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Developmental Comparative Philosophy: Identifying Common Trends Between American Libertarian and Chinese Thoughts

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Abstract

East/west comparative philosophy often focuses on the differences between philosophies as finished states which, though effective at showing differences in thought, emphasizes the otherness of foreign traditions. In order to establish meaningful similarities between the development on eastern and western traditions, I compared the development of American liberalism (1651-1776 CE) and Chinese Confucianism and Daoism (772-221 BCE), focusing on the similarities between social contract to enlightenment philosophers and the early to late Hundred Schools of Thought Confucian and Daoist philosophers. Three principals were derived from this process: a shift from external to internal justifications for the state causes increased secularism within philosophies, ideal states are based on virtuous leaders when the state is integrated into the citizen's lives and virtuous structure when the state separate, and philosophical skepticism towards human nature creates more restrictive governments. This method of developmental comparison could yield more accurate and universal principles if applied to more traditions.

Introduction

Many academic disciplines have taken an interest in comparative studies, especially in regards to the individualistic/collectivistic differences accentuated by western and eastern cultures respectively. Journals like *Philosophy East and West* (originated in 1951) show that philosophers have likewise engaged in comparative work for many years, with concerns about representing foreign traditions accurately existing from the discipline's beginnings (Creel 1953). To avoid making overgeneralized claims, comparative philosophers separate regional biases

from foreign traditions by avoiding historical, cultural and ideological parallels between regions when comparing philosophies. Much work in east/west comparative philosophy focuses on comparisons based on specified topics, such as ethics or consciousness, instead of a more comprehensive analysis as a result. Though precautions like these are critical for understanding foreign philosophies and facilitating compromise between traditions (Stepanyants 2014), it unfortunately creates a sense of otherness that prevents genuine commonalities from being recognized.

It would be foolish to argue that there are not elements of exclusiveness between eastern and western traditions, but the value of universal trends between philosophies is enormous should they exist, and the east/west dichotomy inhibits the research needed to find them. A different perspective must be used; instead of comparing philosophies as they are, we could instead examine the process of how philosophies develop and find similarities there. To illustrate how these developmental comparisons can be made; this paper will compare the philosophies crucial to the development of American and Chinese thought (British social contract theorists to colonial American libertarianism and the original Confucian and Daoist sages[1]). These philosophies were chosen based on two qualities: the difference between American and Chinese philosophies are extensive enough to show that the development-oriented comparative approach has value in seemingly opposite ideologies, and they represent an individualistic/collectivistic dichotomy within their culture (libertarianism and Daoism are individualistic, whereas Confucianism and Hobbes's absolutism are collectivistic in comparison).

Methodology

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[1] The term sage refers to a master of philosophy whose thoughts and actions are aligned completely to their tradition; the term is used in both Confucian and Daoist texts (Hinton 2013). The qualities defining a sage vary based on the tradition, but they usually imply a dedication to their ideals more substantial than the term philosopher.

Among others, three common problems that plague comparative philosophers in their analysis of foreign philosophies are descriptive chauvinism (thinking other philosophies use the same base assumptions as your own), incommensurability (untranslatable concepts) and perennialism (thinking foreign philosophies, especially older ones, never change) (Littlejohn 2016). Due to how integrated morality, science (Creel 1953), religion and metaphysics (Gu and Guo 2015) is with Chinese political philosophy, these problems are particularly troubling in making Chinese and western comparisons. The approach I propose addresses these concerns by establishing a common ground in developmental trends across philosophical traditions. For example; comparing specific virtues between two traditions can lead to misinterpretations, but by focusing on how virtues change similarly in each individual tradition in response to similar situations (i.e a change in resource availability correlates with more frugal values), a philosopher can make a well define and universal comparison. Economic, cultural, historical and/or general changes in thought can serve as catalysts for change, but those events must have sufficient analogues in both cultures for the comparisons to be genuine. To demonstrate this method, I will start with an overview of both eastern and western philosophies before identifying their developmental commonalities.

Philosophy Summary: Chinese

Both Confucianism and Daoism originated during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (772-221 BCE); further divided by the Spring and Autumn (772-475 BCE) and Warring States (475-221 BCE) periods (Tanner 2010). Though the Western Zhou dynasty is well regarded as the progenitor of the Chinese identity, the Eastern Zhou was considered as a period of decline even by its own citizens due to a decline in the emperor's authority, a deterioration of alliances between feudal states and the rise of the warrior class in the Zhou bureaucracy (Tanner 2010).

This is evident even in the name "Eastern Zhou"; the Western Zhou (1046-771 BCE) utilized the same feudal system and is differentiated only by the fact that the western territories were lost. This degradation caused a rise in scholarship that emerged throughout the Eastern Zhou with the goal of understanding the causes of the state's problems and creating the policies and philosophies needed to fix them (Hinton 2013). This movement is known as the Hundred Schools of Thought; it encompasses many classical Chinese philosophies spanning from the Spring and Autumn period to the end of the Warring States period (when the Zhou Dynasty fell, and multiple feudal states vied for power) when the Qin dynasty rose in 221 BCE (Tanner 2010).

Confucianism and Daoism are the most influential philosophies to come from this period. Confucianism is named after its creator Confucius (551-479 BCE), who posited that *ren* (compassion for others) is the foundational principle that creates both a stable society and meaningful life (Chan 1963). Thus, the state's and ruler's purpose are to instill *ren* in the citizenry by teaching filial piety and ritual (Wong 2011). Filial piety refers to the mutual obligations people have in respecting and maintaining relationships (ruler-subject, father-son, etc.); for hierarchical relationships, those in authoritative positions have the responsibility to act as role models and those in subordinate positions have the responsibility to learn from and follow their example (though it is expected for subordinates to correct their superiors if necessary). Rituals refer to the proper actions and mannerisms one is expected to undertake in a task or situation. By learning and adhering to rituals, the individual learns the correct actions needed to achieve *ren* in their current positions as well as the values of *ren* that can be applied to address ambiguous situations.

Confucianism was continued by Mencius and Xunzi, who both expanded on the tradition by introducing human nature into Confucian thought. Mencius (371-289 BCE) claimed that

human nature is inherently good because we are naturally averse to inhumane acts (evident by

the universal distress caused by a child falling in a well), though we obviously maintain more

reverence to relationships closer to us like with family members (Wong 2011). This means the

state creates policies that cultivates the *ren* inherent in its citizens, and the desperate conditions

of a poor state is what drives people to immorality, not the citizens themselves. Xunzi (298-238

BCE) was not as optimistic, as he thought *ren* was absent from human nature. Since people lack

discipline and are quick to do acts that satisfy their feelings over what is right, it is up to filial

relationships (starting with the state) to instill *ren* into the populous (Chan 1963). Also notable in

Xunzi's philosophy is the incorporation of some Daoist elements, specifically that heaven is

observable and can be reacted to, but is ultimately unknowable, and as such, we should focus on

human affairs in isolation of heaven (Chan 1963). He also deviated from Confucius by saying

talent and property were more important to respect than laws and people, ideas that resonates

more in legalist thought[2] than in Confucianism (Elstein). Mencius also differed from Confucius

in saying that the emperor and state needed to be constant authority figures (Mencius 2013),

whereas Confucius relegated them to figureheads in an ideal state (Confucius 2013). To this end,

both Mencius and Xunzi believed the ruler/state were always necessary in the citizen's lives, but

Confucius believed that a citizenry that knew *ren* could be relied on to govern themselves and

teach *ren* to their children.

  Daoism, originated by the semi-mythical Laozi (600-400 BCE?)[3] in his *Dao De Ching*, is

centered around the metaphysical concept *Dao*. The term *Dao* is directly translated as meaning

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[2] Legalism was another philosophy originated in the Hundred Schools of Thought that prioritized strict state control and using laws as ways to punish and reward people into being ideal citizens (Goldin 2018). Hsun Tzu's disciples became the originators of this movement, though Hsun Tzu himself is classified as a Confucian.

[3] It is debatable when or if Laozi lived; it is even theorized that he was the personification of preexisting beliefs compiled into the *Dao De Ching* by an unknown author(s) (Morgan 2001). Regardless, Laozi is commonly referred to as the founder of Daoism.

"way"; it refers to a universal and everlasting process of change that everything in the world abides despite having individual characteristics (Hinton 2013)[4]. This can be conceptualized as a life cycle; living beings are born, age, die and decompose, but although this process affects each type of being differently (i.e a human vs a tree), they are all following the same cycle, or the same *Dao*. The term *Dao* can refer to a specific cycle (the life cycle, the seasons, etc.) and the cosmological rule of constant change. Complementing this is the principle of *wuwei* (meaning action/nonaction), which promotes purposeful actions when needed and inaction otherwise (Chan 1963). Daoist believe people (and states) struggle often because they act unnecessarily and thus go against the *Dao*, so they embrace inaction as viable strategy. These principles applied to the state emphasize a restrained government that acts only when the citizen's needs are at risk (like in cases of invasion or famine) and abstains from its citizens' lives in all other matters (Feldt 2010). Where Confucians believed that the state was responsible for instilling or cultivating *ren* into its citizens to create a stability, Daoist believe that instability is directly caused by excessive state action (Chan 1963). This is because strict rules are incapable of changing according to the *Dao* and obsessive acting only induces unnecessary conflict.

The main difference between Laozi and Zhuangzi (399-295 BCE) is that Zhuangzi focused more on how to apply the *Dao* to personal life (Hinton 2013). Daoist doctrine remained the same between the two; Zhuangzi mainly reiterated a lot of the points made in the *Dao De Ching* in a different literary style. Some points Zhuangzi made that Laozi did not include state/society creating values and desires that obstruct and manipulate what is necessary for a good life (Zhuangzi 2013) and Confucian values being a second-best option compared to Daoism (if you must have an interventionalist state) (Zhuangzi 2013). Zhuangzi was also unique in that

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[4] Confucius also used the term *Dao* in *the Analects*, but his interpretation referred to the pursuit of *ren* and is unrelated to the Daoist interpretation

he considered the self (or rather the individual's attachment to it) as the cause of personal problems because valuing it too much was incongruent with the *Dao* (because death was a changing state of life) (Zhuangzi 2013). This, in conjunction with the continued acknowledgment of Confucianism as a semi-viable state, gave Daoism credence as a personal philosophy that could be integrated into other ideologies and likely encouraged the gradual shift from philosophical to religious Daoism seen past the warring states period (Morgan 2001). It is also worth noting that Zhuangzi heavily commented on Confucianism (even using Confucius as a character in his book) (Zhuangzi, 2013), but his Confucian counterparts rarely commented on Daoism, instead focusing on other philosophies like Yangism and Mohism (Mencius, 2013)[5]. Xunzi was the most critical Confucian against Daoism, criticizing Laozi by saying that his philosophy did not describe how people actually live (nor how they wanted to live) (Chan 1963); Mencius never referenced Daoism at all.

Philosophy Summary: Western

American libertarianism refers to the focus in limited government and free market economics predominantly seen in the 19th and 20th centuries (though it remains relevant in modern American culture too) (McClelland 1996). This philosophy was cultivated in colonial America as a result of the dissatisfaction and alienation colonists felt towards Britain during the 1700's (Axelrod 2007), in addition to the spread of natural rights-based thinking dominant throughout the enlightenment (McClelland 1996). Natural rights (derived from natural law) refer to principles deduced through reason outlining the rights of individuals in a state of nature (i.e no governments); many critiques towards the British government, including those found in the

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[5] The *Dao De Ching* has many ideas that could be used as critiques of Confucianism, but it is unknown whether Laozi was referring to Confucius, as he and his specific principles was never directly mentioned in that book.

Declaration of Independence, focus on their violation of the colonist's natural rights (Axelrod 2007). Natural rights are a product of the Protestant Reformation and the increased skepticism towards Catholic traditions (especially in protestant countries like Britain), specifically the questioning of divine right arguments (Russell 1945). The period between the Reformation and American Revolution (17th and 18th centuries) marks a transition from the social stratification innate to divine right monarchism to the focus on equality in libertarianism, a change caused by the introduction and development of natural rights arguments (Russell 1945). As such, I will start with British social contract theorists (Hobbes and Locke) who first posed these arguments before covering the influence of the enlightenment and ending with the American libertarian perspective portrayed by Thomas Paine in his book *Common Sense*.

In social contract theory, the form and function of the state is predicated on how people act in a state of nature (McClelland 1996). It was thought that any reasonable person in the state of nature would deduce natural laws and from it natural rights, which are inherent principles of life that everyone shares (the most universal and important being self-preservation and equality). Since natural laws are difficult to enforce in the state of nature, people create and consent to governments, sacrificing some of their natural liberties in exchange for security. Hobbes, Locke, Paine and most enlightenment era thinkers all shared these premises; their differences mainly concerned human nature and what government type was best suited to protecting natural rights.

Hobbes (1588-1679 CE) and Locke (1632-1704 CE) wrote their seminal works *Leviathan* (1651 CE) and *The Two Treatises of Government* (1689 CE) in response to similar ideas and events. Both books challenge the divine right argument (Locke, in fact, dedicated the entirety of his first treatises to criticizing Robert Filmer's variation on the theory (Filmer, 1680))[6] and both

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[6] It is likely that Hobbes was responding to Filmer too in *Leviathan* since they lived during the same time and Filmer's *Patriarcha* was popular with the British monarchy (Filmer 1680).

writers were influenced by the English civil war (1642-1651 CE) fought between parliament and the monarchy (Pattison). Their differing statuses during the war, however, best epitomizes their difference in philosophy. Hobbes was an associate of the British monarchy and wrote *Leviathan* during the war, whereas Locke wrote *The Two Treatises of Government* 30 years separated from the event without ties to the monarchy and with hindsight of the temporary Parliament state established during the war (McClelland 1996). Thus, Locke had more of a reference of a non-monarchical state and less investment in Britain's institutions compared to Hobbes.

The greatest philosophical difference between Hobbes and Locke is that Hobbes thought the state of nature inevitably led to war, but Locke thought cooperation could exist without a state. This difference permeates throughout both *Leviathan* and the second of *The Two Treatises of Government*. Hobbes's view is based on a selfish and opportunistic conception of human nature; people are inherently self-interested and narcissistic (since you only know your own thoughts, you presume yourself to be superior to others), so we are primed to conflict with others to expand our power (resources, influence and prestige). Though we desire power, our understanding of natural law (self-preservation and everyone being born equal) makes us skeptical about the abilities of others to do us harm and thus we willing to engage in peaceful, risk-aversive compromises with them. The state is the result of this compromise; it is an entity to which individuals surrender their power in exchange for common laws, defense and punishments, which removes ambiguity and thus facilitates risk-free exchanges between citizens. Locke, in contrast, believed that since any reasonable person would be aware of the natural laws, you can expect most people in a state of nature to respect each other's rights because they would in turn respect yours (the idea being that people in the state of nature would mutually agree to punish breakers of the natural law). Thus, the state is not required for societies to form because it

would be in everyone's interest to cooperate rather than engage in war. Instead, the state forms as

a convenience to enforce natural laws and organize labor more efficiently, which provides a

better life to its citizens when compared to the state of nature. Other aspects of Locke's theory

follow from this point; property can exist within the state of nature because people can be

expected to respect an individual's right to own their labor and democracies (preferably direct,

but representative are logistically better) are the preferred system of government because they

retain more natural liberties compared to other governments. Hobbes, in contrast, believed that

most rights (like property) unrelated to self-preservation are dependent on the state because

mutual trust does not exist in the state of nature. Also, despite the future association between

natural rights and democracy, Hobbes preferred monarchies as the ideal state because they

consolidated power within a single, consistent authority figure that can create more stable laws

compared to democracies. In sum, Hobbes believed that the state was a remedy for the abysmal

state of nature conditions, whereas Locke thought that the state was a refinement of the state of

nature's best aspects.

  Locke's favorable perspective of the state of nature continued through enlightenment era

political thought (McClelland 1997). Though Locke clearly preferred democracies over

monarchies, he emphasized in his second treatise that whatever government the original founders

of a state (and people who subsequently join) agreed to is the government they should pursue. In

fact, though the second half of his second treatise is dedicated to explaining difficulties common

in monarchies, it is framed more as a critique of the British crown's failure to protect natural

rights than claiming monarchies are unable to protect natural rights at all[7]. The enlightenment's

heavy focus on human reason is why monarchies shifted from being unideal to detestable

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[7] Locke believed that monarchies formed because early states replicated the hierarchy found in the family structure; they did not have to form through usurpation or conquest.

between Locke and Paine. Since the state of nature and natural laws were deduced by reason alone, enlightenment thinkers glorified them, any state that emphasized them was considered just and states formed from other precedents (like monarchies) were deemed unjust (McClelland 1997). This culminated in Paine's *Common Sense* (1776 CE), where he states that governments are a necessary evil whose only purpose is to ensure a society's defense and enforce laws, and that they are only justified as a representational democracy. This is evident in Paine's critiques of the British crown; he focuses on their failure to protect English colonialist against the French and Indian tribes during the Seven Years War, their policies restricting and taxing colonists in ways other British citizens were not and their lack of representation in Parliament. Paine also characterizes of the monarchical system as an intentionally confusing tyrant state that lacked any right to rule outside of conquest. These critiques are emblematic of those found in Locke and the enlightenment; the British broke the social contract by failing to protect (or even by infringing upon) the colonial citizen's natural rights. Paine is notable among other enlightenment era thinkers for basing his polarization of natural-right based democracies and monarchies on practical examples of the deficiencies in monarchies rather than supposed injustices as theorized by other enlightenment thinkers, and it is likely why American libertarianism prioritizes government noninterventionism and natural rights so heavily.

Justification for the State

An interesting trend across eastern and western thoughts is the gradual secularization of the state. Divine right arguments were used to justify monarchs in both European and Chinese culture prior to the Zhou dynasty (Tanner 2010) and as late as the 19th century in Europe (Russell 1945). I explained how the social contract and subsequent enlightenment thinkers were the result of the reformation, but the transition seen in China warrants further explanation.

Traditional Chinese thought posits a three-way relationship between heaven, earth and humans, where heaven was given the most influence and was thought to create principles that regulates the other two. (Chan 1963). Governments were subject to *tianming* (the mandate of heaven) which determined what policies and actions created successful states or led to ruin through war, uprisings and/or economic or natural disasters (Chan 1963). The Shang dynasty (whom the Zhou dynasty proceeded) believed heaven had tangible influence in human affairs and the emperor was thought to be directly related to heaven and influential spirts (Morgan 2001), essentially making him a god king (Hung 2019). When the Zhou dynasty overthrew the Shang, heaven was recontextualized as ideals and processes rather than a tangible authority, and its influence on the human world became more subtle (Chan 1963). This manifested as *ren* for Confucians and the *Dao* for Daoist, ideals that are archivable for any state or individual who labors to learn them. Though *ren* and the *Dao* are created by heaven, the consequences of following them occurs solely within the human realm without overt divine interventionism. It was argued in *The Analects*, for example, that the citizenry *ren* makes them more effective citizens which strengthens the state; heaven does not directly bless the state to be successful. Likewise, the social contract theorist's separation of God from governments formed out of the state of nature meant that the state was formed by people alone, and thus its successes and failures were human caused as well. For both cultures, removing supernatural justifications for the states meant philosophies justified the state's authority by their adherence to principles (*tianming* and natural rights respectively).

An explanation of differences between the western and Chinese conceptions of heaven is warranted to strengthen this comparison, the most notable of which being agency. Heaven in the west is synonymous with God; the will of heaven is whatever God decrees and any form of

divine intervention in human affairs is attributed directly to Him. In Chinese culture, however, who or what creates *tianming* is not emphasized (Hung 2019), and the will of heaven had to be deduced through shamans, divination and observing the environment (Morgan 2001), meaning heaven was ambivalent towards humans. This was certainly true for the Zhou culture, whose myths avoided the topic of world creationism and focused instead on the creation of society and the state (Tanner 2010); in fact, both Confucian and Daoist texts reference famous kings to strengthen their arguments. Even within the Shang culture, god-kings were thought to have had a connection with heaven, but they did not control heaven (Morgan 2001). Regardless of these cultural differences, the comparison I suggest is predicated on the divine right to rule being the same between these cultures, which was true for both divine right European and Shang states despite Shang rulers being attributed with more divinity.

Ideal Governance

The most substantial difference between Chinese and western thought is the integration of the state and the individual found in Confucianism. Confucians argue that the state and the individual are reciprocal entities that facilitate or hamper each other's growth. The state's purpose is to teach *ren* to its citizenry, and citizens knowledgeable in *ren* in turn creates a perfect society (Wong 2011). A parallel can be made here in Hobbes's theory, which is predicated on the idea that the state is necessary for individual's success and vice versa (since more citizens in a state makes the state stronger by increasing its collective power) (Hobbes 1994). Both *The Analects* and *Leviathan* attribute consent as a factor in determining the ruler's authority; losing *tianming* and failing to surpass the state of nature are both justifiable reasons to abandon an authority, so the right to rule is not absolute. However, the goal of the Confucian state is the moral development of its citizens, an obligation not found in the Hobbesian state. Hobbes

deemed any action not restricted by the ruler nor an infringement of natural law as allowable, the state is not inherently responsible to instill morality in the individual. Though a ruler can enforce laws based on morality, Hobbes did not believe in a set moral code of which all states must adhere to be successful. Thus, Confucius's successors were favorable towards the state's authoritative power in its citizens' lives (Chan 1963), whereas the philosophers who followed Hobbes became more concerned with limiting the state's power over the individual (McClelland 1996). This is intuitive; the more intertwined the state and citizens are, the more authority the state needs in the citizen's affairs to be effective.

Daoism also emphasizes the relationship between the state and the individual, though unlike Confucianism, this relationship is corruptive. Daoist see state values as unnatural and obstructive to the citizen's understanding of the *Dao* (Zhuangzi 2013). The Daoist state is more akin to the western perspective in this regard, where it is treated like a tool that facilitates the citizenry rather than teach them. It should be emphasized however that none of the western thinkers thought the dangers posed by the state were as spiritually insidious as the Daoist portray. Paine's "necessary evil" description of government is a likewise negative view of the state, but he was more concerned with the abuses of power the state could physically impose on people rather than its ability to create unnatural desires within the individual (Paine 2020). Although western thinkers differed in how extensive the state's responsibilities were, they always thought that the state needed to have a consistent presence, which is not shared in how Daoist states could theoretically be completely non-active when appropriate (Feldt 2010).

The growth and sustainability of the ideal state differs between the Confucian, Daoist and Western philosophies. It is argued multiple times in both Confucius's *Analects* and Mencius's titular book that a just ruler draws support from citizens in unjust countries because they want to

be ruled by an emperor with *ren*, thus bolstering the just state while diminishing the unjust states. Western thinkers, in contrast, do not focus on how states expand their power, but rather on maintaining what they have according to natural law. All the western philosophers agreed that self-defense was quintessential, which is why they all agreed on common laws and defense forces being justified despite the differences between Hobbes, Locke and Paine. Both Laozi and Zhuangzi believed that restricting desires in things like wealth and power protected the citizens because invaders would have no reason to attack, and citizens would have no reason to steal.

In sum, when the state is integrated into its citizen's lives, the optimal state is justified by being run virtuously, whereas an integrated state is virtuous by design. Confucian rulers must act according to *ren* because the success of the state comes from the rulers being examples for the citizens. Western thinkers, in contrast, described the optimal state as providing a minimal service (common laws and defense); the quality of the rulers does not matter so long as these services are maintained and natural rights are not infringed upon in the process. Thinkers past Hobbes (especially Paine) were broader on what counted as infringing on nature rights, but they all agreed on this premise. This is also evident in the preference for democracies from later western thinkers; since the ideal state does not require an exceptional leader, then people might as well represent themselves. Daoism agrees more with the western perspective because the state's actions are to be restricted in order to allow individual's actions to be performed uninhibitedly.

Human Nature

Similar with how the concept of heaven differed across cultures, the different views of nature must be understood to make any meaningful comparisons with human nature between Chinese and western traditions. The literal meaning of nature (physical landscapes, features, animals and resources) does not differ between cultures, but the relationship between people and

nature does (Hung 2019). Western thought (at least since the social contract theorists) views

nature as the state from which people originated and diverged from, which is evident by the state

of nature argument and especially nowadays with post-Darwin thought (Singer 2005).

Traditional Chinese thought, as mentioned before, made a clear separation between man and

nature, but both entities are bound to heaven's will. The Chinese philosophies differed in how

similar those relationships were; Confucius thought *tianming* affected humans and nature in

reminiscent, but not exact ways, whereas Laozi thought the relationship was the same for both

groups and nature followed heaven perfectly (so humans should follow nature's example and

live naturally) (Hung 2019). The implication of this cultural difference is that western

philosophers assumed that humans started out stateless and transitioned into governments, but

Confucian philosophers assumed the opposite was true since *tianming* preordained state living

for humans.

　　　Both the enlightenment thinkers and Daoists are similar in that they idolize the state of

nature[8] and believed that virtues[9] were inherent to people regardless of the state. This

comparison is best expressed in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals* (released 20

years prior to Common Sense); Hume (2008) distinguishes between natural virtues derived from

intrinsic morality and artificial virtues created to facilitate societal and state functions. Though

specific natural virtues are categorizable through reason, the sense of what is right and wrong is

undefinable and instinctual; Hume even says the best way to know if something is a virtue is to

judge your reaction to being attributed a specific trait (Hume 2008). Instinctive virtue is also a

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[8] A state of nature is never overtly used in Daoist text, however, they do refer to naturalistic conditions actions that imply statelessness, which I consider to be analogous to the western concept.

[9] There are considerable differences between virtues across the texts used in this paper. Since this paper is comparing where virtues originated instead of what those virtues are, I am using the word virtues to refer to a group of desirable and just traits that the individual philosophy values.

defining aspect of the Daoist ethics; *wuwei* entails a spontaneity in one's actions according to the whims of the *dao* which, for morality, is based on the individual's natural inclinations (Wong 2021). Daoist value self-cultivation over social indoctrination for this reason, evident in how Laozi encouraged people to follow nature to learn *tianming* (Hung 2019), how Zhuangzi constantly references nature in his analogies (Zhuangzi 2013) and even in the first line of the Dao De Ching proclaiming that the true *dao* and the spoken *dao* were not the same (i.e the true *dao* cannot be taught) (Laozi 2013). Hume was obviously not skeptical about the corrupting influence of society on virtues, but both he and the Daoists agreed that virtues did not require a state for to exist.

These parallels are not found in Hobbes nor Confucianism. Hobbes did not believe that virtues existed in the state of nature, only self-interest did; he is the only philosopher discussed in this paper that thought virtues were a social construct. Xunzi thought that *ren* existed and could be cultivated, but it had to be taught because human nature was evil. One could argue that a negative view on human nature creates more restrictive states (Hobbes was the most open to ruler-imposed laws than the philosophers who followed him and Xunzi inspired legalism, a very restrictive philosophy (Goldin 2018)), but this does not seem to apply to Confucius and Mencius, both of whom held more positive views of human nature and yet also argued for interventionalist states. However, if we consider the subtext underlining their theories, that the state is necessary for the individual's development, then it is clear that Confucius and Mencius were skeptical that humans without the state would ever become moral, regardless of their human nature. It is argued in both *The Analects* and *Mencius* that although some people can be born sages, most people must learn to become them. Even Mencius, who claims that human nature is good, argues for a stricter state (i.e the state was always a presence in the citizen's lives) than Confucius, who

was seemingly indecisive on the matter (Morgan 2001). Thus, the difference between Hobbes and the Confucians and the enlightenment thinkers and Daoists is the former's skepticism towards the ability of humans to act morally in the state of nature led to higher control states compared to the latter.

Conclusion

Three general principles of philosophical development can be derived from the analysis done in this paper. . .

1) A shift from external to internal justifications for the state results in secular state justifications. The success and authority of the state depended on the ruler's/citizen's ability to deduce, learn and abide to *tianming* and natural laws after the Shang dynasty and in post-reformation Europe. Philosophies that arose during and after this shift became centralized around secular principles (*ren*, human *dao*, natural rights) and divine right arguments were refuted and/or abandoned entirely, regardless of the different conceptualizations of heaven across cultures.

2) Optimal states are based on virtuous leaders when the state is integrated into the citizen's lives and virtuous structure when the state is not. Confucianism prioritizes sage rulers as essential to the state because virtuous living is deemed crucial for the state's ability to operate successfully and filial piety places rulers in teaching roles for their subjects. This relationship is corruptive in Daoism, so Daoist rulers must instead prioritize *wuwei* in state interventions where selective action is utilized. Success comes from the state following the *dao* rather than its ruler. Western traditions adhering to natural law arguments likewise idolize states which adhere most closely to the natural laws rather than the qualities of its ruler. Hobbes was the most supportive

of monarchies (and the most pessimistic of the state of nature), yet even he valued kings for their institutional role as consolidates of power rather than their qualities.

3) Philosophical skepticism towards human nature creates more restrictive governments. Unless virtues are both attributed to and can be achievable by humans in a state of nature, philosophies will attribute the creation of virtues to the state regardless of whether human nature is good or bad. Hume and Daoists posited that virtues existed outside of the state, and as such, Daoist and Paine's ideal states could be expected to function with limited restrictions. Confucians and Hobbes doubted or even refuted that people could achieve morality without the state defining virtues, so the state was necessary for cooperation, leading to philosophies that were more controlling by comparison.

These principles, being derived from comparative developments, should be applicable to Confucian/Daoist and social contract/enlightenment era thoughts, though more research into their universality ought to be performed before applying them to unrelated philosophies. What I wish to emphasize here is that the process of comparing philosophies by their developments, as shown in this paper, has promise in explaining changes within philosophies regardless of cultural context. This has the potential to frame differences in east/west philosophies without relying on culturally specific principles and in understanding why thoughts change over time.

Limitations/Further Research

The greatest challenge to the comparisons offered by this paper is the different progressions for Chinese and pre-libertarian thoughts. Confucianism and Daoism originated as competing ideologies during the same period; this is evident by the amount of commentary found in Mencius, Xunzi and Zhuangzi's referring each other's philosophies. American libertarianism's progression was very linear in comparison; Hobbes, Locke and Paine's work built off each other,

which is why a clear transition emerges between them. Although developmental comparisons were made between these philosophies, the differences between Confucian and Daoist thinkers within their own philosophies were not as substantial as between the social contract and enlightenment theorists. Expanding research into Han dynasty Confucian and Daoist philosophers may yield comparisons in this regard (though Daoism became less politically relevant as time progressed).

The conclusions made in this paper would also be strengthened by applying developmental comparisons to different philosophical movements within western and Chinese cultures. Other philosophies from the Hundred Schools of Thought had varying views of filial piety, human nature and heaven's will (Chan 1963), which would make them perfect for testing the three principles outlined in this paper. Researching Yangism in particular could lead to compelling comparisons, as it prescribes a self-preservation focus to people as a part of the *Dao* similar to how the social contract theorist thought about natural rights (which is absent in both Confucianism and Daoism) (Hansen 2021). Expanding into other movements with similar ideas could also be beneficial. Daoist political thought is often portrayed as anarchist due to its focus on a non-acting state (Feldt 2010), so comparisons with western anarchist thought would be interesting. Kropotkin (1897), for example, wrote about how human nature is corrupted by social structures and how virtues were inherent in people, both of which are themes in Daoism. This would also allow the paradigm shift caused by Darwinism to be compared to the state of nature based social contract theorists.

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