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The Religious Nature of "Dao" in the Yi Zhuan

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Abstract

Confucian thought inherently contains a religious dimension, with its core concept, "Dao," serving as its principal expression. The Confucian classical text Yi Zhuan, built upon the Dao of Yin and Yang, presents a system imbued with religious significance. Scholarship on the Yi Zhuan has largely approached its theory of Dao from a human-centered philosophical perspective. By contrast, this paper examines the religious nature of Dao in the Yi Zhuan, as expressed through four key dimensions. In its worldview, Dao is the universal foundation of all existence. It permeates the world through the Dao of Yin and Yang, accounting for the generation and transformation of all things. In the realm of values, Dao serves as the ultimate source, guiding individuals in cultivating virtue and realizing their true nature, thus fostering the moral ideal of unity between Heaven and humanity. Within the sphere of norms, Dao acts as the foundation of ethical principles, directing individuals in the construction of moral frameworks for the real world. This framework is realized through the divine teachings of sages and the understanding of Dao by persons in high station and exemplary persons. In religious and ethical practice, Dao serves as the ultimate point of reference for meaning, with the belief that deviation from Dao results in misfortune, while adherence brings blessings. It calls for individuals to seek practical wisdom, cultivating an awareness of the times and acting in harmony with them, thus providing a foundation for one's life and purpose, thereby presenting a distinctive Eastern approach to religious and ethical living. This approach offers a new perspective on the interpretive tradition of the Yi Zhuan and its place in contemporary religious studies, while fostering dialogue between philosophical and religious approaches to the Yi Zhuan and Confucian thought more broadly.

Keywords: Yi Zhuan; religious nature; Dao of Yin and Yang; human nature; virtue; norms; life

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1. Introduction

The question of whether Confucian thought possesses a religious nature has been a central and enduring topic of academic inquiry in China and abroad for nearly a century.[1] Since the modern period, scholars have largely agreed that Confucianism, as a cultural system, is fundamentally human-centered. It is not theocentric, lacks formal religious institutions or organization, and does not involve prescribed religious rituals, and thus does not fit the typical definition of a religion. Nevertheless, it exhibits profound religious qualities and plays a role in society similar to that of religion.[2] If elements such as theocentrism, ecclesiastical organization, and religious ritual are taken as criteria for determining whether a system of thought qualifies as a religion, then what is meant here by a "profound religious

nature" remains obscure and insufficiently defined. This paper argues that the religious nature of an ideology can be understood from two perspectives: first, it has a foundational belief system within its cultural framework, which, though not necessarily empirically verifiable in the scientific sense, forms the basis of the worldview and values that guide a way of life. Second, this belief system is transcendent, affirming the value of individual life within the system and guiding ethical practice. These two aspects correspond, respectively, to the belief system of the cultural community and the ethical practices and life value foundation of the individual. From these viewpoints, Confucian thought's systematic construction of Dao, human nature, and value norms reflects the dual nature of religious belief systems and individual life values within its religious framework. Accordingly, this paper aligns with Paul Tillich's conception of an intrinsic religious nature, which locates the criterion of religion not in external features such as rituals, but in the inherent characteristics of the thought itself, guiding scholars to assess its religious nature from within. Paul Tillich argued that faith is a state of ultimate concern, where ultimate concern refers to the commitment to and reliance on what is experienced as the ultimate. The ultimate need not be a transcendent deity, but it must be unconditional, absolute, and infinite.[3] Anything regarded by humans as the object of ultimate concern inherently possesses characteristics of rootedness, universality, transcendence, and sanctity. In Confucian thought, concepts such as Dao, Heaven, Fate, Nature, and Benevolence all reflect these religious qualities of ultimate concern. Among them, Dao, as the ultimate belief, occupies the most central position in the entire belief system, playing a crucial and foundational role. The Yi Zhuan, a key Confucian text, offers a particularly rich discussion of Dao, frequently emphasizing its religious characteristics. It stands as a representative work of Confucian Daoist thought. This paper aims to investigate the religious nature of the Dao in the Yi Zhuan through careful conceptual clarification and propositional analysis, firmly grounded in textual evidence and logical reasoning. Drawing upon multiple philosophical domains—including metaphysics, moral philosophy, and political philosophy—it seeks to deepen scholarly understanding of the concept of Dao within the Confucian tradition.

For a long time, research on the Yi Zhuan has primarily relied on the extant modern version. In December 1973, the Silk Manuscript Zhou Yi was unearthed from Tomb No. 3 at Mawangdui, located in the eastern suburbs of Changsha, Hunan Province. Its contents include the sixty-four hexagrams of the Yi Jing as well as several chapters of the Yi Zhuan, such as Er San Zi, Xici, Yi Zhi Yi, Yao, Miu He, and Zhao Li.[4] The chapters of the Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan correspond only partially to those of the extant modern Yi Zhuan—including the Tuan Zhuan, Xiang Zhuan, Xici Zhuan, Shuo Gua Zhuan, Wen Yan Zhuan, Xu Gua Zhuan, and Za Gua Zhuan—with the majority of content differing significantly. This discovery attracted considerable scholarly attention, prompting researchers to conduct multi-dimensional and in-depth studies of Yi Xue based on this new material, thereby greatly broadening the scope and perspective of research in the field.[5] The extant modern Yi Zhuan was likely compiled between the mid-Warring States period and the early Han Dynasty,[6] with the Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan dating to approximately the same period.[7] The two versions complement each other in content, often serving to reinforce and expand upon one another.[8] This paper will integrate both the modern version and the Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan to explore the material.

The concept of Dao in the Yi Zhuan operates both as a philosophical category and as an expression of religious nature. Contemporary scholarship on Yi Xue has largely concentrated on the philosophical dimensions of Dao in the extant modern version and the Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan, frequently neglecting its religious dimension—a tendency that has drawn critical attention from some scholars [9]. A close examination of the materials reveals that the Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan places greater emphasis on issues of governance, such

as the relationships between Dao and virtue, rulers and subjects. In fact, this focus deepens our understanding of the religious ethical practices arising from the Daoist philosophy within the Yi Zhuan.

In the Yi Zhuan, Dao, as a transcendent and ultimate entity, serves not only as the universal foundation for the existence and transformation of all things but also as the ultimate source of values, the foundation of norms, and the foundation for human life and purpose. In this sense, the Dao in the Yi Zhuan not only provides the metaphysical foundation of Confucian philosophy but also, through its religious nature, bestows transcendent meaning upon human life and ethical practice.[10] This expansion from the philosophical to the religious offers a new interpretive path for understanding Confucianism's ultimate concern.

2. Dao as the Universal Foundation for the Existence of All Things

The original meaning of Dao refers to the path one walks. Over time, this concept evolved to represent the principles or laws that govern both people and things. For instance, the orbit of the sun, moon, and stars is referred to as "the Dao of Heaven," while the path that guides human life is called "the Dao of Human."[11] Notably, the underlying concept of "path" has not been fully clarified. First, a path implies that it is not a personal, private matter; it inherently carries a transcendent meaning that goes beyond individual limitations. Second, a path has a normative function—it defines and directs individuals toward a destination. Finally, because there is a fundamental connection between value and purpose, a path that leads to a goal inherently carries a value implication. Thus, in the interpretation of Dao as a path, Dao transcends the individual and carries a shared value meaning, alongside its normative function. It is precisely due to these characteristics that Dao can be extended to signify a cosmic order or law. In contrast, anything limited to the individual or private sphere would not be called Dao, as Dao, by its nature, transcends the limits of individual traits. This is the foundation for the continued expansion of Dao in Confucian philosophy, where it is discussed across various levels of universality. However, as noted, if this foundation remains rooted solely in concrete experience, it is insufficient. Without rising toward abstraction and universality, and eventually detaching from the constraints of experience, it would fail to serve as the cornerstone of a belief system. In fact, Confucian understanding of Dao involves a process of expansion and abstraction, which reaches its fullest expression in the Yi Zhuan.

In early Confucian thought, concepts such as the Dao of the Sage, the Dao of the exemplary persons, and the Dao of the Family all referred to the Dao of Human. These early interpretations of Dao remained shaped by human characteristics. In the Analects, discussions of Dao are often tied to human roles, such as the Dao of a father or a minister. By contrast, it is noted that "the Master's words on human nature and the Dao of Heaven cannot be fully grasped" (Analects, Gongye Chang). The Zhongyong (Doctrine of the Mean) emphasizes that the legitimacy of the Dao of Human derives from the Dao of Heaven, which thus holds a transcendent position. It states: "Sincerity is the way of Heaven; those who cultivate sincerity follow the way of humanity." The Yi Zhuan builds on this idea, distinguishing the broad concept of the Dao of Heaven in the Zhongyong and Mengzi into the Dao of Heaven and the Dao of Earth, represented by the Dao of Qian and Kun, respectively. The Tuan Zhuan of the Qian Gua states, "The Dao of Qian (the Dao of Heaven) operates continuously, allowing all things to realize and stabilize their inherent nature and fate," while the Tuan Zhuan of the Kun Gua adds, "The Dao of Kun (the Dao of Earth) aligns with the Dao of Heaven, receiving its power, and its movement follows a natural order." The Dao of Qian and Kun symbolize the Dao of Heaven and Earth, complementing each other—neither can exist without the other. According to the Yi Zhuan, in addition to symbolizing the Dao of Heaven, the Dao of Qian also represents the Dao of the

ruler and the husband within human society. Similarly, the Kun Gua represents not only the Dao of Earth but also the Dao of the subject and the wife.[12] Here, the Dao of Qian and Kun assumes a symbolic role, allowing it to acquire greater abstraction and universality. No other concept or category in the Yi Zhuan exhibits this property. Additionally, while the roles of the ruler, husband, subject, and wife belong to different categories, they are all expressed through the Dao of Qian and Kun. This indicates that the Dao of Qian and Kun transcends categorical distinctions, reaching a higher level of abstraction. The Zhong of the Silk Manuscript states, "Qian originates from Yang, and Kun originates from Yin"; the Xici Xia further elaborates, "Qian represents yang qualities, and Kun represents yin qualities. Yin and Yang complement each other, with Qian embodying strength and Kun representing gentleness, reflecting the composition of Heaven and Earth." Heaven and Earth are the concrete embodiment of the Dao of Qian and Kun, while Qian and Kun are the specific manifestations of Yin and Yang. Compared to Qian and Kun, Yin and Yang are more universal and abstract. In the Yi Zhuan, the Dao of Yin and Yang thus serves as a more universal and transcendent expansion of Dao, surpassing the Dao of Qian and Kun, as well as the Dao of Heaven and Earth. From this, it is clear that the Yi Zhuan outlines a hierarchical structure of transcendence, beginning with the concrete concept of the public path, moving to the universal norms and moral principles governing human behavior, then to the Dao of Heaven and Earth and the Dao of Qian and Kun in the worldview, and ultimately, the Dao of Yin and Yang becomes the highest form of transcendence. Most of the time, the term "Dao" is used to refer to the fundamental core of this belief system.

The Xici Shang presents the proposition that "one Yin and one Yang is what we call the Dao." Although this may appear as a metaphysical statement distinguishing the metaphysical from the physical, for Confucian thought, which carries a religious dimension, its significance is crucial in another way: it addresses whether the concept of Dao can transcend the confines of concrete experience and reach the "unconditional" as described by Paul Tillich. The concept of "one Yin and one Yang" refers to the fundamental interaction of one Yang line and one Yin line in the hexagramic system, which can illustrate the transformation of Heaven and Earth. The Shuo Gua Zhuan of the Yi Zhuan summarizes this as follows: "In ancient times, the sages composed the Yi Jing to guide people in following the principles of human nature and destiny. They established the way of Heaven as Yin and Yang, the way of Earth as softness and firmness, and the way of humanity as benevolence and righteousness. By integrating the Three Powers and balancing these dualities, the Yi forms hexagrams from six lines. It distinguishes Yin from Yang and alternating softness and firmness to complete the text."[13] This proposition does not imply that the Dao is the "Yin Qi and Yang Qi" but rather that by abstracting Yin and Yang into the symbols of the hexagram lines, their changes can illustrate the Dao of Heaven and Earth. It demonstrates the generation and transformation of all things based on Yin and Yang, providing a worldview schema rooted in ancient Chinese philosophy. Starting from the concept of one Yin line and one Yang line, the hexagram symbols evolve into the sixty-four hexagrams, corresponding to the process of the universe's creation in the Yi Zhuan, where the merging of the Yin Qi and Yang Qi give birth to Heaven and Earth and all things. Yin and Yang can transcend the limitations of specific objects and categories, manifesting as Qian and Kun, and symbolizing Heaven and Earth. They further classify into male and female, thereby embodying all forms of existence. It is noteworthy that Max Müller also acknowledged this point.[14] With respect to the hexagrams, the Yin and Yang lines constitute the foundation of the Eight Trigrams, which correspond to natural phenomena including Heaven and Earth, thunder and wind, water and fire, and mountains and lakes. The fundamental distinction between Yin and Yang and ordinary beings is that the Dao of Yin and Yang is supremely transcendent and universal. This Dao of Yin and Yang is often simply referred

to as "Dao", and thus the Yi Zhuan explicitly states: "One Yin and one Yang is what we call the Dao." Here, the operation of Yin and Yang, starting from Confucian cosmology, is in alignment with the Dao. While the Dao is necessarily embodied in the operation of Yin Qi and Yang Qi, its religious nature emphasizes the Dao as the foundational law of the world, which is unconditional. Confucian thought typically holds that the Dao and its effects are omnipresent. "Since all things are manifestations of the Dao's existential commonality, the phenomena, though appearing diverse, are merely the ordered unfolding of the Dao as a single unity. Their essence is the same, and they are harmonious in their manifestations. The Dao encompasses all phenomena, and as such, the Dao itself is the infinite."[15] Therefore, the understanding of Dao in the Yi Zhuan is not merely a cosmological hypothesis; it also represents the ultimate belief about the foundation of human existence, thereby positioning Dao as the foundation for the existence and transformation of all things.

3. Dao as the Ultimate Source of Value

In the Yi Zhuan, the transformations represented by the Qian and Kun, symbolizing the transformations of Heaven and Earth, play a significant role in the generation and nurturing of all things. The Xici Xia states, "The greatest virtue of Heaven and Earth is to give life to all things." As John Lagerwey notes, Heaven and Earth are at once the physical heavens of the astronomers and the calendar and a moral being.[16] The Xici Shang asserts, "The continuous process of generation is what we call the Yi (the Way of Change)," where "continuous generation" is the fundamental characteristic of the Dao of Yi, or the Dao of Yin and Yang. The Zhong of the Silk Manuscript states, "Heaven and Earth maintain balance between each other, their forces and essences mutually attract; Yin and Yang continually flow and interact, producing the characteristics of rigidity and flexibility; all things yearn for long-lasting life and abhor death." Yu Dunkang notes that the Yi Zhuan, through the proposition "one Yin and one Yang is what we call the Dao," elaborates a holistic view of the concept of "continuous generation," which underpins the value of the generative functions of Heaven and Earth.[17] The question then arises: while continuous generation seems to be an objective fact, why is it considered the 'greatest virtue' in Confucian thought? This leads to another issue.

The Xici Shang presents a classic proposition: "One Yin and one Yang is what we call the Dao, following this Dao is goodness, and realizing one's true nature through this Dao." "Following this Dao is goodness" implies that to follow the Dao is virtuous. The Dao here refers to the Dao of Yin and Yang, and the sentence suggests that all things and humans follow this Dao. The question to analyze is: why is this considered goodness? As mentioned earlier, "The greatest virtue of Heaven and Earth is to give life." Life is the prerequisite for all things to have needs. Without life, there would be no need to speak of demands. Therefore, if the fulfillment of needs is considered good, then the prerequisite for fulfilling needs—life—must also be good. And life, in this sense, is primarily the inheritance of the Dao of Yin and Yang. The transformation and movement of Yin and Yang generate all things. Thus, inheriting the Dao of Yin and Yang enables the existence of life, allows the fulfillment of demands, and permits the satisfaction of needs. From this perspective, 'following this Dao' refers to the process of 'continuous generation,' which is beneficial for any existing individual. Within this context, the concepts of 'great virtue' and 'goodness' can be regarded as synonymous.

The phrase "realizing one's true nature through this Dao" means that different entities acquire their specific forms through the interaction of Yin and Yang, and in doing so, each attains its own Dao. This applies to both humans and all other beings. The principal commonality between humans and all other beings lies in their inheritance of the continuous, life-generating qualities of Yin and Yang. Thus, "benevolence" in the Yi Zhuan

transcends its meaning as a personal virtue and becomes a virtue of "continuous generation" for all things. The Dao of Yin and Yang thus becomes the ultimate source of value for the survival of all things. From the perspective of the relationship between Heaven and humanity, the Dao of Yin and Yang belongs to the Dao of Heaven, as the Shuo Gua Zhuan clearly states, "The Dao of Heaven is called Yin and Yang." The connection of the Dao of Yin and Yang with human nature does not distance us from the Dao of Heaven, but rather "one aspect is received as one's own nature, while the other is transformed into a metaphysical entity." "This consciousness directs the center and focus of Chinese thought not to the Dao of Heaven itself, but to the integration of the Dao of Heaven with human nature and destiny."[18] This integration reflects the ideal of embodying the great virtue of the Dao of Heaven, the continuous generation, in human actions, particularly the 'care' humans exercise toward all things in following the Dao of Heaven. This inherent connection gives Confucianism its foundation in the transcendent Dao of Heaven, endowing it with religious significance. "The Dao of Heaven is both transcendent and internal. At this point, it can be said that it possesses both religious and moral significance; religion emphasizes transcendence, whereas morality emphasizes internality."[19] In the Yi Zhuan, the Dao of Yin and Yang is transcendent, while human nature is internal. Confucianism's moral foundation stems from this transcendent source of value, establishing in the connection between Heaven and humanity, whose essence is the fusion of religious and ethical morality.

From the discussion of the relationship between Dao and human nature, it is clear that the establishment of the meaning and value of human existence fundamentally relies on the bestowal of the ultimate source. This bestowal is a process where the inherent human nature aligns with the transcendent Dao of Heaven. When human ethical practice harmonizes with the continuous generation of the Dao of Heaven, the human value system achieves intrinsic unity. The Dao of Heaven, as the ultimate source of value, is thereby established as the cornerstone of belief. This resonates with Paul Tillich's insight: "Since the Ultimate is the ground of all being, ultimate concern constitutes the central organizing principle of an individual's life. Without this concern, there can be no such center."[20] From this perspective, the Dao of Heaven, as the original source of human value and meaning, becomes the highest value in the hierarchy of human life. Specifically, in relation to humanity, nature (xing), as the essence of the human being, not only carries the supreme value of the Dao of Heaven but also embodies the practical reality of human existence. Through discovering and realizing one's own nature, a person becomes the point of convergence for the Dao of Heaven's value and moral life.

However, the content and requirements of the Dao of Heaven are not automatically accessible to humans. They must be experienced, perceived, and comprehended through ethical practice. The Xici Shang states, "A person with benevolent virtue sees it and calls it benevolence; a person with wisdom sees it and calls it wisdom; ordinary people use it every day but do not know of its existence. Therefore, those who truly understand the way of the exemplary Persons are few." Human nature is inherited from the Dao of Heaven, but due to differences in intellect, circumstances, and other inherent or acquired factors, individuals' understanding of their own nature often varies. Therefore, humans must engage in deep reflection on and examination of the relationship between the Dao and human nature to achieve meaningful and valuable existence. In response to this situation, the Xici Shang points out, "A person can realize their own nature and continually cultivate it, thus finding the gateway to righteousness." "Righteousness" here refers to value, with the gateway metaphorically representing the proper path to the realization of value. Fundamentally, this is because human nature is bestowed and defined by the Dao of Heaven; any mode of existence that contravenes this definition results in the loss of one's true nature. As Tu Weiming states, "In the Confucian view, becoming religious means immersing oneself in

the process of fully becoming a person (or realizing one's humanity). This Confucian orientation toward religious realization can be defined as ultimate self-transformation. This ultimate self-transformation is not about transcending human nature but realizing it. This view of Confucianism is a claim of substantial and ethical religious significance."[21]

In Confucian thought, this ethically and religiously informed practice has been consistently described across dynasties as the pursuit of the unity between Heaven and humanity. Fundamentally, the pursuit of this unity is about humans inheriting the "continuous generation" virtue of Heaven and Earth, and how this is manifested in human nature. This inheritance and manifestation are expressed as human virtue. In its original sense, virtue (de) means "to gain" or "to attain." Here, it can be understood as the attainment of Dao, that is, inheriting and actualizing its continuous generative principle. If Dao is conceived as the ultimate source of value, then virtue (De) embodies the principle through which that value is realized. This manifestation of Dao (value) is realized in two interconnected dimensions: the individual and the social order. For the individual, the Yi Zhuan emphasizes that the personal qualities of the exemplary person function as a medium for embodying Dao. Through the cultivation of Dao and the expression of virtue, the exemplary person's self-cultivation attains a transcendent foundation of value. As the Da Xiang Zhuan of the Qian hexagram states, "The movement of Heaven is strong and vigorous; therefore, the exemplary persons must strive ceaselessly," and the Da Xiang Zhuan of the Kun hexagram notes, "The Earth is vast and capable of bearing all things; therefore, the exemplary persons should cultivate virtue to sustain others." Beyond the Qian and Kun hexagrams, many of the other sixty-four hexagrams also convey qualities expected of the exemplary persons, such as Modesty (Qian), Perseverance (Heng), and others. Regarding social order, the Yi Zhuan emphasizes governance through virtue as a means of ensuring social harmony and stability. As the Xici Xia states: "The greatest virtue of Heaven and Earth is to give life; the sage's greatest treasure is position. One maintains position through benevolence, gathers people through resources, and manages both properly through righteousness."[22] Here, the sage upholds position through virtue and organizes people and resources in an orderly manner, exemplifying the principle of virtuous governance. Similarly, the Zhao Li of the Silk Manuscript emphasizes that those in power should govern through virtue.[23] Social order manifests its value only when aligned with the Dao of Heaven, and this alignment endows that value with a transcendent foundation. It is thus evident that, in the Yi Zhuan, the pursuit of De embodies the human aspiration to "align with the supreme virtue of Heaven and Earth," both in personal cultivation and in the governance of society.

4. Dao as the Foundation of Norms

In early Confucianism, both Confucius and Mengzi advocated for norms, putting forward numerous principles regarding human conduct. These propositions generally either focus on Confucius' political philosophy, based on the Zhou Li, or on Mengzi's moral philosophy, rooted in the concept of compassion. The distinctive feature of the Yi Zhuan's discussion of norms lies in its integration of the Dao of Yin and Yang, which underpins the Dao of human and its associated norms, thereby linking them to an integrated worldview and value system. This allows metaphysics and religious philosophy to become the foundation for norms, representing a progressive development in Confucian thought. Since Dao is the universal foundation of the worldview and the ultimate source of value, humans achieve integration between the Dao of Heaven and the Dao of human by following the Dao to realize their nature. This makes the understanding of norms dependent on the ethical practice of following the Dao and realizing one's true nature. In the Yi Zhuan, the ideal personalities that embody the realization of nature and Dao are the sage, persons in high station, and the exemplary Persons.

The sage, persons in high station, and the exemplary persons are individuals who, from their respective positions in human society, uphold, practice, manifest, and fulfill the Dao. They should not be interpreted as specific historical figures, but rather as individuals across eras who contribute significantly to the understanding or construction of ethical and political frameworks. The Yi Zhuan's reverence for the sage, persons in high station, and the exemplary persons stems primarily from the universality of Dao. Understanding the Dao from a broad, interconnected, and transcendent perspective requires human intelligence and discernment. The universality of Dao confers a transcendent dimension to knowledge, which ordinary individuals cannot attain. Moreover, in establishing norms and social order, these norms inherently transcend the individual. This universality requires that those who establish norms transcend personal interests and self-interest, and, guided by human nature, take into account the ultimate source of value in human existence as well as the relationship between humans and the cosmos when formulating appropriate norms. The Er San Zi of the Silk Manuscript states, "When the sage governs the country, they must respect the Dao of Heaven and honor the people." The Miu He of the Silk Manuscript says, "The ancient exemplary persons… above, aligns with the Dao of Heaven; below, follows the laws of the Earth; in the middle, observes the human heart." They advocate that the construction of order should have threefold support from the Dao of Heaven, the laws of the Earth, and human nature.

In the Yi Zhuan, the sage holds the highest position relative to persons in high station, the exemplary persons, and the common people, as he represents the ideal personality or the ideal ruler. The key aspect is that the sage acts as a bridge between the Dao of Heaven and humanity. From a religious perspective, the sage can be understood as a spiritual guide who leads people toward self-perfection. Following the sage's guidance entails adherence to the norms of the Dao of Heaven and acknowledgment of the sage's authority. A passage from the Guan Gua Tuan Zhuan illustrates this principle: "By observing the divine Dao of Heaven, the four seasons will never go wrong; the sage establishes teachings based on this divine Dao, and the people of the world will follow." Similarly, another passage from the Xici Xia reinforces this principle: "In ancient times, Bao Xi governed the world. He looked up at the sky to observe celestial phenomena, gazed down at the Earth to study geographical laws, and examined the patterns of birds and beasts and the suitability of the land. He drew upon his own experiences and also from the phenomena of the world, and thus created the eight trigrams, used to convey the virtues of the divine and systematically categorize all phenomena." Both "the divine Dao of Heaven" and "the virtues of the divine" are descriptions of the Dao of Heaven's laws. The Xici Shang says, "The changes of Yin and Yang are unpredictable; this is what is called the divine," and, "Those who understand the way of change understand the actions of the divine," indicating that the changes in Heaven, Earth, and all things caused by the Dao of Yin and Yang are mysterious and unpredictable. This element of mystery is likewise embodied in the hexagrams. The Xici Xia says, "The Zhou Yi cannot be neglected; the Dao it represents lies in constant change, pervading all hexagrams and their six lines. Up and down, they move without fixed patterns; Yin and Yang interact and transform, and no fixed standard can be sought. One must respond in accordance with these changes." This means that the changes embodied by the hexagrams' Yin and Yang do not follow a fixed pattern, and humans must adapt flexibly to the unpredictable changes in the world. This reveals a tension between apparently fixed norms and the perpetually changing world. However, from the Confucian perspective on norms, all norms should evolve in response to the changes in the times. Thus, the Yi Zhuan proposes three fundamental principles: simplicity (jian yi), unchanging (bu yi), and change (bian yi). Simplicity refers to the fundamental relationship between all things and the Dao of Yin and Yang. While things may be complex and diverse, they all operate ac-

cording to the laws of Yin and Yang, which have remained unchanged from ancient times to the present. As Confucian tradition holds, "Heaven does not change, and the Dao does not change," referring to the fundamental laws of the world. As for specific moral norms and institutional structures, Confucianism advocates that these be inherited and adapted over the generations.

The Dao of Yin and Yang is the foundation of norms because it is both the fundamental law governing the operation of the world and the ultimate source of value for human ethical practice. In this sense, facts and values are not separated at the highest level of the Dao of Yin and Yang. However, since humans have the potential to act against their own nature, that is, their actions may deviate from the nature they inherit, norms arise from the distinction in the Dao of Yin and Yang at the human level, which constrains human behavior. In this respect, the Dao of Yin and Yang functions analogously to what James Rachels terms natural laws: "Natural laws not only describe how things are, but also dictate how they ought to be."[24] The Wen Yan Zhuan of the Kun Gua uses the Kun Gua (Yin) to symbolize the Dao of Earth, the Dao of the wife, and the Dao of the subject. By extension, the Qian Gua (Yang) symbolizes the Dao of Heaven, the Dao of the husband, and the Dao of the ruler. This reflects the way the Dao of Yin and Yang differentiates into various ethical relationships among humans. The principle of norms in the Yi Zhuan is realized in the positioning and flow of Yin and Yang.[25] The theory of the hexagram line positions defines the principles of Yin and Yang positioning, and the best example of this principle is found in the Ji Ji Gua. The Tuan Zhuan of the Ji Ji Gua states that it is "the proper positioning of hardness and softness," where hardness and softness correspond to Yang and Yin. In the hexagram's six lines, Yang lines occupy the odd positions and Yin lines the even positions, which is the principle of correct positioning. The Yao of the Silk Manuscript summarizes the relationships in human ethics based on the Dao of Heaven, employing the conceptual framework of "up and down." It states, "In the Zhou Yi, there is the Dao of Heaven, but the Dao of Heaven cannot be fully expressed only through the sun, moon, and stars, so Yin and Yang are used to describe it. There is the Dao of Earth, but the Dao of Earth cannot be fully expressed only through water, fire, metal, earth, and wood, so hardness and softness are used to regulate it. There is the Dao of human, but the Dao of human cannot be fully explained just by the father-son, ruler-subject, husband-wife, or senior-junior relationships, so the up-and-down relationship is used to summarize it."

Differences in people's positions can lead to estrangement in interpersonal relationships, highlighting the necessity of effective communication. This parallels the functional role of li (ritual) and yue (music) in Confucian thought. While li can differentiate social ranks, which may cause estrangement, yue promotes emotional exchange and fosters harmony among people. The Dao in the Yi Zhuan also places significant emphasis on mutual understanding and communication between individuals. The Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan focuses on the up-and-down relationships, with the core being the relationship between ruler and subject. The Zhao Li of the Silk Manuscript says, "When a ruler's arrogance leads to the fall of the state, his ministers are often left to devise strategies. When the ruler and his ministers do not understand each other, the people are naturally not inspired, and this chaos originates from the ruler's negligence and forgetfulness." This emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding between ruler and subject. The Miu He of the Silk Manuscript states, "A wise ruler treats his ministers with harmony, seeking to serve the ruler with sincerity, thereby enhancing his virtue. The relationship between ruler and subject, based on virtue and emotional connection, leads to mutual communication and cooperation, which is the key to long-lasting peace and stability." In the normative theory of the Yi Zhuan, positioning reflects the order principle of the distinctness and proper positioning of Yin and Yang, while mutual communication reveals the dynamic principle of

Yin and Yang in interaction. Together, these principles form the normative structure of human relationships, giving the Dao of human both stability and flexibility. However, we must not overlook that the foundation and highest principle of all norms stem from the cornerstone of belief—Dao. This religious aspect is manifested in the sage's establishment of teachings grounded in the divine Dao.

The phrase "the sage establishes teachings through the divine Dao" means that the sage establishes educational guidance grounded in the laws of the Dao of Heaven, leading the people through Dao and cultivating virtue. This stands in stark contrast to a governance method that relies on authority and force to make people fearful and obedient. As Tu Weiming emphasizes, the aim of political practice is not only to maintain social order through law but also to cultivate a community of trust via moral persuasion.[26] In this ethical education, Dao constitutes the supreme good guiding the people, endowing Confucian political and ethical practices with a transcendent religious significance. It is important to note that the primary direction of the normative theory in the Yi Zhuan is education, as it first reflects the belief in and practice of the sage's preaching, and second, it embodies the principles of positioning and communication within the up-and-down relationships. However, the Yi Zhuan does not deny the auxiliary role of law and punishment in achieving the ideal of education. For example, the Er San Zi of the Silk Manuscript states, "The sage establishes legal and educational institutions to guide the people." The Zhao Li of the Silk Manuscript further says, "In the past, wise rulers treated people with generosity, used righteousness to educate the people, and employed punishments to prevent unlawful actions, penalizing those who deserved punishment. Only then would the people follow, as the ruler begins with the minutiae, setting an example; this exemplifies righteousness." The Confucian idea of governance, where virtue is primary and punishment secondary, does not contradict the Dao of Yin and Yang. Even in the Han Dynasty, Dong Zhongshu unified the interpretations of Yang with virtue and Yin with punishment, reinforcing the religious significance of Confucian thought through his theory of the correspondence between Heaven and humanity. The reason Dong Zhongshu was able to achieve this is fundamentally because Confucian concepts, especially the concept of Dao, inherently possess significant religious characteristics.

5. Dao as the Foundation for One's Life and Purpose

Religious life, while providing believers with religious experiences, fundamentally offers value and a sense of security to ordinary human existence. Some scholars observe that "Confucianism neither believes in gods nor in an afterlife; its primary concern is the order of this life and the proper functioning of society."[27] Indeed, Dao, due to its non-personal, non-theistic nature, does not promise an alternate world beyond this one for people to choose. However, this does not negate the religious nature of Confucian thought; rather, it highlights one of its most distinctive features. Even without promising an afterlife, Confucianism's religious nature provides a secure foundation for human existence. Confucius emphasized that "if one hears the Dao in the morning, one can die in the evening without regret," and "the Dao is not far from human beings." These sayings reflect the role of Dao in providing foundation for human life and purpose. Therefore, Confucianism requires that the exemplary persons "must follow the Dao even in times of exile, and must follow the Dao even in times of adversity," meaning that life's difficulties are external, and the true foundation for one's life is Dao. As Paul Tillich observes, the Dao "imbues all aspects of the human spirit with purpose, ultimate meaning, discernment, and the courage to create".[28] The Yi Zhuan teaches that a life in violation of Dao will bring misfortune, which is similar to the belief in many religions that defying religious ethics will result in punish-

ment. Confucianism insists that human life must be lived within a framework of religious belief and ethical norms.

In the Yi Jing, there is an abundance of phrases that assess the consequences of actions, including terms such as auspicious, beneficial, hindering, dangerous, regret, fault, and inauspicious,[29] used to describe the good or bad, the difficulties or successes, and the fortunes or misfortunes that people encounter. Human nature encompasses the pursuit of benefit, avoidance of harm, and aspiration for favorable outcomes. The Miu He of the Silk Manuscript states, "Everyone in the world, whether intelligent or ignorant, virtuous or ordinary, hopes for a smooth life, success in their endeavors, and to receive honor and respect." The Zhong of the Silk Manuscript also says, "The role of the Zhou Yi is to make people understand that the decline of the Shang Dynasty was due to the loss of the Dao, while the prosperity of the Zhou Dynasty resulted from its great virtue. It teaches people to be cautious in preserving their accomplishments, to handle affairs with respect, and to avoid disasters with wisdom." Violation of virtue entails consequences. In the Yi Zhuan's framework, these consequences do not depend on a personal deity; rather, because the Dao of Yin and Yang is inherently good, contravening it is regarded as morally and cosmologically adverse. When humans go against the natural laws of Heaven and Earth, leading their actions to break away from the constraints of Dao, they will face negative consequences.

In the Zhou Yi, the most common terms used to indicate consequences are the terms "auspicious" (吉) and "inauspicious" (凶). The Silk Miu He of the Manuscript says, "Auspicious is the leader of all blessings," indicating that auspicious refers to the greatest good fortune and blessings; conversely, inauspicious refers to the greatest misfortune and calamities. This may lead to a misunderstanding that the Yi Zhuan suggests a consequentialist perspective. However, the majority of references to auspiciousness and inauspiciousness in the Yi Zhuan primarily indicate whether actions accord with or contravene the Dao. In fact, it is the alignment or violation of Dao that the Zhou Yi considers most important. For example, the Xici Shang states, "Auspiciousness and inauspiciousness are signs of gain and loss," and scholars throughout history have offered different interpretations of this. Jing Fang interpreted it as, "When one attains a position, it is auspicious; when one loses a position, it is inauspicious,"[30] interpreting gain and loss in terms of the attainment or loss of official rank or social position. Xun Shuang interpreted it as, "Those who align with the right timing will succeed, while those who go against it will fail,"[31] understanding gain and loss as contingent upon following or contravening the proper timing (shi). Zheng Xuan, while interpreting the Sui Gua hexagram's phrase "Yuan Heng Li Zhen, Wu Jiu", followed the traditional understanding of Yi Xue and explained "Yuan Heng Li Zhen" as four virtues, stating that "Having these four virtues leads to success and blessings; lacking them results in disaster."[32] This interpretation connects gain and loss to the presence or absence of virtue (de). The common thread in these interpretations of inauspiciousness is that, whether arising from the loss of position, virtue (de), propriety (li), or the proper timing (shi), they all ultimately stem from violating the Dao. Following this line of reasoning, the Yi Zhuan asserts that attaining the Dao results in auspicious outcomes, whereas straying from the Dao results in inauspicious outcomes.

The Yi Zhuan emphasizes virtuous conduct and firmly admonishes immoral conduct. For instance, in the Xici Shang, it praises Yan Hui for his positive moral behavior, saying, "He can recognize what is wrong and, once he knows it, he will never do it again." The Wen Yan Zhuan of the Kun Gua asserts, "A family that accumulates good deeds will surely receive additional blessings, while a family that accumulates evil deeds will surely face additional misfortune," interpreting virtuous actions as the source of auspiciousness and immoral actions as the source of inauspiciousness. This assertion that good actions lead to good fortune encourages people to accumulate virtue and live in accordance with

the Dao, fundamentally grounded in a religiously infused ethical worldview. Real-life experience seems to easily challenge this belief, as moral behavior does not always lead to favorable outcomes due to the influence of luck or misfortune. The Zhou Yi itself does not deny that there are times when bad luck affects the outcome, and moral actions do not necessarily yield good results. As for the ostensibly absolute statement that "a family that accumulates good deeds will surely receive additional blessings, and a family that accumulates evil deeds will face additional misfortune," we can regard this as an observation of behavior in normal circumstances. In everyday social life, those who observe moral norms and perform virtuous deeds are more likely to receive favorable outcomes, reflecting the accumulation of trust and credibility in human relationships. Conversely, those who act immorally are more likely to encounter misfortune. From a Confucian perspective, the attainment of worldly happiness is never the primary objective. Living in accordance with the Dao is not contingent upon wealth or social status. Confucianism consistently emphasizes that "the exemplary persons care more about the Dao than about poverty," and living in accordance with the Dao itself is the greatest form of happiness. Thus, Yan Hui's contentment, even when living with only a small bowl of rice and a ladle of water in a humble alley, is seen as a demonstration of the joy derived from the Dao, despite others' concern for his apparent poverty. This leads to the important question of understanding Confucian thought through the lens of Confucius and Yan Hui's joy in their circumstances. Therefore, while there are many passages in the Yi Zhuan that present auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, the interpretation most consistent with Confucian thought holds that deviation from the Dao results in misfortune, whereas adherence to the Dao yields favorable outcomes. This reflects a deeply rooted commitment to living in accordance with the Dao.

However, the manner of following and practicing the Dao differs from the notion of 'righteousness through faith'. In the Yi Zhuan, to find security and purpose in life, one requires practical wisdom. The Silk Er San Zi of the Manuscript states, "When misfortune and fortune intermingle, a wise person can see the underlying principles." The highest expression of wise ethical practice lies in aligning with Heaven and acting in accordance with opportune timing. The Da You Gua Tuan Zhuan explains that the reason a person can achieve great success is because "their virtue is robust and manifest, and they act in accordance with the Dao of Heaven and in proper time." The Yi Zhuan repeatedly emphasizes that "the significance of timing is great," and one's understanding and judgment of "timing" determine whether they possess the practical ability to act in accordance with the Dao of Heaven. In the Yi Zhuan, the term 'timing' (Shi) most commonly denotes the specific opportunities and circumstances confronting an individual. The Xici Xia says, "The exemplary persons have hidden talents and sharp tools, waiting for the right moment to act. What could go wrong?" The Er San Zi of the Silk Manuscript adds, "The exemplary persons value timing; when the moment arrives, they act, using all their strength to strive for success… When the opportunity is spent, they stop acting, placing themselves in a stable position and resting." The Miu He of the Silk Manuscript states, "In ancient times, the exemplary persons grasped opportunities during good fortune and actively pursued success; when misfortune arose, they withdrew and refrained. When good fortune arrived and could be controlled, they followed the right timing and did their best to maintain it; their concerns were not to lose these opportunities. So, if one fails to seize the opportunity when it comes, and loses it, how can they ever regain such an opportunity, even if others wish to reappoint them?" These materials often consider the alignment with timing as closely connected to achieving favorable outcomes. However, acting in accordance with proper timing necessitates profound practical wisdom. At minimum, this entails acute discernment, expressed as the capacity to "recognize the signs". The Xici Xia says, "Signs are the subtle movements just before things occur, the early indications of good fortune. Once

the exemplary persons see these early signs, they act immediately, not waiting until the end of the day." The Er San Zi of the Silk Manuscript further explains, "If the exemplary persons can foresee difficulties and prepare in advance, the difficulties will no longer be hard to manage; when they detect the early signs of things and acts upon them, they will achieve success. Therefore, preparing for difficulties in advance makes things easier, and grasping early signs ensures success." Such practical wisdom is attainable only by the exemplary persons, individuals in high station, or the sage, as delineated in the Yi Zhuan. Thus, Confucianism places a central emphasis on learning. The emphasis on learning does not conflict with the religious nature of Confucian thought. Confucianism's emphasis on learning focuses on becoming an exemplary person or a sage; it is not about knowledge in the Western epistemological sense. It is an experiential transmission of ethical practice in the religious context, where learning to respect virtue and inquire about the Dao enables individuals to attain a transcendent, secular happiness and foundation for life and purpose.

6. Conclusions

In summary, the discussion of Dao in the Yi Zhuan follows the Confucian tradition of elevating the concept of Dao, and through the construction of the Dao of Yin and Yang, the concept of Dao functioning as a transcendent and unconditional principle that underlies all particular existences. This understanding of religious nature is based on its intrinsic features, shifting the focus from external ritual and institutional forms to its underlying metaphysical foundations. Paul Tillich's account of the Ultimate is rooted in metaphysics, highlighting a clear concern with the foundations of thought. Confucianism's focus on Dao as the Ultimate gives its thought a clear and pronounced religious nature. In the worldview, Dao is the fundamental principle upon which all things depend for their existence and movement. It runs through all things via the Dao of Yin and Yang, explaining the generation and transformation of all things. In the realm of values, Dao is the ultimate source of value. It guides individuals to cultivate virtue and realize the moral construction of the unity of Heaven and humanity, achieving integration of higher and lower, internal and external dimensions. In the domain of norms, Dao serves as the foundation of norms, guiding individuals in the construction of ethical standards in the real world. This construction is realized through the sage's teachings, which are based on the divine Dao, and through the understanding of Dao by persons in high station and the exemplary persons. In religious and ethical practice, Dao serves as the foundation for meaning, emphasizing that violating the Dao brings misfortune and assuring them that adhering to the Dao brings blessings. It urges individuals to pursue practical wisdom by acting in accordance with the appropriate timing, providing them with a secure foundation and sense of purpose in life. This reflects a unique, Eastern religious–ethical way of life. By highlighting the religious nature of Dao in the Yi Zhuan, this study challenges earlier philosophical, human-centered interpretations and offers new perspectives for rethinking the Yi Zhuan—and Confucian thought more broadly—within its intellectual tradition and contemporary religious studies, fostering dialogue between philosophical and religious approaches.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Notes

1 See (Q. Guo 2010): "儒学是否是一种宗教？这是近一百年以来学术界一直十分关注的问题。近世以来的思想家，如康有为、严复、陈焕章、夏曾佑与梁启超、章太炎、蔡元培、陈独秀等人曾就这个问题发生过争论。时至今日，人们仍然各抒己见，莫衷一是。唐君毅、牟宗三、钱穆、杜维明、刘述先等一部分当代新儒家学者认为儒学是"人文的宗教"或"道德的宗教"。李泽厚认为，儒学不是宗教，但在历史上起着"准宗教"的作用。《文史哲》、《中国哲学史》等刊物曾辟有专栏、专文讨论儒学、儒家与儒教的问题。李申坚持儒学即是宗教的观点。"

2 See (Tu 2013), 英文二版前言p. 2: "如果我们把儒家之道规定为人文主义，则这种道所象征的便是一种兼容的而非排他的人文主义"；中文版序言 p. 9: "在比较文明的格局之中， 强调儒家人文精神的宗教性， 无非是要阐明儒家的人生哲学虽然入世，但却有向往天道的维度。" (Mu and Zhang 2007), p. 3: "儒学是一种以人为本位的伦理型人文学说，它不是宗教，因为宗教必须以神为本位并有'彼岸'的追求；不过儒学有一定的宗教性，而且给予中国历史上各种宗教的世俗化过程以重大影响。" (Ames 2019), Issue 2, p. 64: "儒家宗教体验本身是一个繁荣的社群的产物，在这个社群中，宗教生活的品质是公共生活品质的直接后果。代代相传的儒家神圣性，不仅是社群繁荣的根本，是文化赖以建立的基础，更是人类不断获取新的生活品质的根源。它是以人为中心（human-centered）的，而不是以上帝为中心（God-centered）的，其宗教性是通过对角色和关系施以其恰当的'礼'并完善人类的经验而产生。" (Yang 2006), Issue 3: "现在很多学者均认同这样一个观点：儒学不是典型的宗教，却有着宗教的作用。儒学之所以有如此奇特的现象，奥秘在于儒学有一个独特的天论传统。" (Huang 2002), Issue 2: "宗教总是以承认个体灵魂不朽或者可以不朽为前提的。如果我们承认这个前提,那么,结论自然就是：儒学显然并不是确切意义上的宗教。" (Dong 2020), p. 266: "儒学本身并不缺乏信仰系统，也并不缺乏基于其信仰系统而引导出来的行为实践系统，但在信仰表达的外观上，它却缺乏一个相对完善的独特的'仪轨'体系与作为信仰者之组织的'教会'。" For a definition of religion, see (Émile 2011), p. 58, which records Durkheim's definition of religion: "宗教是一种与既与众不同，又不可冒犯的神圣事物有关的信仰与仪轨所组成的统一体系，这些信仰与仪轨将所有信奉它们的人结合在一个被称之为'教会'的道德共同体之内。" (Russell 2010), p. 2: "历史上著名的大宗教都具有三个方面:（1）教会，（2）教义，和（3）个人道德法规。"

3 See (Tillich 2019), p. 2: "信仰是终极关怀的状态", p. 9: "终极关怀乃是对被经验为终极东西的关怀"。译者前言 p. 4: "这个被经验为终极者（也称'无条件者'、'无限者'、'绝对者'）的东西，也被称为'神圣者'(the holy)"；译者前言p. 2: "如果某种事物成为我们无限关切的对象，那就可以称之为"终极者 "(the Ultimate)。不唯超世的神祇能成为我们的终极关怀，就是世俗之物，如金钱、权力、民族、 成功等，也可成为我们的终极关怀。"

4 See (Xing 1997), p. 17: "马王堆帛书（周易）1973年12月出土于湖南省长沙市东郊马王堆三号汉墓，墓主可能是西汉初期长沙国丞相、软侯利苍的儿子。" p. 19: "马王堆帛书（周易）写在整幅的帛上。根据目前发表的释文，帛书《周易》包括《六十四卦》、《二三子问》、《系辞》、《易之义》、《要》、《缪和》、《昭力》诸篇。"

5 See (Li 2005), Issue 2: "考古发现的文献保存了没有经过后人改动的古书原貌。利用出土文献中的与《周易》有关的材料，我们可以认识当时的《周易》的面貌，对《周易》经传进行深入研究"；"今天我们研究孔子，马王堆帛书给我们提供了非常重要的材料，使我们可以更好地理解孔子与《周易》经传的关系。" (Chen 2000), p. 311: "帛书《易传》释文的整理发表，在学术界特别是哲学界引起了较大的反响，许多专家学者借助这一新材料，对汉初易学展开了多角度多层次的深入研究，在很大程度上拓展了易学研究的视野，在海内外学界中再次形成了一种易学研究的热潮。"

6 This conclusion can be found in (Wang 2003). p. 36: "就《易传》而言，如前人已经指出过的，并非一人一时之作，而且它们最初也不是一个整体。一般的看法，以《彖传》的写作最早，其次是《象传》，然后是《系辞传》，《文言传》，《说卦传》，《序卦传》和《杂卦传》。" p. 49: "《彖传》应该是属于战国中期以后的作品。" p. 248: "《序卦传》的作成年代也不太早，以秦汉之际最有可能。" p. 257: "《杂卦传》的写作年代比汉宣帝时早很多。"

7 See (Li 1993), p. 2: "帛书《二三子问》和《要》的形成约当在战国早中期之间，《缪和》《昭力》的形成迟到战国晚期。" (Liao 1995), Issue 6: "帛书《易传》诸篇的写成时间，并不相同，它们有早到战国中期的， 也有晚到战国末期的。总之，不会出于战国以后。" (Ding 2015), Issue 1: "帛书《易传》大抵上反映了战国末季至汉初的易学思想。"

8 See (Ding 2015), Issue 1: The author argues that there is a significant degree of similarity between the Silk Manuscript Yi Zhuan and the modern version of the Yi Zhuan. This is the original text: "帛书《易传》大抵上反映了战国末季至汉初的易学思想，一方面它与今本《易传》存在很大的共通性，另一方面在一定程度上也反映了孔子的易学思想。"

9 (Lagerwey 2010), p. 1: "As is now well-known after forty years of unprecedented study of religion in Chinese society and history, we Westerners have had a kind of congenital incapacity to see the religious dimension in China." p. 2: "At the very least, they (the Jesuits）convinced Voltaire and the philosophes, and their version of Chinese history has continued to dominate Western studies of China: China had no religion of its own and China, the China of the elite, of its best minds, of its thinkers, had no religion. China was a philosopher's republic (with a nod to Plato)." p. 6: "The basic problem with this view is that it is wrong, and a more accurate account—the one we will seek to detail in this book—would read more like this: Confucianism is a religion involving blood sacrifices to the ancestors, to the gods recognized by the state, and to Heaven (by his Son 7CT, the emperor)."

[10] This indicates that the perspective of this paper is grounded in both philosophical and religious dimensions, as noted by (Tillich 2019), p. 75: "哲学与终极者的关系，原则上是要中立地描述终极者在中展露自身的基本结构。而信仰与终极者的关系，原则上则要涉及表达终极者对于信仰者的意义。这一区别是明显的、基本的。"

[11] See (Zhang 2017), p. 27: "道的本义为路，人行之路为道。《说文》云：'道，所行道也，一达谓之道。'具有一定方向的路叫做道。引申为人或物所必须遵循的轨道，通称为道。日月星辰所遵循的轨道称为天道，人类生活所遵循的轨道称为人道。"

[12] From the phrase in the Wen Yan Zhuan of the Kun Gua, "阴虽有美，含之以从王事，弗敢成也，地道也，妻道也，臣道也 (Although Yin has beauty, it submits to the king's will and dares not act independently. This is the Dao of Earth, the Dao of the wife, and the Dao of the subject)," it can be inferred that the Dao of Heaven, the Dao of the husband, and the Dao of the ruler are symbolized by the Dao of Qian.

[13] The original text of Shuo Gua Zhuan in Yi Zhuan is: "昔者圣人之作《易》也，将以顺性命之理。是以立天之道曰阴与阳，立地之道曰柔与刚，立人之道曰仁与义。兼三才而两之，故《易》六画而成卦。分阴分阳，迭用柔刚，故《易》六位而成章。"

[14] See (Müller 2010), p. 76: "中国总是要求有秩序和规定，他们之所以建立这种体系是因为他们承认两种力量在相辅相成，一正一负，一阳一阴，这两个力量在统治万物，在明智者的心目中，它们超过那许许多多的神灵。在每个事物的中间、 下面、 后面都存在这两个力量，所以每个事物都有双重性质，常把这两个力量比作天和地。"

[15] See (Dong 2020), pp. 278–79: "正由于一切万物均为道本身之存在性的共相显现，所以现象全体虽在表象上呈现为千差万别，却不过为道之一元的有序展开，它们的本质是同一的，而在现象上则是和谐的。道统摄了一切现象之全体，故道本身为无限者。"

[16] (Lagerwey 2010), p. 21: "Tian is at once the physical heavens of the astronomers and the calendar and a moral 'being'", "Having spoken of Heaven, we must speak of Earth, for its cult too is an integral part of the construction and representation of power".

[17] See (Yu 2005), p. 44: "《易传》通过'一阴一阳之谓道'这个命题展开了一个'生生之谓易'的整体观，这是一个天人合一的整体观，是自然主义与人文主义相结合的整体观。"

[18] See (Mou 2007), p. 34: "'超越的'与'内在的'是相反字，顾名思义，可知内在的遥契，不是把天命、天道推远，而是一方把它收进来作为自己的性，一方又把它转化而为形上的实体。" pp. 23–24: "这里开启了性命天道相贯通的大门。'维天之命，於穆不已'是一个重要的观念，它把人格神的天转化为'形而上的实体'（Mataphysical reality)。只有这一转化，才能下贯而为性，才能打通了性命与天道的隔阂。如此，才有'民受天地之中以生，所谓命也'的观念，才有'民之秉彝，好是懿德'的观念。这是中国从古以来所自然共契的一个意识趋向。这一意识趋向决定了中国思想的中点与重点不落在天道本身，而落在性命天道相贯通上。"

[19] See (Mou 2007), p. 20: "天道既超越又内在，此时可谓兼具宗教与道德的意味，宗教重超越义，而道德重内在义。"

[20] See (Tillich 2019), p. 188: "由于终极者是一切存在者的根据， 所以终极关怀便是个人生活之起整合作用的中心。 无此关怀便无此中心。"

[21] See (Tu 2013), p. 113: "在儒家的心目中，成为宗教的人意味着一个人投身于充分地成为一个人（或做人）的学习过程。我们可以把成为宗教的人的儒家取向界定为一种终极的自我转化"; p. 116: "终极的自我转化，不是超离人性，而是实现人性。儒家这种看法，是一种具有实质的和伦理宗教意义的宣称"。

[22] The original text of Xici Xia in Yi Zhuan is: "天地之大德曰生，圣人之大宝曰位，何以守位曰仁，何以聚人曰财，理财正辞、禁民为非曰义。"

[23] The original text of the Zhao Li of the Silk Manuscript is: "上正（政）〈卫〉国以德，次正（政）〈卫〉国以力，下正（政）〈卫〉【国】以兵。"

[24] See (Rachels 2008), p. 62: "'自然的法则'不仅描述了事物是怎样的，而且指定了事物应当是怎样的。"

[25] See (Wang 2010), Issue 2: "《易传》论阴阳，是有两个向度的。其一是定位，其一是流行。定位表现为阳尊阴卑阳主阴从，如'天尊地卑，乾坤定矣；卑高以陈，贵贱位矣'类的表述。流行则表现为阴阳之间的交通成和，如《彖传》解释泰卦时所说的'天地交而万物通也，上下交而其志同也'，或者《系辞传》的'天地氤氲，万物化醇；男女构精，万物化生。'没有流行的定位是闭塞不通的，而没有定位的流行是散漫无序的。两者的平衡才是阴阳关系的理想状态，即创造与秩序共存的太和的状态。"

[26] See (Tu 2013), p. 59: "政治的目标不仅在于达成法律和社会秩序，而且还在于通过道德说服来建立信赖社群。因此，政治的功能就围绕着道德教育，以道德教育为中心。"

[27] See (Stewart et al. 2020), p. 305: "儒教既不信神，也不信来生。它最关注的是现世生活的秩序，它关心社会的良序，重视孝道，强调敬祖。"

[28] See (Tillich 1988), p. 9: "宗教赋予人类精神的所有机能以要旨、终极意义、判断力和创造的勇气。"

[29] See (Gao 1984), p. 138: "总之，吉者，福祥也；吝者，艰难也；厉者，危险也；悔者，困厄也；咎者，灾患也；凶者，祸殃也。吉与利均表示其有好前途、好结果，……吝、厉、悔、咎、凶均表示其有坏前途、坏结果。"

[30] See (Y. Guo 2002), p. 94: "得位吉，失位凶。"

[31] See (Zhang and Wang 2004), p. 259: "顺时者成，逆时者败。"

[32] See (Zhang and Wang 2004), p. 67: "则功成而有福，若无此四德，则有凶咎焉。"

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