

Taoism: harmony with the cosmos

Religion



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A Critical Analysis of the Concept of Harmony of the Universe in Daoism A
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Harmony or sacredness of the universe' is one of the central ideas of
Daoism. It is directly related to ' Tao' or ' Dao', the embryo of Daoist views.
Textually, ' Dao' represents a transcendental being that contains both the
good and the evil harmoniously. Daoism is " letting things to be their natural
way" (Tzu, 2009, p. 1). Hence, a Daoist must follow the divine Way of Non-
interference. In ' Dao', there exists a balanced co-existence among the
opposites. In some ways, the ' Dao' is how the universe operates. Lao Tzu
identifies some of the qualities of Dao in the following sentence: " There is a
thing, formless yet complete. Before heaven and earth it existed. Without
sound, without substance, it stands alone and unchanging. It is all-pervading
and unfailing...we call it Tao" (Tzu, 2009, p. 1). Daoist scholars interpret the
world as the manifestation of the ' Dao'. Like Dao, the ways or orders of the
universe ensure a balanced co-existence among the opposite forces.
Therefore, man must be respectful to these harmonious and unperturbed
ways of the world. As to the goal of human life, Lao Tzu, one of the central
figures of Taoism, says, " Being one with nature, the sage is in accord with
the Tao" (Tzu, 2009, p. 1). Despite that ' Daoism' is often referred to as a
religion, in reality, it represents a broader concept about the existence and
relations between human life and the universe. A Daoist believes that man's
activities must not disturb the sanctity of the natural order. The Oxford
Dictionary defines that "[' Dao' is] an absolute entity which is the source of
the universe; the way in which this absolute entity functions" (Daoism,
1997). According to Daoism, man is an integral part of how the universe
works. That is, he or she is a part of the Dao. Therefore, he/she should know
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what ' Dao' is and how he is related to it. Man's happiness lies in his awareness of the Dao. In other words, a man should know how the immense universe functions as a whole. Obviously, Daoism also puts emphasis on the fact that man should lead his life in harmony with the Dao. Man's existence in the universe or in the ' Dao' has its own significance. According to Daoism, man should exist harmoniously in nature. Uniting with Dao is assumed to be one of the essential goals of human being. Since Daoism claims that man should know about his role amid the ways how the universe functions, he or she cannot view himself or herself as the master of this universe. He is not assigned with any authority over the universe or the nature. Rather he or she is assigned with the duty to grow a peaceful relationship with natural orders and functions, in other words, with the ' Dao'. But in Daoism, the universe as well as the nature is infused in the existence of Dao. Indeed, Daoism advocates for a holist idea of life and of existence. Lao Tzu, the preacher of Daoism, describes the symbiotic existence of man in the cosmos, as following: " Man abides by Earth, Earth by Heaven, Heaven by Dao, Dao by Nature" (Tzu, 2009, p. 1). A Daoist worldview tends to ensure a sustainable development while keeping the orders of nature intact. A Daoist essentially views that man has to play a non-interference role in an ecological chain where, " Man, Earth, Heaven, Dao and Nature" (Tzu, 2009, p. 1) cohabit in an organic harmony. The question, whether Daoism is a religion or philosophy, may engender hot debates. But a close analysis of the traits and concepts of Daoism will reveal that, in some way or other, spirituality and philosophy about ' life-in-universe' are placed on the same continuum of Daoist thought. Both spirituality and philosophy are interwoven in Daoism which requires that the order of the universe is sacred and it must remain unperturbed.

Daoism claims that man must exist harmoniously amid the sacred (or unperturbed) order of the universe. To a great extent, it fulfills the demands of modern 'spiritual ecology' which calls for a spiritual response to the ecological crisis. Modern discourses on 'spiritual ecology' necessarily demand that environmentalism, to a great extent, should rely on man's spiritual awareness of nature, universe (or cosmos) in order to respond to modern environmental crisis. A spiritual ecologist believes that man's spirituality and religiosity can be significantly translated into his or her pro-environment (and pro-harmonious universe) stance. In line with this concept of modern spiritual ecology, Daoist notion about the sacredness of the natural order of the universe or of the cosmos, man's perspective towards nature and the universe should be in harmony with a better inhabitable environment. References Daoism. (1997). In Oxford English Dictionary Additions Series online. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.oed.com/>. Tzu, T. (2009). Ancient Eastern Philosophy. In On truth and reality. Retrieved from <http://www.spaceandmotion.com/buddhism-hinduism-taoism-confucianism.htm>