōng qì yǐ wéi hé). “Heaven and earth complements another, morning dew befalls, people without ordinance, becomes orderly” (天地相合, 以降甘露, 人莫之令而自均 tiān dì xiāng hé, yǐ jiàng gānlù, rén mò zhī lìng ér zì jūn). Tao contains two of the opposite aspects of Yin-Yang, all things in the universe contain Yin-Yang plus and minus. Yin-Yang shake and interact with each other, to form “peace. It is the essence of ten thousand things in the universe and to survival in heaven and earth being harmonious balance self-so naturally (自然而然 zì rán'ér rán).

In the axis of the creation of Chinese culture, mentioned *He Xie* (Harmony). Without thinker has vividly put forward the idea of “combining love and making benefits” (兼相愛, 交相利 jiān xiāng'ài, jiāo xiāng lì). Like, Mo Tzu (墨子 mòzi), and spares no effort to advocate and practice the philosophy of “combining love” (兼愛 jiān'ài). Mo Tzu realized the reason why the Pre-Qin human society lost its harmony essence. Such as, if people did not care about each other, or, they will fight in the battered field. If family members do not love each other, or, they will be opposite both. If father and son are not concerned about both, or, they will not be filial due to the son. If the brothers are not mutual respect, or, they will not adjust fair treatment. Thus, Mo Tzu posed the harmony idea of “combining love and making benefits.” Mo Tzu’s thought of mutual benefit reflected the simple, pure, kind character, and desire of people. That it would put forward an ideal for pursuing harmonious society.

“In contrast, disagreements and clashes are typically viewed in the West from a conflict framework.” (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000, p.44). *He Xie* and conflict may be regarded as the two sides of the same coin. The synthesis of these two viewpoints is likely to shed new light on the human understanding of disagreements and clashes. The underlying harmony motives are consistent with the intrinsic value of better and better relationships with other societies. And instrumental needs concerned with trade and other benefits. Most likely to result in compromise, balance, and feelings of mutual benefit, since ancient time up-to-now in Chinese human society. It is the highest state of unity of feeling and action among individuals with the common interest, mutual support developed by *He Xie* (Harmony). Accordingly, it is applied to serve society self-so naturally.

3.2 *He Xie* with Inaction Naturally (自然無為 zì rán wú wéi)

Wu Wei, Inaction (無為 wú wéi) is defined as the returning to fundamental habits and submitting to the natural course of actions, is the way to cultivate virtue. These thoughts make the Taoism society as a stable, peaceful community, where everyone is given a few identical resources and left to a harmonious existence. Therefore, following the *Tao Te Ching* results in a perfect, sustainable society. Lao Tzu believes that inaction and spontaneity will return everything to an ordered state, Tao, itself, is the natural flow of life, which means that people

should flow naturally according to their impulses and desires. The perfect society is passive, as Lao Tzu provided no rules or rituals that provide a moral code for society. The problem with this idea is that it assumes that people and their natural impulses are intrinsically good. The *Tao Te Ching* allows for very little individual existence and expression, as the key action is inaction, it serves as an incredible contrast to this insatiable society, as Lao Tzu addressed this claim by arguing that knowledge and artificial values are the ones that create the negative sides of humanity. Although the *Tao Te Ching*, is not necessarily a democratic text because it is not concerned with establishing a society, and that valuable opinions and self-expression still have some ideas for current harmonious societies could learn from.

Wu Wei (Inaction) or do nothing naturally on Taoism is one of the characteristics of the Tao, or the Great Originator, it is also a model of conduct in the universe. *Wu Wei* (Inaction) appeared in the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 2 mentioned:

The whole world knows the beautiful as beautiful, Hence the existence of the ugly; The whole world knows the good as good, Hence the existence of the bad. Therefore existence and nothingness beget each other, Difficult and easy complement each other; Long and easy complement each other; Long and short manifest themselves by comparison; High and low are inclined as well as opposed to each other; Musical sound and signing voice harmonize each other; Front and back follow each other, Thus the Sage behaves with *Wu Wei*, Teaches without using words, Let all things grow without interference, Gives them life without claiming to be their owner, Benefits them without claiming to be their benefactor, Succeeds without claiming credit, His credit is never lost. (Lin, trans., *LaoZi*, 2000, p.5)

天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已；皆知善之為善，斯不善已。

故有無相生，難易相成，長短相形，高下相傾，音聲相和，前後相隨。是以聖人處無為之事，行不言之教，萬物作焉而不辭，生而不有，為而不恃，功成而弗居。夫唯弗居，是以不去。（《老子》，2006, p.15）

This content of explanation of Lao Tzu's use of *Wei* (為 wéi), to explain its role more fully than does the theory on acts while lacking "purpose" or deliberation. Little in the *Tao Te Ching*, or earlier Chinese thought, suggests any development of a distinction between voluntary, deliberate, purposive action, or its opposite. "Thus the Sage behaves with *Wu Wei*, teaches without using words, let all things grow without interference, gives them life without claiming to be their owner." (是以，聖人處無為之事，行不言之教，萬物作焉而不辭，生而不有 shì yǐ shèngrén chù wúwèi zhī shì, xíng bù yán zhī jiào, wànwù zuò yān ér bùcí, shēng ér bù yǒu). To act without *Wei* is to remove the social, conceptual character from human behavior and act on natural instinct or intuition. This makes the concept cohere nicely with Lao Tzu's analysis of "Names" (名 míng) and "Knowledge" (智 zhì) as forms of social control. Being social beings is as much a skill as being a butcher, and one may practice inaction with the same attitude of inner *He Xie*. As long as one takes the right attitude, one may pursue any activity consistent with Tao, Neo-Taoists conform to modern Chinese who regarded Taoism "non-striving" or "purposelessness" as the source of Chinese ideal society.

He Xie with inaction naturally in Taoism idea is a reverence for life and conforming to the principle, self-so naturally, nature's tendency is constantly moving to a state of harmony and balance, not only enables humans to cope with change and negative events with equanimity, but also shows them the path to happiness. *He Xie* refers to the thinking in an intention of action, by the time, trend of the decision to make an orderly, adapt to the changing principle of nature, so that thing keeps its natural essence not artificial affectation, achieving the realm of "inaction than action without strives" (無為而無不為 wúwéi ér wúbùwéi).

According to the different handling problems, the attitude of “*He Xie* with inaction naturally” can be used to self-cultivation, humans autonomy, and can also be applied to serve society. By adopting its way of thinking, can be said it is based on the concept of Taoism. Taking naturalism as its purpose; taking “*He Xie* with natural inaction” as its guideline; and taking to serve society self-so naturally, as its goal to achieve social harmony and ideal society.

4. The Embodiment of *He Xie* (Harmony) in Serving a Society

4.1 Three Treasures of Lao Tzu (老子三寶 *lǎozi sānbǎo*)

Lao Tzu’s idea of “Three treasures” is to guide humans imitate, such as, to be merciful, to be kind, to be frugal, not to fight, to meet the interests of people. It puts forward in the position of people, represents the interests of social beings, its ideas and theoretical value should be affirmed, in this regard, Lao Tzu explained the problem more use of fable to expound his own ideas. As the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 67 mentioned:

I have three precious things that I hold onto and cherish.

The first is called mercy, the second is called prudence,
and the third is not daring to be on top of the world.

Merciful, therefore can be courageous.

Prudent, therefore can be generous.

Not daring to be on top of the world.

Therefore can become instrumental and respectable.³

我有三寶，持而寶之。

一曰慈，二曰儉，三曰不敢為天下先。

慈，故能勇；儉，故能廣；

不敢為天下先，故能成器長。（《老子》，2006, p.180）

Lao Tzu’s idea of “Merciful, therefore can be courageous” (慈，故能勇 *cí, gù néng yǒng*), that humans not only have a benevolent heart, but also will be able to understand the suffering of people and public, the society should be consolidated. It shows that humans are never hunted innocents with a loving heart, then, to gain respects of innocents. For a society of *He Xie*, such a pity for people, cherish the people’s compassion, it will be able to thrifty self-care, integrity, really in teaching without saying, therefore, it is prosperous society naturally. Tao is inaction naturally, it is merciful to ten thousand things, in order not to fight and win, not to attack and grams, therefore can be courageous, “prudent therefore can be generous” (儉，故能廣 *jiǎn, gù néng guǎng*), “Not daring to be on top of the world, therefore can become instrumental and respectable” (不敢為天下先 *bù gǎn wéi tiānxià xiān*). This is the highest goal to be achieved a society of *He Xie*.

4.2 The Highest Virtuous is like Water (上善若水 *shàng shàn ruò shuǐ*)

Mencius (孟子 *mèngzǐ*) mentioned, “Water, indeed, is indifferent to the east and west, but is it indifferent to high and low? Man’s nature is naturally good just as water naturally flows downward. There is no man without this good nature; neither is there water that does not flow downward, and by damming and leading it, you can force it uphill. Is this the nature of water? It is the forced circumstance that makes it do so. Man can be made to do evil, for his nature can be treated in the same way,” (Chan, 1963, p.52) As the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 8 mentioned:

The highest virtuous is like (that of) water. The excellence of water appears in its

³ Retrieved from https://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Translation:Tao_Te_Ching&oldid=7035082 23/03/2019.

benefiting all things, and in its occupying, without striving (to the contrary), the low place which all men dislike. Hence (its way) is near to (that of) the Tao. The excellence of a residence is in (the suitability of) the place; that of the mind is in abysmal stillness; that of associations is in their being with the virtuous; that of government is in its securing good order; that of (the conduct of) affairs is in its ability; and that of (the initiation of) any movement is in its timeliness. And when (one with the highest excellence) does not wrangle (about his low position), no one finds fault with him. (Legge, trans., 1962, *Tao Te Ching* chapter 8)

上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭，處眾人之所惡，故幾於道。居善地，心善淵，與善仁，言善信，正善治，事善能，動善時。夫唯不爭，故無尤。(《老子》，2006, p.31)

“Water, the female, and the infant are Lao Tzu’s famous symbols of Tao. The emphasis of symbolism is ethical rather than metaphysical. It is interesting to note that while early Indians associated water with creation and Greeks looked upon it as a natural phenomenon, ancient Chinese philosophers, whether Lao Tzu or Confucius, preferred to learn moral lessons from it. Broadly speaking, these different approaches have characterized Indian, Western, and East Asian civilization, respectively.” (Chan, 1963, p.143) Lao Tzu espouses a lifestyle in accord with the Tao, the ultimate cosmic truth, which is described as being selfless, simple, authentic and spontaneous. “Tao in the expression” (道用 dào yòng) refers to the motion and the cultivation of Tao, so the *Tao Te Ching* becomes the fundamental classic nurture of Tao, it will achieve amicable and cheerful life harmoniously.

Conclusion

Taoism offers a unique perspective on *He Xie* is that humans can achieve contentment and health regardless of circumstances if humans can understand and practice the *He Xie* naturally and transcend the limiting factors in our daily lives. Instead of trying to confront problems and conquer nature with Tao, Taoism teaches that humans need to transform whose thinking and way of life, so that humans can live in harmony with the mankind and nature, people and society. The idea of *He Xie*, in human life between man and nature, as well as the thought of servicing society in a passive manner and in accordance with the principle, with very practical implications for *He Xie* of society. As the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 70 mentioned:

My doctrines are very easy to understand and very easy to practice, But none in the world can understand or practice them. My doctrines have a source (Nature); my deeds have a master (Tao). It is because people do not understand this that they do not understand me. Few people know me, and therefore I am highly valued. Therefore the sage wears a coarse cloth on top and carries jade within his bosom. (Chan, trans., 1963, p.172)

吾言甚易知，甚易行。天下莫能知，莫能行。言有宗，事有君。夫惟無知，是以不我知。知我者希，則我者貴，是以聖人被褐懷玉。(《老子》，2006, p.187)

Taoism advocates a proactive and transformative approach to serving society self-so naturally. This is the highest goal to be achieved *He Xie* to serve society. By embracing the Taoist way of thinking and way of life, automatically humans become free from all kinds of keeping natural essence not an artificial affectation, achieving the realm of “inaction than action without strives” (無為而無不為 wúwéi ér wúbùwéi). By adopting the art of surrender and “inaction naturally’ can overcome powerful negative forces without confronting, then the actual application to use of an idea of *He Xie* to serve the society in feasible ways naturally.

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