



國際關係學院

University Of International Relations

碩士研究生學位論文

題目 論“天”與“Heaven”

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專業：英語語言文學

方向：翻譯

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完成時間： 2007 年 5 月

答辯日期： 2007 年 6 月 7 日

On *Tian* 天 and “Heaven”

**A Thesis Submitted to
Department of English Language and Literature
University of International Relations
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Arts**

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**Under the Supervision of
Professor Wang Wenhua**

May 28th, 2007

Acknowledgements

I am first and foremost indebted to my supervisor, Professor Wang Wenhua, with whose help I narrowed down to the present topic of this thesis, a field which had interested me for a long time and which I had dared not to venture in because of its complexity and profundity. Despite his extremely tight, almost hectic schedule, Mr. Wang has taken the trouble to give me help whenever I was in need of it. His inspiring suggestions, his acute criticism and his penetrating insights enlightened me a lot in the fulfillment of this thesis. And his meticulous and critical reading of my drafts helped me to realize how great effort I need to make in English learning and how erudite and diligent a person he is. Besides, his easy-going manner put me at ease whenever I consulted with him. His charismatic personality, profound knowledge and approachable manner make me realize what kind of person a real scholar should be.

My parents are the ever-lasting emotional prop for me. Whenever I felt disheartened with my writing, the thought of them would immediately cheer me up. Every bit of achievement I have ever made is attributable to their love, understanding and encouragement.

Last but not least, my gratitude goes to my lovely roommates and friends, whose help and advice in daily life gave me valuable experience of friendship and made my postgraduate study one of the best memories in my life.



Abstract

To some extent, Chinese culture and western culture can be condensed to two most revealing words, *tian* and “heaven”. A contrastive study of the two terms based on systematic and independent investigations as is tentatively demonstrated here in this paper could facilitate a better understanding of the two cultures, upon which the translation between the two words depends.

The study of *tian* has aroused the interest of many scholars, among whom Feng Youlan attributes five senses to this concept, namely, the physical *tian*, the ruler *tian*, the fatalistic *tian*, the naturalistic *tian*, and the patriarchal and ethical *tian*. However, his classification is incomplete in its exclusion of “a natural state of things”, an important point in Xunzi’s doctrine, and his failure to recognize the central status of the patriarchal and ethical *tian* which, according to Yang Shi, justifies the rules and the laws of the traditional stratified family-oriented society where the obediently accepted ethical values in the name of love and care in actuality could bring the ones in lower status into the submission to the ones above them when a great deal of attention and regard are paid to the subordination of a son to his father, the younger brother to the elder, and a wife to her husband. Similarly, the semantic changes of “heaven” in the Christian classic – the *Bible* have been diligently studied by western scholars throughout history as well as in modern times, and their research shows that the significance of this word lies in its centrality of man’s focus on salvation.

This thesis is composed of three chapters. The first one is devoted to an investigation of *tian*. The Confucian tradition of Chinese culture underlies the notion that the concept of *tian* as laid down by Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, the founding fathers of Confucianism, is a microcosm of what it is in Chinese culture. And the five senses of *tian* in their mind converge on the patriarchal and ethical *tian*, a confirmation of Professor Yang’s argument.

The second chapter attempts to investigate “heaven” in the Christian classic – the *Bible*, which to some extent has laid the very foundation of the western culture. It reflects

and engenders a God-centered culture pregnant with the spirit of freedom and equality. Though it is equal to *tian* in its physical sense, its impact on western culture is most felt in its theological dimensions. As God's domain, it is the place of salvation where the blessed enjoy their eternal bliss. The conception of this Christian term suggests that degenerated men learn, in their arduous pursuit of heaven, that the only way of attaining eternal happiness is to be God's faithful servants, i.e., to be sincere and steadfast in religious belief and in good conduct, the strict practice of which secures every God's devotee the equal opportunity of entering heaven, and therefore helps to establish a harmonious society of freedom and equality.

The third chapter makes a contrastive study of *tian* and "heaven" in terms of their translation. The independent researches in the first two chapters show the fundamental discrepancy between the two words, and thus deny the legitimacy of "heaven" as the most accepted rendering of *tian* (except in its physical sense). In addition, *tian*, with its five senses, has been translated, however, by different and seemingly unrelated words in different circumstances, which unavoidably undermines the integrity of these senses and fails to convey *tian*'s complete meaning for westerners. The widely-acknowledged Chinese rendering of "heaven", *tian tang* 天堂, is also a partial translation suggesting more spatial connotation of "heaven" than its temporal implication. Hence a proper way of dealing with *tian* may be not to translate it but to keep it as pinyin "tian" in the TL text and aid it with additional explanations. Translation is in a sense the replacement of the SL culture with the TL culture, and on many occasions, on account of its disregard for cultural uniqueness, could only end in either distortion or failure.

Key words: *tian*; "heaven"; translation; culture

内容摘要

从某种意义上说，“天”与“heaven”浓缩了中国文化和西方文化的不同特点。本文首先对这两个词分别进行了较为系统的语义学和哲学考查，并从这对概念入手对中西文化的根本差异进行了一番探究。在此基础上，本文还进一步对这对概念作了全面的对比研究，对其在现存诸多译本中所采取的翻译方案进行了较为中肯的分析和评价，并提出作者个人的翻译对策和见解。

许多学者都曾经研究过“天”在中国文化中的含义。冯友兰认为“天”有五种含义，即“物质之天”，“主宰之天”，“命运之天”，“自然之天”以及“义理之天”。但是他的概括并不全面，因为其中不包括“事物自然而然的状态”这层含义——这是荀子理论的重要组成部分。此外他也没有认识到这五种含义中“义理之天”的核心地位。杨适认为，儒家思想倡导的伦理道德规范具有两重性。一方面，这些伦理道德规范从人的亲情、友情等自然本性出发，规定了诸如孝，悌等一系列对待他人的行为准则；另一方面，这些伦理道德规范无一例外地强调了一方对另一方的服从，如儿女对父母的服从，弟弟对兄长的服从，妻子对丈夫的服从等等，这就在无形之中将人们划分为不同的等级，人们之间的关系也不再是自然的平等关系，而是在伦理道德规范约束下的统治与被统治的关系。整个宗法人伦社会就是靠这些看似自然和讲家思想常常压抑、扭曲人性的伦理道德规范维系起来的，儒家思想认为“天”是这些伦理道德规范的最终来源，从而论证了这些伦理道德规范的合理性，乃至整个不平等社会的合理性。西方对“heaven”的研究亦有不少。许多学者研究了“heaven”在《圣经》中的语义变化，进而指出其在西方文化中的重大理论与现实意义。本文便采用了这一研究方法。

本文共分三章。第一章对“天”在中国文化中的含义进行了研究。由于儒家思想在中国文化中的主流地位，儒家思想中的“天”，特别是儒家思想的三位奠基者——孔子，孟子，荀子——思想中的“天”特别突出地反映了其在中国文化思想中的重要地位。冯友兰对整个中国文化中“天”的含义的概括和分析与孔子、孟子、荀子对“天”的认识是基本吻合的，但不足之处是他的概括未涉及到“事物的自然而然的状态”，而这层含义在儒家思想中是有所体现的。

第二章研究了“heaven”在《圣经》中的含义。这部著作既是基督教的经典著作，

同时在其某种程度上也是西方文化的奠基之作，它对西方文化的本质特点产生了决定性影响。因此通过考查“heaven”这一基督教核心概念我们便可以窥见西方文化的基本精髓。“heaven”概念的本质内涵对西方文化产生了重大影响，孕育出了一种以神为中心，崇尚自由平等精神的文化。作为上帝的居所，“heaven”从一开始就同西方人生活的重大主题“救赎”紧密相连。“heaven”象征着被救赎者永享上帝的荣耀，因此成为人们长期以来的不懈追求。在这个艰苦卓绝的过程中，人们逐渐领悟到获得永久幸福的唯一途径便是毫无功利目的地坚定对神的信仰、唯善是行，由此每一位上帝的信徒都可以获得平等享受上帝荣耀的机会。因此，“heaven”的重大现实意义在于它鼓励人们虔诚的信仰和善行，从而有助于建立一个自由、平等、和谐的社会。

第三章从翻译角度对“天”与“heaven”进行了对比研究。前两章的研究表明，“天”与“heaven”有着根本性的差异，这些差异决定了“天”无法翻译为“heaven”（“物质之天”除外）。然而本文收集到的数据显示，目前为止“天”在大多数情况下被翻译为“heaven”。此外，“天”作为五种含义的统一体在不同语境中被翻译为不同且彼此似乎毫无关联的词，这种翻译方法不可避免地破坏了“天”的五种含义的统一性，从而无法将其完整的、原初的含义准确地传达给西方读者。“天堂”作为“heaven”的中文翻译虽然受到广泛认可，但也没有翻译出“heaven”的全部含义，因为“天堂”更侧重空间意义而忽视了时间意义。因此在“天”的翻译中一种比较合理的办法也许不是用一些外语词汇来替换“天”，而是保留其拼音“tian”并辅以进一步说明。翻译从某种意义上说就是源语文化与目的语文化之间的替换，而这种替换如果忽视了文化的独特性就常常会导致译文的扭曲和失败。

关键词：“天”；“heaven”；翻译；文化

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On *Tian* 天 and “Heaven”

Introduction

When doing something unpredictable, a Chinese often tends to comfort himself by saying “谋事在人，成事在天”. Most English learners, I believe, know the two universally-acknowledged translations of this proverb: “Man proposes, God disposes.” and “Man proposes, Heaven disposes.” To my instinct, **only** the almighty God not the heaven could perform the act of doing something. However, a second thought set me hesitant and wavering between the two versions followed by a series of confusing questions: What does *tian* 天 really mean in Chinese culture? Is it simply identical to the western concept of God or a term with complicated connotations? What does “heaven” mean in western culture? Is it the translation equivalent to the Chinese term *tian*? What differences and what similarities are there between *tian* and “heaven” since after all, they are both closely associated with the overarching firmament above us? How should the two words be translated in case that they are not equivalent conceptions? (In fact, a lot of translators have addressed themselves to the problem and yet few have given a satisfactory answer.) These questions attracted me so much that I couldn't help devoting myself to a contrastive study of *tian* and “heaven” to decode those riddles entangling my mind.

Some further readings proved my study a necessity. *tian* is one of the most commonly used words in Chinese. Our daily language or even academic study is so teeming with words and expressions associated with *tian* that people often take this word for granted, totally unaware of its complexity, not to mention a systematic investigation that could possibly bring some valuable and interesting discoveries. At the inspiration of the books on Chinese philosophy and Christianity, I came to realize that *tian* and “heaven” are two words of fundamental significance in both Chinese and western cultures. Generally speaking, the evolution of human history has witnessed three steps in the understanding of the world: to know the world itself, to know men themselves and to know the relation between the world and men themselves, a process in which *tian* and “heaven” become

inevitable and in fact crucial issues because of their affinity with the fundamental concern of mankind, and this further declares their underlying status in the two cultures.

Of course *tian* and “heaven” differ in many ways from each other and with either word is involved one complicated culture distinct from the other. However, comprehensive knowledge of these differences is almost impossible without investigations of both words. In fact, some achievements have already been made in this field. Fu Peirong defines *tian* with five characters: Dominator, Revealer, Judge, Creator, and Sustainer.¹ However, his view is not convincing enough since to some extent the five roles of *tian* exhibit too much Christian influence to be an exact depiction. It is God who plays the role of “Revealer” and “Judge” and reveals His decree that men must abide by and who will punish them for their disobedience. *tian*, on the contrary, is usually not as thrilling a figure as God. It is awed just because it is mystically unknown and threateningly looming behind. And men, though holding it as an all-powerful ruler, are too engaged in human affairs to care about whom it is and what it tells. Feng Youlan also attributes five characteristics to *tian*: the physical *tian*, the ruler *tian*, the fatalistic *tian*, the naturalistic *tian*, and the patriarchal and ethical *tian*.² Comparatively speaking, Feng’s generalization is more acceptable though it is not a complete one.³ The biggest problem of the two scholars is that they do not recognize the central status of the patriarchal and ethical *tian*, a notion advocated by Professor Yang, who, after a systematic analysis of the structure of the traditional family-oriented society in which men by practicing the ethical values are unconsciously stratified as lord and servant, proclaims that *tian*, as the source of those values, justifies the unequal human relationship and helps to preserve social inequality.⁴ Yang’s pioneering viewpoint is absorbed in my further research.

The semantic changes of “heaven” in Christianity, especially in the *Bible*, have been studied in a lot of works such as the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, etc. Not surprisingly, apart from being a physical existence, “heaven” differs in its semantic dimensions from *tian* in almost every aspect, and these

¹ 傅佩荣：《儒道天论发微》，台湾学生书局，1985，第27页。

² Feng’s description of *tian* will be elaborated on in Chapter One.

³ This point will be further explained in Chapter One.

⁴ This argument will be illustrated in detail in places of my thesis.

differences converge on its centrality of the focus of men's salvation. Signifying men's reunion with God and their salvation from sin—their fallen state, heaven is a place where everyone claims equal opportunity as long as they follow God's decree. Therefore in a way, the Christian conception of "heaven" entails the spirit of equality, forming a sharp contrast to *tian*. However, these underlying differences are often overlooked in the translation of Confucian classics in which *tian* is replaced by "heaven" in most cases with no further explanations, making the contrastive study an urgency. Translation between *tian* and "heaven" is hardly an easy job for it involves two distinct cultures in which the two words are of fundamental significance.

In half way, my study of the two terms conducted here is an imitation of the method Professor Yang adopts in his study of "是" and "to be". He argues that the meaning of a word is a system in which its different layers are interrelated with each other and therefore a scientific comparison must be established upon systematic semantic investigations of both words to ensure a comprehensive study.⁵ In view of the fact that exhaustive research on each minute shade of the meaning of *tian* in Chinese culture is too huge a task to be possible for a postgraduate thesis, most of the efforts in this paper therefore will be made to investigate the Confucian concept of *tian* instead of the notion of this word in every school of Chinese thought, e.g., Taoist *tian*, Moist *tian*, etc. This approach is further justified by the fact that *tian* in Confucianism is a microcosm of what it is in Chinese culture that takes Confucianism as its foundation. Three chapters are devoted to my thesis. In the first chapter the Confucian *tian* is investigated with corresponding examples to reflect in a broader sense its contours in the whole Chinese culture. The conceptions of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, the central figures and founding fathers of the backbone of Chinese culture—Confucianism, are the focus of my study. The second chapter adopts a similar method. Through an investigation of "heaven" in the *Bible*, the significance of this word in western culture is decoded since this Christian classic in a sense lays the

⁵ “汉字‘是’与印欧语的 to be 一样，也必定会有一个作为起点的基本含义，在它和由此衍生出来的多义之间，在这些多重含义的相互之间，会有意义的联系。这些联系总起来说便会形成一个关于‘是’或 to be 的语义系统，好像一个家族那样”。我们应当致力于找出这种语义系统。首先应分别地研究善、中各自所用的 to be 和‘是’的语义系统；然后加以比较，对双方的同异之处心中有数；最后才能找出较为恰当的翻译方式，其中包括必要的限定。这样做了，就有「能为释答翻译的难题带来光明。」杨国，《古希腊语学校本》，商务印书馆，2003，第 26 页。

foundation of the western culture. After these independent researches on *tian* and “heaven”, a contrastive study of the two terms is made in the third chapter, where, on one hand, *tian* with its five senses is translated into different words, such as “sky”, “heaven”, “it”, “heavens”, “Heaven”, and “Heavens” as renderings of the physical *tian*; “heaven”, “Heaven”, and “*tian* 天” the ruler *tian*; “heaven”, “Heaven”, and “*tian* 天” the fatalistic *tian*; “Heaven”, “Nature (T’ien)” and “*tian*” the naturalistic *tian*; and finally “heaven”, “Heaven”, and “*tian* 天” the patriarchal and ethical *tian*, an exhibition which proves that in most cases to translate *tian* into “heaven” (or “Heaven”) is inappropriate and that its cultural uniqueness somewhat renders any attempt to translate the Chinese term with an English word a futile and doomed failure. This argument is further reinforced with the research on a few scholars’ works. On the other hand, it is argued that “*tian tang* 天堂” fails to convey the full meaning of “heaven” as westerners understand it. In addition, a table is given to show chronologically that behind these translations of the word, how westerners’ understanding of it varies and changes. Generally speaking, most of them tend to translate *tian* into “heaven” with only a few exceptions who stick to the pinyin “*tian*” throughout to show their awareness of the cultural distinction. In the final chapter, it is concluded that *tian* and “heaven” except in their material sense are too culturally loaded to be mutually translatable terms. To some extent, translation is the replacement of the SL culture with the TL culture, which without discretion and prudence could only end in either distortion or in some cases failure.

Chapter One *Tian* 天

According to *An Analytical Dictionary of Chinese Characters* (《说文解字》) *tian* in ancient Chinese is equal to *dian* 颠 meaning “the top of the head”, from which *tian* is perhaps conferred with the feature of “high above man” and further evolves into an almighty god in Shang Dynasty.⁶ In spite of that, the etymology of this word is uncertain.⁷

Because of its ambiguity, *tian* in Chinese culture remains a controversial topic today. Scholars never stop making their propositions, but no one could claim dominance. For example, Fu Peirong attributes five features to the term *tian*, namely as Dominator, Revealer, Judge, Creator, and Sustainer. However, “Revealer” and “Judge” partake of Christian influence, and the five roles of *tian* are overlapping with each other since all of them can be regarded as one aspect adding to the portrait of an anthropomorphic figure. Comparatively speaking, Feng Youlan’s classification⁸ is somewhat clearer and more convincing. Feng defines *tian* as the physical *tian* (in contrast with physical *di* 地), the ruler *tian* (an anthropomorphic dominator), the fatalistic *tian* (an uncontrollable power over man’s destiny), the naturalistic *tian* (the objective world operating according to its innate principles, e.g., *tian* in Tianlun 《天论》), and the patriarchal and ethical *tian*. However, his description does not include “naturalness” (a natural state of things), an important point in many scholars’ doctrines.⁹ In my thesis Feng’s classification is adopted with some modification, that is, the meaning of “a naturalistic *tian*” will be expanded to refer to both “the objective world operating according to its innate principles” and “a natural state of things”.

Some further explanations need to be made concerning Feng’s idea. The five senses of *tian* as laid down by him constitute an overview of what *tian* means in the overall Chinese

⁶ 郑德良，唐作藩，何九盈，李绍斌，+ 培姆编著，《古代汉语》上册，商务印书馆，1999，第 373 页。

⁷ 傅佩荣，《儒道天论发微》，台湾学生书局，1985，第 13 页。

⁸ “在中文字字中，史记天有五义：一物质之天，即与地相对之天；一主宰之天，即史记皇天上帝，有人格的天主、帝；二命运之天，乃指人生中所无可奈何者，如孟子所谓‘若夫成功则天也’之天是也；三自然之天，乃指自然之运行，如荀子天论篇所说之天是也；四义理之天，乃指宇宙之最高原理，如《中庸》所说‘天命之谓性’之天是也。” 冯友兰，《中国哲学史》上册，中华书局，1947，第 55 页。

⁹ For example, *tian* in this sense is an important point in Xunzi’s doctrines.

culture instead of merely in Confucianism. However, it is beyond doubt that Confucianism is the source of Chinese culture and that all the mainstream Chinese philosophical thoughts claim their debt to it. Therefore Feng's classification of *tian* in Chinese culture can apply to Confucianism as well, and this will be certified in my following investigation.

Among Confucian scholars, Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi are the most brilliant pioneers upon whom Confucianism lays its foundation. Their ideas of *tian* – though somewhat different from each other – are governed by the five senses mentioned above, among which the patriarchal and ethical *tian* is the core because of the man-centered nature of Chinese culture resulting from the stratified family-oriented society¹⁰ dominated by the lord-and-servant human relationship. However, such a distorted inhuman relation has been believed to be natural by the advocating of Confucian teachings which back it up and integrate it with the loving human kindness of kinship and friendship. Confucianism combines the two seemingly contradictory sides in an extremely tactful way: domination and subordination in the name of the more benign terms of *xiao* (孝: filial) and *ti* (悌: loving to brothers) between father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife are natural enough and so are that of ruler and his subjects. And these fettering ethical values take *tian* as their final resource, which therefore serves to justify the distorted human relationship and further the society of inequality.

1.1 Confucius' *tian*

Confucius is the forerunner of Chinese philosophy. Recognized as China's first great teacher both chronologically and in importance, Confucius' ideas have been the fertile soil in which the Chinese cultural tradition has been cultivated and has flourished. From the little evidence illustrating his *tian* we find that this concept has never been clearly stated in *The Analects*. A closer look might find out that it is in fact composed of several senses that are talked about in relational terms, that is, Confucius has little concern about *tian* in

¹⁰ The stratified family oriented society (宗法等级社会) refers to the traditional Chinese society in which family or clan is the basic unit and in which family members are of superior and inferior status, i.e., domination and subordination lie between father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and husband and wife. However, such inequality is believed to be natural since it is integrated with kinship in which love is an indispensable element.

isolation from man and never gives it any purely cosmological description.

Firstly, Confucius is seemingly not exempt from the traditional belief that *tian* is the all-powerful ruler. For example:

夫子矢之曰：予所否者，天厌之，天厌之！¹¹

This declaration is made when Confucius' meeting with Nanzi, a notorious woman, displeases Zilu, one of his best disciples. He says that *tian* will abandon him if he has done anything improper. In his eyes *tian* is a ruler supervising what happens on earth and may take due action when necessary. However, it is no longer the almighty god worshipped by Shang people. Rather, it is an anthropomorphic figure which, though high above mankind, is more concerned with what is taking place on earth. And this is why in Confucius' mind it may punish him if he has done anything improper, thus presenting a contrast to the situation in Shang Dynasty when men bow down low to the decree of *tian*.

Confucius' attitude towards *tian* is pragmatic. For him *tian* is no more than an awesome ruler whom he has little interest in exploring further and who is concerned with nothing but man.

子不语乱、力、怪、神。¹²

子曰：“务民之义，敬鬼神而远之，可谓知矣。”¹³

Confucius flatly refuses to discuss what man can hardly know. In his eyes, instead of inquiring into the spirits, man should respect them and at the same time keep them at a distance. For him, what beyond man's knowledge is beyond his concern.

Secondly, *tian* is destiny.

死生有命，富贵在天。¹⁴

五十而知天命。¹⁵

“*ming* 命” and “*tian* 天” express the same meaning – destiny, on which man, dead or alive, rich or poor depends. The second quote states that Confucius at the age of fifty knows the bidding of *tian*. However, *tian ming* 天命 for him is more than destiny. Confucius takes himself as the one chosen by *tian* to shoulder the responsibility of

¹¹ 孔子，《论语·雍也》。

¹² 孔子，《论语·述而》。

¹³ 孔子，《论语·雍也》。

¹⁴ 孔子，《论语·颜渊》。

¹⁵ 孔子，《论语·为政》。

reconstructing *li* (礼, Rituals) created by Zhou people. It is the divine mission in which *tian* has selected him as “the champion and carrier of China’s culture.”¹⁶ Thus *tian* in his mind is not only destiny but more importantly that which has entrusted him with the sacred mission.

Confucius is never a pessimist facing the unknown fate. Instead, as a great humanist he is more interested in human affairs. The uncontrollability of destiny is by no means a hindrance to men’s striving for their dreams. *tian ming* should only be obeyed when men have exhausted every other choice.

Thirdly, Confucius asserts that *tian* is the source of virtue within him.

子曰：天生篤於予，桓魋其如予何！¹⁷

When informed that Huan Tui is attempting to kill him, Confucius is not afraid. He believes that *tian* is the source of virtue within him, which will render any harmful attempt, including murder, futile and useless. It is virtue that inspires Confucius for he believes that his virtue secures him the position as the chosen one to shoulder the responsibility of restoring Zhou people’s achievements, a divine mission that cannot be interfered.

Not only *tian* is the source of virtue in Confucius, but it “is the most important moral force in the universe and...human beings who wish to be morally good must therefore seek to discern and follow it.”¹⁸

子曰：天何言哉？四时行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉！¹⁹

子曰：大哉，尧之为君也。巍巍乎，唯天为大，唯尧则之。²⁰

Though *tian* does not speak, it delivers its messages through things under its command, such as the four seasons going round and the hundred things coming into being. Here *tian* is neither what some scholars argue an anthropomorphic ruler nor the naturalistic *tian* operating in accordance with some innate laws. What Confucius emphasizes is that these natural phenomena inform of something that *tian* should have said, that is, “天何言哉？四时行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉！” implies “that through the harmony, beauty, sublimity of its natural processes” *tian* “communicates a great deal about how human beings ought to

¹⁶ Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 78.

¹⁷ 孔子，《论语·述而》。

¹⁸ Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 79.

¹⁹ 孔子，《论语·阳货》。

²⁰ 孔子，《论语·泰伯》。

live and act.”²¹ It is man instead of *tian* that holds the central concern. What man should do lies in the following example in which Confucius eulogizes Yao as a great ruler with the remark “Great indeed was Yao as a ruler! How lofty! It is only Heaven²² that is great and it was only Yao who modeled himself upon it.”²³ Confucius believes that Yao’s greatness is in his virtue and he owes its origin to *tian*, a belief denoting what man in general should do for the quality of man lies in his virtue which has *tian* as its final resource.²⁴

Man’s virtue that Confucius advocates is seemingly no more than a series of ethical values. Confucius is a great humanist who, as a successor and transmitter of the man-centered tradition stemmed from Zhou Dynasty, devotes his life to culturing man with these values, which, however, destroy the original harmonious human relationship on account of their innate inequality determined by the stratified family-oriented society where subordination and domination thematize human relationship. Meanwhile these values are regarded as the natural behavioral norms because of their integration with the immanent love and care among family members. And *tian*, as the source of man’s virtue, thus justifies the ethical values and serves social inequality.

1.2 Mencius’ *tian*

Mencius is regarded as Confucius’ most prominent successor who earns his fame by his firm belief in the goodness of human nature. For him *tian* is also a multi-layered concept, varying in a spectrum from the most anthropomorphic sense to the least.

Firstly, *tian* is the ruling power governing the world which reveals its will with no words but conduct. For example,

孟子曰，天与之……天不言，以行与事示之而已矣……²⁵

tian confers the throne upon the emperor, but its appointment is not invested with specific injunctions. *tian* does not speak. It shows its will by the emperor’s personal conduct and

²¹ Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 79.

²² “Heaven” as the translation of *tian* is not appropriate, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

²³ Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 79.

²⁴ 傅仁康，《循道天论发微》，台湾学生书局，1985，第113页。

²⁵ 孟子，《孟子·万章上》。

his conduct of affairs.²⁶

Secondly, *tian* refers to the sky where rain falls and the celestial bodies move.

七八月之间旱，……天油然作云，沛然下雨，则苗勃然兴之矣。²⁷

天之高也，星辰之远也，苟求其故，千岁日至，可坐而致也。²⁸

Here *tian* is understood in its natural sense. It operates in accordance with its innate principles that are not inaccessible to men. Though it is high and stars are distant, men still have the means of going back to the solstice of a thousand years ago as long as they have a close investigation of *tian* with its all kinds of phenomena.²⁹

Thirdly, *tian* is destiny.

吾之不遇鲁侯，天也……³⁰

Mencius ascribes his not finding a prince of Lu to (the will of) *tian*, his destiny. In this sentence the sage expresses his frustration at men's impotence in such an uncontrollable world. He acknowledges that every living thing has a destiny to which they must be obedient, and the obedience, he further argues, is oftentimes the aftermath of the hardship and the toil with which they endeavor to fight against their destiny, a view complying with Confucius' idea of destiny.

Last but not least, *tian* is a concept closely related to the stratified family-oriented society, which resonates with Confucius' idea. Mencius maintains that man's *xing* (性 nature) is good, as proved by the fact that everyone has in him the "Four Beginnings": a sense of compassion for others, a sense of shame, a sense of modesty and courtesy, and a sense of right and wrong.³¹ And these, he says, "are not infused into us from without. We are certainly possessed of them; and a different view is simply from want of reflection."³² Man is born with these roots of ethical values, and to act according to them is a universal property of man, i.e., man's nature, which, for Mencius, is engendered from *tian*. There is

²⁶ "Heaven does not speak. It simply showed its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs." Mencius. *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 355.

²⁷ 孟子，《孟子·梁惠上》。

²⁸ 孟子，《孟子·离娄下》。

²⁹ "There is heaven so high; there are the stars so distant. If we have investigated their phenomena, we may, while sitting in our places, go back to the solstice of a thousand years ago." Mencius. *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 331.

³⁰ 孟子，《孟子·梁惠下》。

³¹ 孟子，《孟子·告子上》。

³² Mencius. *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 60.

an example that “ties the universal dispositions of *hsing* [i.e. *xing*, nature] to the absolute authority of T’ien”³³:

天生蒸民，有物有则。民之秉彜，好是懿德。³⁴

T’ien gave birth to the teeming masses;

Every thing has its law.

The norm which people possess

Is love of splendid virtue...³⁵

This poem echoes explicitly Mencius’ idea that the ethical values as man’s nature come from *tian*, which justifies that the best way to know *tian* is nothing but to know man’s own nature.

尽其心者，知其性也。知其性者，则知天矣。³⁶

The man who exhausts his mental constitution knows his nature, and to know his nature is to know *tian*.³⁷ Here *tian* functions not as a physical existence but as something that sustains human nature, i.e., what makes man man and to which man owes his very essence of his being. However, human nature as Mencius believes is by no means natural. The ethical values are designed purposefully to preserve the stability of the stratified family-oriented society in which men, though labeled as superior or inferior, are blinded by the manipulated kinship and friendship that make them willing to accept those values, i.e., to subject to their inferior status.

1.3 Xunzi’s *tian*

As an avowed successor of Confucius, Xunzi departs to some extent from his predecessor and leaves great influence on Chinese people’s understanding of *tian* in two senses. Firstly, *tian* is the abstract, impersonal objective world operating by foreseeable processes and principles that are certain and constant.

³³ Robert Fno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*, State University of New York Press, 1990, 121.

³⁴ 孟子，*《告子上》*。

³⁵ Robert Fno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*, State University of New York Press, 1990, 121.

³⁶ 孟子，*《尽心上》*。

³⁷ “He who has exhausted his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven.” Mencius, *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 448.

天行有常，不为尧存，不为桀亡。应之以治则吉，应之以乱则凶。³⁸

The course of *tian* is constant. It does not exist because of good government, nor does it perish because of misgovernment. What counts is that we understand it and respond to it intelligently so that we can benefit from it. We should know the difference between *tian* and man, observe its constancy and make use of it, an idea declaring Xunzi's close attention to man's affairs with little interest in exploring *tian* as westerners have been doing. This echoes the traditional Chinese culture wherein man is of the paramount importance and thereby asserts Xunzi's membership in Confucianism.

In addition, Xunzi takes *tian* as a natural state wherein everything develops as it is supposed to be.³⁹ "Man must not 'contest over the work of Nature,' in which nothing is done yet there is completion and in which nothing is sought yet all is obtained."⁴⁰

凡性天之就也，不可学，不可事。礼义者，圣人之所生也，人之所学而能，所事而成者。不可学，不可事，而在天者，谓之性，可学而能，可事而成之在人者，谓之伪，是性伪之分也。⁴¹

Whatever belongs to original nature is the gift of Nature⁴². It cannot be learned. It cannot be worked for. The Sage-Kings brought forth the rules of proper conduct (*Li*) and justice (*Yi*). Men learn them and gain ability; they work for them and obtain results in the development of character. What cannot be learned and cannot be worked for, what is in the power of Nature only is what is meant by original nature. That which can be learned and which gives men ability, which can be worked for and which brings results in the development of character, whatever is in the power of man is what is meant by acquired character. This is the distinction between original nature and acquired character.⁴³

Human nature is something one is born with. It is not natural but artificial for man to follow his conjured-up idea instead of his inner nature.

In this sense Xunzi owes his debt to Zhuangzi who criticizes that the ethical values

³⁸ 荀子，《天论》。

³⁹ 杨适，《中西大论的冲突》，中国人民大学出版社，1997，第85页。

⁴⁰ John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, Stanford University Press, 1988, 70.

⁴¹ 荀子，《性恶篇》。

⁴² I prefer "tian" instead of "Nature", a point which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁴³ Xunzi, *The Works of Hün-tze*, trans. Homer H. Dubs., Arthur Probsthain, 1928, 303.

that Confucius and Mencius advocate distort human nature and he argues that “nonaction”, i.e., to let everything be what it is is the only way out.

牛马四足是谓天，落[同“络”]马首、穿牛鼻是谓人。故曰勿以人灭天，无以
[衣]有心而为[灭]命，无以得殉名，谨守而勿失，是谓反其真。⁴⁴

That horses and oxen have four feet is a natural state, whereas putting a halter on the horse's head, piercing the ox's nose is by the human and thus artificial. Zhuangzi strongly opposes man's intrusion into the natural state and believes that what is human should not wipe out what is natural, what is purposeful should not wipe out what is fated, and fame should not be men's pursuit in all circumstances. To guard what they have already gained in a natural way is to return to the True, i.e., naturalness.⁴⁵

However, human nature, according to Xunzi, is evil, so “nonaction” is futile and “action” should be taken to transform evilness into goodness. He argues that the solution lies in those ethical values that Mencius takes as human nature.

人之性恶，其善者，伪也。⁴⁶

Man is born evil. A good man is not born, but made. And what makes a good man is nothing but a series of ethical values, such as *li* 礼, and *yi* 义.

故必将有师法化，礼义之道，然后处于辞让，合于文理，而归于治。⁴⁷

Therefore the civilizing influence of teachers and laws, the guidance of the rules of proper conduct (*Li*) and justice (*Yi*) is absolutely necessary. Thereupon courtesy results: public and private etiquette is observed; and good government is the consequence.⁴⁸

Only through these ethical values can man's evil nature be transformed into goodness. In this way Xunzi embraces Mencius though they hold the opposite opinions on human nature. Their convergence denies what some scholars uphold Xunzi as an avant-garde

⁴⁴ 庄子，《秋水》。

⁴⁵ “Horses and oxen have four feet – this is what I mean by the Heavenly. Putting a halter on the horse's head, piercing the ox's nose – this is what I mean by the human. So I say: do not let what is human wipe out what is Heavenly; do not let what is purposeful wipe out what is fated: do not let [the desire for] gain lead you after fame. Be cautious, guard it, and do not lose it – this is what I mean by returning to the True.” Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1968, 153.

⁴⁶ 荀子，《性恶篇》。

⁴⁷ 荀子，《性恶篇》。

⁴⁸ Xunzi, *The Works of Hün-tze*, trans. Homer H. Dubs., Arthur Probsthain, 1928, 301.

naturalist.⁴⁹ Rather, his proposition of ethical values to transform man's evil nature affirms his status in Confucianism, the doctrine of which is established to preserve those ethical values produced in a stratified family-oriented society. As an aggressive undertaker of Confucianism, Xunzi believes in man's initiative in dealing with *tian*.

Confucianism witnesses its further development in Han Dynasty, Song Dynasty as well as the Buddhist influence. However, Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi are beyond doubt the pioneers of the mainstream Chinese culture. Any later sparkle of thought is indebted to the three sages from whose perspective a scrutiny of *tian* is able to yield an overall picture of this word, including what it is in today's use. Generally speaking, *tian*'s meaning ranges from the natural phenomenon to the anthropomorphic ruler.⁵⁰

1.4 *tian* in today's use

1. *n.* the region in which the celestial bodies move, i.e., the sky

For instance, the term *tian wen* 天文 equates astronomy, the scientific study of the sun, moon, stars, etc. Here *tian* refers to the sky as well as the celestial bodies in it, and *tian wen* 天文 therefore a study of these phenomena. There are many other words and phrases using the character *tian* in this sense:

天宇 天崩地坼 天崩地裂 天长地久 天翻地覆 天高地厚 天高地远 天各一方 天花乱坠 天荒地老 天罗地网 天南地北 天南海北 天壤之别 天上人间 天无二日 天下第一 天下奇观 天下太平 天下为公 天下无敌 天下无双 天旋地转 天涯北邻 天涯海角 天渊之别 天外 天涯 天昏地暗 天罗地网 天下兴亡，匹夫有责 天下无难事，只怕有心人 天河 天幕 顶天立地 天有不测风云

2. *adj.* on top of

tian's adjective use originates from "sky" which is high above man and therefore modifies something "on top of" something else.

For example, *tian chuang* 天窗 is a window on the top of a house through which the

⁴⁹ “刘俊像荀子那样详细提出‘切于天人之分’重要命题的大思想家，如果同亚里士多德比较，就可见到其间的重大差别。荀子不曾像亚里士多德那样去专门研究自然本身，他的《天论》同后者的《物理学》全不一样。没有多少自然哲学和自然科学本身的讨论，其思考只在人事或礼制方面。”杨适，《中西大论的冲突》，中国人民大学出版社，1992，第83页。

⁵⁰ “天，《现代汉语辞海》，孙家丰主编，新华出版社，2002。

sky can be perceived. And *guo jie tian qiao* 以街天桥 is a similar case.

3. *adj. natural, inborn*

For example, *tian cai* 天才 is equal to “genius” in English which means a person inborn with great talent. There are many similar words in this group:

天府之国 天籁 天堑 天然 天然气 天险 天性 天灾人祸 天造地设 天资 天姿国色
天真活泼 天真烂漫 天职

4. *n. a day and night of 24 hours, especially the day*

tian se 天色 usually refers to the time through perceiving the color of the sky. *tian chang ri jiu* 天长日久 is of the same type.

5. *n. season*

春天 冬天

6. *n. climate*

天气 天寒地冻 暑天 晴天 雨天

7. *n. deities and their habitation*

tian tang 天堂 is a translated word that originally refers to God's domain. It corresponds to the traditional Chinese belief that *tian* is the habitation of deities. This meaning is shared by the following Chinese words and phrases:

天衣无缝 天仙 天宫 天神 天司

8. *n. the supreme transcendental ruler*

tian tan 天坛 is a building for ancient Chinese emperors to pay tribute to *tian* to seek help for the preservation of their royal power. More similar words are:

天骄 天公地道 天巧难容 天怒人怨 天随人愿 天之骄子 天诛地灭 老天爷 天意
天经地义 天无绝人之路 天网恢恢，疏而不漏 天作之合

Chapter Two “Heaven”

“Heaven” is a concept underlying the western culture just as *tian* does in Chinese culture. It is mankind’s ever-lasting pursuit intriguing countless speculation and quest. However, man’s inability to know the absolute truth symbolized by the expulsion of Adam and Eve for their disobedience indicates that we have no way of knowing what “heaven” really is. Since what the *Bible* provides is nothing but mere hints instead of thorough analysis or a clear picture of “heaven”, what we can know and believe to know is only the human conception of the holy domain deduced from speculative understanding of the biblical teachings.

“Heaven”, like *tian*, is also a concept of complexity with its meaning varying from the least theological to the most. “Heaven combines physical and metaphysical components. It designates everything that is actually or figuratively located over the earth and above humanity: ‘the firmament, the vault of heaven, the expanse, the divine.’”⁵¹ The God-centered nature of Christian teachings gives “heaven” the fundamental status in that the theological dimensions of this word serve as the stimuli for human pursuit. And its meaning is distilled in the Christian classic – the *Bible*, from which evolves in a sense the western culture. Thus an investigation of “heaven” in the *Bible* can help bring about a better understanding of the nature of western culture. However, to exhaust the meaning of “heaven” in the *Bible* is a “mission impossible” which I dare not propose to complete in this thesis. For the time being, an investigation of the major points will suffice for the purpose here.

2.1 “heaven” in the *Bible*

Christianity asserts that men must believe in God so that they can find salvation from their sin and the ultimate bliss in heaven. All humans, according to the *Bible*, are sinners

⁵¹ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990, English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

on account of Adam and Eve's original sin and they "in their fallen condition" will never be able to love and worship God as they are supposed to. Instead, they are self-centered, ungrateful, and disobedient, which severs a meaningful relationship with God and destroys the very basis of human happiness. The only way of regaining God's blessing is to believe in God and to be His faithful servants, by which men can enter heaven – home for all God's devotees who are longing for their eternal happiness. "The very essence of heaven is a relationship with God characterized from the human perspective by endless fascination, love, and gratitude."⁵² Heaven is a fundamental conception for all human beings, not just Christians, for it deals with the innermost recesses of humans who always feel helpless when faced with death and yearn for a harbor where their anxiety can be dissolved and inner peace restored. With this underlying notion, the meaning of "heaven" can be viewed as follows.

Firstly, "heaven" is equivalent to "sky" or "firmament" which is regarded as the highest part of the universe – "in general it is presented on the basis of simple observation"⁵³ – as in the case of *Genesis* where heaven is created on the second day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.⁵⁴

Moreover, the spatial priority of heaven, i.e., the fact that it is high "above" man, is further related to its supremacy on account of the fact that it is God who creates it and dwells in it. "That which had power over humans and lay beyond their control was heaven, the heavenly, or in heaven."⁵⁵ However, in the *Old Testament*, heaven is more connected with God's work on earth – His omnipotence of controlling the destinies of humans. In the *New Testament*, heaven stands under God's inviolable lordship and it is the spheres of

⁵² Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: the Logic of Eternal Joy*, Oxford University Press, 2002. 37.

⁵³ "ouranós," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abt. ed., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

⁵⁴ *Gen.* 1: 6.

⁵⁵ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990, English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, vol. 2. 1978-80.

God's dominion ("I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants." [Matt. 11:2]). As the dominator of both heaven and earth, God is high above everything and the source of the supremacy of heaven, God's domain. "Decisive for the understanding of the scope of the matter is that God himself is determinative of what is predicated to heaven."⁵⁶ God and heaven belong together. "...whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who is seated upon it."⁵⁷ Here "throne" denotes government, suggesting God's absolute and inviolable power, and thus heaven is conferred with these attributes for it is where God sits upon His throne. Besides, the positioning of Jesus Christ in the *New Testament* "at the right hand"⁵⁸ implies the sovereignty of heaven. In a word, heaven's share in the inherent power of God serves it as a substitute designation for God and His supreme sovereignty.

Secondly, heaven is the place of salvation. As the dwelling of God, heaven is the source of blessing, the setting of life, and the place where God's planned salvation is already achieved. "Heaven represents the telos⁵⁹ and the climax of salvation" and it is the "goal toward which salvation aims."⁶⁰ Heaven declares the fulfillment of a long overdue promise in which God restores the relationship between man and Himself and thereby endows man eternal happiness and peace.

The *Old Testament* witnesses Hebrew's covenant with God and their violation of it, which is believed to be the primary cause of their destruction and misery. The pain-haunted history of Israelites makes them long for the coming of a savior who will take them out of torture and suffering. "Through the experiences of Israel's own disobedience to the laws and the will of God and defeats at the hands of its enemies, the concept of the 'day of the Lord,' which is to bring salvation and victory, came into existence."⁶¹ And in due time the "day of the Lord" turns into the "day of judgment" ("Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD?

⁵⁶ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990, English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kuhlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

⁵⁷ Matt. 23:22.

⁵⁸ Eph. 1:20.

⁵⁹ "telos" is Greek, meaning "end".

⁶⁰ Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: the Logic of Eternal Joy*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 35.

⁶¹ "Ischatology," *Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, 15th ed., vol. 6, 1980.

It is darkness, not light." [Amos 5:18]) when God's pious followers will be blessed and brought into heaven and the disobedient sinners thrown into hell. However, in the midst of the 8th century BC, Israelites believed that they were the only people chosen by God and any other people would be ruined for their disbelief. It was in the later period which witnessed the political destruction of Israel (8th century BC) and Judah (6th century BC)⁶² that the hope of salvation was "to include not only Israel but also the Gentile world"⁶³ ("It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." [Isa. 49:6]). The day of the Judgment is "the bearer of eschatological hopes"⁶⁴ which claim that there will be a 1000-year Kingdom of Christ and of his own people, in which the ones who are suffering now will rule over their enemies. After that all creatures will be liberated to receive the Final Judgment with the good going to heaven and the evil hell. In the main, salvation in the *Old Testament* is not a reality but a utopia.

The Christ-event expands the semantic dimensions of this religious word. The violation of the covenant no longer brings eternal damnation for God's grace and love for humans, as shown in his sending His own Son to live among them and sacrifice his own life to save them, overcomes all the barriers that lie in the way of human salvation. "The judgment of God on heaven and earth is the background to the true message of the NT, i.e., the intimation of what is enduring and unshakable."⁶⁵ Everything will pass away, but only Jesus' saving work remains ("And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." [Matt. 28:20]). Jesus' greatness lies in his turning the illusion into a reality and makes human's salvation possible – he is the initiator of the action of resurrection. He brings hope to men desperate for their violation of the covenant with God. He is not only the gate of heaven ("Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep." [John 10:79]) but "wherever he is, heaven becomes a reality"⁶⁶ ("And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you,

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "ουρανός," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abr. ed., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

⁶⁶ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990, English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” [John 1:51]). He unites the Kingdom of God with himself by his words and deeds of grace and glory. “If for Judaism the peculiar eschatological event lies in the future, this future of God, according to the *New Testament*, has already begun with Christ”⁶⁷ (“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.” [Mark 1:15]).

The passage recording the baptism of Jesus is the key to the understanding of this point. Heaven opens above Jesus and God bears witness to him. “And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.”⁶⁸ This event marks the beginning of the eschatological blessing, contradicting “the apocalyptic sense of the world, which suffered under a closed heaven and a silent God,”⁶⁹ the token of the enraged God by men’s sinful deeds. Heaven thence denotes not just the place from which God’s lordship comes down, it also carries the reference to God’s saving work that is initiated from heaven. “God’s saving will characterizes the heaven from which Jesus comes and to which he returns.”⁷⁰ In his lifetime Jesus through his words and deeds proclaims the Kingdom of God, which stands as men’s central hope since God in His Kingdom will claim His lordship and thereby human will be liberated from the threat of death and be embraced by God’s eternal glory. “Heaven is a focus for present and future blessings in the new aeon, e.g., citizenship, dwelling, inheritance, reward, and treasure. Being in heaven, these blessings are with God or Christ, with whom believers already are, although incomprehensibly.”⁷¹ Jesus’ word calls men to eschatological decisions and makes the Final Judgment a present concern. That is, men follow his direction in hope of heavenly bliss. “The presence of Christ is the anticipation of the future of God, and the future of God is the fulfillment of the presence of Christ. God has reconciled the world in Christ but not yet redeemed it.”⁷² Jesus represents God’s reconciliation while heaven

⁶⁷ “Eschatology.” *Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*. 15th ed., vol. 6. 1980.

⁶⁸ *Mat* 3:16.

⁶⁹ Holst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990. English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

⁷⁰ “ouranos,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abr. ed., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

⁷¹ *Ib* d.

⁷² *Ib* d.

redemption. He brings men opportunity of entering heaven, which, however, depends on nothing but their own effort. Jesus' Crucifixion signifies his redemption of sinful men. As the son of a virgin, his exemption from the original sin makes him the only eligible one who by his purging blood restores men's bondage with God so that their salvation is within reach. "His Crucifixion in loneliness and alienation is understood as the presence of salvation among the unsaved and as revelation of the divine righteousness."⁷³ Jesus' resurrection brings hope to his disciples who see in this action the anticipation of his parousia that echoes the approaching steps of eternal happiness. He is awaited from heaven because his coming means eschatological manifestation.

The Parousia brings the visible presence and indwelling of God in his new creation. It brings the freedom of the 'children of God' and thus the new humanity. It brings the liberation of the whole creation, which 'waits with eager longing' for its glory of God and the participation of the new man in peace and freedom.⁷⁴

In a word, God and men, heaven and earth are given a new relation by Christ's sacrifice. The paradise is regained thanks to the restoration of the meaningful relationship and the universe is integrated into a whole under the name of Christ through whom the work of reconciliation and peace is done ("as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." [Eph. 1:10]). By means of Christ's work, the isolation and the autonomy of heaven and earth are ended. Heaven is no longer high above the earth as something alien and unattainable. Rather, it is concerned with what takes place on earth. Men's belief in God and their compliance with His will make it possible for them to regain the innocent state of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve used to live before they fell. Men's belief and their own conduct make a perfect world immanent with God's glory and they, after conquering the power of death, will enjoy the ecstasy of the eternal bliss when heaven descends to earth and becomes a reality, and God embraces men with all His love. It is in this sense that a unity of heaven and earth, God and men, i.e. the moment of men's salvation is reached.

⁷³ *Ib d.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Thirdly, heaven is “an empirical point of reference”⁷⁵ that has theological implications as far as human beings are concerned. From heaven come God’s revelations that direct men’s belief as well as their conduct. For example, “the light from heaven in Acts 9:3 is a light from the Lord that leads to faith and knowledge,” and “God’s wrath is also revealed from heaven in and with the revelation of righteousness.”⁷⁶ All the revelations intimate that men’s only duty is to be God’s servants through the unconditional practice of His decree, a point best illustrated in the end of *Matthew*: “...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”⁷⁷ To be human means to live under heaven, and this demonstrates heaven’s domination and men’s subordination (“Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.” [*Acts*: 2:5]). “Man is under heaven: in principle, then, he can be only a passive recipient. Heaven here denotes the action of God which embraces the whole world and which controls all men.”⁷⁸ Heaven functions as the Judge which supervises men’s conduct and decides the list of the men to be saved as well as the guidance under which humans learn how to be God’s faithful servants. Therefore, it does not suffice to only follow the rituals and the rules. It is purity in heart and humbleness in mind that is crucial. Men should have “certain attitudes, desires, and beliefs. For example, it would be ruled out for one who did not believe God was worthy of praise or who felt no desire to be united to him.”⁷⁹ However, the notion that faith can justify one or get one to heaven is not enough to satisfy all the believers other than the orthodox Christians. Good deeds for men’s salvation are not unnecessary. Believers cannot mistreat others and be followers of God, i.e., they are obliged to bring their moral self to perfection. Supreme good must be established upon the spiritual peace that results when vice is eradicated. “But what is it we wish to do when we seek to attain the supreme good, unless that the flesh should cease to lust against the spirit and that there be no vice in us against which the

⁷⁵ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990. English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

⁷⁶ “ουρανός,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abr. ed., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

⁷⁷ *Matt.* 28:18.

⁷⁸ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990. English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

⁷⁹ Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: the Logic of Internal Joy*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 37.

spirit may lust?”⁸⁰ “The Parable of the Pharisee and The Tax Collector” is a good example. By contrasting the arrogant Pharisee who claims himself devout and moral with the humble tax collector who confesses himself as a sinner and begs for God’s pardon, Jesus teaches that “all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”⁸¹ Humbleness constitutes the foremost virtue that men should abide by for it is men’s arrogance that causes their expulsion from paradise. The fruit of the tree of knowledge symbolizes the ultimate truth which no creature other than God can know. And Adam and Eve’s eating that fruit is therefore a sign of challenging God’s almightiness, hence, inevitably their degeneration.

Finally, heaven is “a depository, from which the righteous receive their reward.”⁸² However, the reward is not some tangible compensation for the loss inevitably caused by belief in God. For example, the opinion that the martyrs whose life is often endangered and cruelly terminated by martyrdom could count on certain compensation in heaven is no religious piety. In God’s eyes the biggest reward for the virtuous is the fact that they have done good deeds. “God Himself, who is the Author of virtue, shall there be its reward; for, as there is nothing greater or better, He has promised Himself.”⁸³ Heaven itself is the true reward for constant belief and continuous good deeds. Moreover, virtuous conduct for the sake of entering heaven is not truly religious either. Desire estranges one from any access to heaven in that good deeds with no sincerity are meaningless. The real virtuous therefore should be those who always do good deeds with no expectation or desire of any material or spiritual reward.

A scrutiny of what “heaven” mostly means in the *Bible* gives us the contours of this word that can be viewed in general from two aspects. It reflects on the one side the ancient view of heaven as a vault and on the other side the belief that heaven is the divine sphere from which God descends. And the two sides in the main encompass almost every aspect of “heaven” in today’s use, which will hopefully be reinforced by the following

⁸⁰ *Ib. d.*

⁸¹ *Luke 18:13, 14.*

⁸² Horst Balz and Gerd Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, T&T Clark Ltd., 1990, English translation of *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Verlag W. Kuhlhammer GmbH, vol. 2, 1978-80.

⁸³ Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: the Logic of Internal Joy*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 38.

explanations of “heaven” according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*.⁸⁴

2.2 “heaven” in today’s use

1. “heaven” is a natural existence. It refers to **the sky**, the atmosphere near **the sky**, or to a larger extent the region **beyond the sky** and where celestial **bodies** move. To be specific, it is composed of the following senses:

1. a. “The expanse in which the sun, moon, and stars, are seen, which has the appearance of a vast vault or canopy overarching the earth, on the ‘face’ or surface of which the clouds seem to lie or float; the sky, the firmament. Since 17th c. chiefly poetical in the sing., the plural being the ordinary form in prose.”

Stars and Constellations; some fixed for the ornament of Heaven.

Heaven’s high canopy, that covers all.

Still burns wide Heaven with his distended blaze.

A serene heaven stretched overhead.⁸⁵

b. “The plural *heavens* was formerly used, esp. in Biblical language in the same sense as the sing.; it is now the ordinary prose form for **the visible sky**.”

maps of the heavens, planisphere of the heavens, globe of the heavens

2. a. “By extension (in accordance with Biblical use) the region of the atmosphere in which the clouds float, the winds blow, and the birds fly; as in the more or less poetical expressions, *the clouds, winds, breath, fowls of heaven*.”

The Mountaine Pines fretted with the gusts of heauen.

Tears, and the careless rain of heaven, mixt Upon their faces.

b. “In reference to **the atmospheric conditions of a country**, **the clear or cloudy sky**, etc., =climate.”

Everie Countrie, by the nature of the place, the climate of the Heaven, and the influence of the starres hath certaine vertues.

Flowers of all heavens Grew side by side.

3. a. “The ‘realm’ or region of space beyond the clouds or the visible sky, of which

⁸⁴ “heaven,” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, Oxford University Press, 1989.

⁸⁵ All the explanations and the related examples are taken directly from *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

the latter is popularly or poetically viewed as the 'floor'. *Esp.* in the collocation *heaven and earth*, as constituting the universe."

Looke how the floore of heauen Is thicke inlayed with pattens of bright gold.

All heauen bursts her starry floors.

b. "The plural is sometimes used for the realms or regions of space in which the heavenly bodies move."

Lifted up far above the starry heavens.

The planets and Comets move in the Heavens very freely.

4. "In the language of earlier cosmography: Each of the 'spheres' or spherical shells, lying above or outside of each other, into which astronomers and cosmographers formerly divided the realms of space around the earth. These generally corresponded to the spaces supposed, according to the Ptolemaic system, to be comprised within the successive orbits of the seven planets (including the sun and moon), the fixed stars, and other spheres. Their number varied according to computation from seven to eleven."

Whatsoever is contained within the circuit of the heaven of the Mone,

Sometimes she deemed that Mars had from above Left his fifth heaven, the powers of men to prove.

II Secondly, "heaven" is a word identifying itself with theological connotations.

1. a. "The celestial abode of immortal beings; the habitation of God and his angels, and of beatified spirits, usually placed in the realms beyond the sky; the state of the blessed here after. Opposed to *hell*." And this sense is also true to the plural form of "heaven", i.e., "heavens".

Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.

Heaven is not the firmament overhead, but the condition of the redeemed after death, of which the blue serene gives us the appropriate symbol.

b. "By the Jews (at least in later times) seven heavens were recognized; the highest, called also 'heaven of heavens,' being the abode of God and the most exalted angels. Thence also the seven heavens of Muhammad."

And we have created over you seven heavens.

From Jerusalem he seemed to mount upwards, and ascend from one Heaven to another.

- c. "The seat of the celestial deities of heathen mythology."

With Ioue in heauen, or some where else.

A urora, now on the Olympian height Proclaiming, stood new day to all in heaven.

2. a. "The power or majesty of heaven; He who dwells above; Providence, God."

The will And high permission of all-ruling Heaven.

Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts!

- b. "Also in pl. The powers above; the gods; God."

The Heavens forbid your highness such mishap!

She was ever praying the sweet heavens To save her dear lord whole from any wound.

III In addition, the fundamental meanings of "heaven", that is, its natural and theological connotations, generate some related senses.

1. Some figurative usages are derived from "heaven" in the sense of natural existence.

- a. "Things of great height are said by hyperbole to reach to heaven; opposite points of the sky are said to be a whole heaven apart. Also *fig.*"

Trees, As high as heaven.

There must always remain a whole heaven of difference between the position of those who know nothing of nature and that of those who recognize light and guidance as coming to men from the living God.

- b. "transf. [from sense 1 in Part I]. A canopy; the covering over a stage. In the 19th c. quot. Directly *fig.* from sense 1 [in Part I]."

Bright golden globes Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven.

2. The theological dimensions of "heaven" also bring about some figurative connotations. As a state of supreme bliss, "heaven" further refers to any state or place with this attribute.

- a. "A place like or compared to heaven; a place of supreme bliss."

England, that was formerly the heaven, would be now the hell for women.

The **mind** is its own place, and in it self Can **make** a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.

- b. "A state of bliss or **supreme** felicity."

Husbandes are in **heaven** whose wiues scold **not**.

The clock That **faithful** monitor, 'twas heaven to hear, When soft it spoke a promised **pleasure** near.

- c. "In same senses: heaven of heavens, **seventh** heaven, **third** heaven." It is a figurative usage from Jewish conception of seven heavens.

He looked **upon** himself as approaching to the seventh heaven.

Lady Ramsey was in **the** seventh heaven of delight.

3. "heaven" is often used at vow **making** and **exclamation**, etc. to show man's honesty or vehement **emotions**. This may derive from its theological implications.

- a. "In asseverations: by (through, before, 'fore) **heaven**, (heavens)."

Fore **heaven**, I scarce can think you are my friend.

By **Heaven** that hears, I tell you the clean truth.

- b. "In exclamations expressing surprise, horror, etc. (Also in pl.). Often with qualifications, as *good, gracious, great*. Also *Heaven and earth!*; *Heavens above, alive!*; *Heavens to Betsy!* (U.S.)."

- c. "*Heaven knows*. (a) Used to **emphasize** the truth of a statement. (b) Used to imply that something is **unknown** to the speaker, and probably also to others. Freq. with *what, where, who*."

Shee ha's spoke shat shee should not, I am **sure** of that: Hcauen **knows** what shee ha's knowne.

Not in Utopia – subterranean fields, – Or some secreted island, Hcaeuven knows where!

4. "heaven" is used in expressions combined with other words with its basic meaning unchanged.

heaven-climber, heaven-worshipper, heaven-assailing, heaven-defying,
heaven-kissing, heaven-rending, heaven-threatening, heaven-accepted.



heaven-begot, heaven-descended, heaven-dyed, heaven-fallen, heaven-forsaken,
heaven-given, heaven-made, heaven-protected, heaven-sprung, heaven-taught,
heaven-affianced, heaven-aspiring, heaven-dear, heaven-devoted, heaven-erected,
heaven-translated, heaven-clear, heaven-sweet, heaven-hued, heaven-high,
heaven-wide, heaven-bow, heaven-bridge, heaven-burster, heaven-gazer,
heaven-gazing, heaven-god, heaven-platt, heaven-send, heaven-tree, heaven-bliss

Chapter Three *Tian* 天 and “Heaven”

The man-centeredness of Chinese culture determines its fundamental difference from the western culture characterized by God-centeredness. This tradition made its debut in Zhou Dynasty of which the rulers were awakened by men’s power in the destruction of the preceding dynasty and realized that the absolute worship of *tian* would be of no avail when men were becoming the real threat to the stability of the country. Thus they focused on human affairs and formulated *li* (礼 Rituals), for the sake of rule, which ushered in a new era in Chinese history and from that period ensued what is generally known as Chinese culture in the following thousands of years. This new trend ran riot in Confucius’ doctrine in which he absorbed Zhou people’s achievements and established his own ethical values resulting from his anxiety over the effect of those Rituals on taming men into obedient subjects. Confucius and his newly-founded school attempted to transform the traditional Rituals into beliefs that make men’s submission more sincere and immanent. Confucius’ successors, among whom Mencius and Xunzi are the most prominent ones, developed his theory in different aspects. Mencius believes that the ethical values are men’s innate good nature and Xunzi regards them as necessity to transform men’s evil nature into good. However, these ethical values are not merely targeted at the cultivation of men, but rather serve to uphold the human relationship of domination and subordination in a family-oriented society. Hence the human-centeredness combined with the stratified family-oriented society constitutes the nature of Chinese culture upon which the different shades of the meaning of *tian* converge and upon which a thorough understanding of this word relies.

Western culture reveals a different picture. Stemmed from Greek culture, it is born with the spirit of freedom and equality integrated with Christian influence in the later centuries. God is always the ultimate backdrop of every pursuit of men. His almightiness and men’s humbleness underlie the Christian classic – the *Bible* and to some extent the western culture. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden for their

disobedience, the establishment of the covenant and its violation and Jesus' redemption of men's sin delineate a loving and meanwhile severe God who reconciles with the arrogant humans and paves the way for their salvation where men are no more than vulnerable recipients waiting for God's grace. God is always there, and what counts is whether humans abandon their arrogance and subjugate to God to gain the final bliss or they are thrown into hell for their disobedience. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. And men gradually learn that God's blessing is far more important than the unattainable absolute truth symbolized by the fruit of the tree of knowledge. What they should and can strive for is all gifts bestowed by God who promises them a heaven where they can find the eternal ecstasy, such a huge blessing purchased with the price of their complete subordination and what is in their way is just how to achieve that "complete subordination" before salvation is at hand. In addition, subjection to God is no hindrance for them to be independent individuals but rather a guarantee of their equal right and opportunity to enter heaven however different their positions might be in the world since the supremacy of God also secures for men the universal brotherhood, and thus their freedom and equality. In a word, the nature of western culture as God-centeredness with the spirit of freedom and equality underlies a thorough understanding of "heaven".

The distinctiveness of the two cultures revealed by the discussion above predetermines that *tian* and "heaven" are in essence different terms with similarities in certain aspects – the fundamentals that make a comparative study possible. However, to rush to generalize the fundamental nature of the two terms with such words as "similarities" and "differences" would be too over-simplified to provide a clear picture of their actual nature and in fact might distort them altogether. And the comparison to be made here in this paper will be divided into two parts: "*tian* and heaven", and "heaven and *tian*". That is, an exhibition of *tian*'s English renderings will be followed by a discussion of "heaven"'s Chinese translation equivalents. Of course, the data can hardly be exhaustive and what I will show is therefore a general portrait of the most important points.

3.1 *tian* and “heaven”

Unifying five senses, i.e., the physical *tian*, the ruler *tian*, the fatalistic *tian*, the naturalistic *tian*, and the patriarchal and ethical *tian*, *tian* is never an easy word for translators. So far the prevalent way is to translate this word differently according to which of the five senses is intended in different contexts, which is detailed as follows.

3.1.1 the physical *tian* and “heaven”

The physical *tian* means that *tian* is a natural existence where rain or snow falls down, clouds float, birds fly and celestial bodies move. The Confucian *tian* in its physical sense is mainly a Mencius' conception and he expounds it in three aspects:

- (1) 天油然作云，沛然下雨，则苗勃然兴之矣。⁸⁶
- (2) 迨天之未阴雨，徧彼桑土，绸繆桑上，绸繆隍户。⁸⁷
- (3) 天之高也，星辰之远也，苟求其故，千岁之日至，可坐而致也。⁸⁸

Translation 1:

- (1) The **sky** grows oily, clouds form, and streams of rain fall, and the **corn** lifts its head stoutly.⁸⁹
- (2) Ere the **sky** was dark with rain,
The mulberry earth we gathered,
To knit the door and window;
And now those nether folk
Will scarcely dare affront us.⁹⁰
- (3) **Heaven** is high, and the stars and planets are far, but by going into their habits, mid-summer day a thousand years hence can be determined where we sit.⁹¹

According to the explanations given in *OED*, “heaven” in its natural sense refers to

⁸⁶ 孟子，《梁惠王上》。

⁸⁷ 孟子，《公孙丑上》。

⁸⁸ 孟子，《离娄下》。

⁸⁹ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Leonard Lyall, Longmans, Green and Co., 1931, 8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹¹ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Leonard Lyall, Longmans, Green and Co., 1931, 129.

“The expanse in which the sun, moon, and stars, are seen, which has the appearance of a vast vault or canopy overarching the earth, on the ‘face’ or surface of which the clouds seem to lie or float; the sky, the firmament.” *tian* in the first two examples is the region where clouds float and rain falls down and in the third the space where celestial bodies move. Hence both “sky” and “heaven” in this case are equivalent to *tian*.

Translation 2:

- (1) If clouds begin to gather in the sky and rain comes pouring down, then the plants will spring again.⁹²
- (2) When it has not yet clouded over and rained,
I take the bark of the mulberry
And bind fast the windows.
Now none of the people below
Will dare treat me with insolence.⁹³
- (3) In spite of the height of the heavens and the distance of the heavenly bodies, if one seeks out former instances, one can calculate the solstices of a thousand years hence without stirring from one’s seat.⁹⁴

In his translation D. C. Lau chooses three different words to translate *tian* despite the fact that what it signifies is merely a physical existence. What catches our eyes most is the second example in which any notional word related to “heaven” does not appear but only an empty word “it”, a usage unavoidably reminding us of the typical English sentence “It is raining,” in which “it” functions as the subject of an impersonal verb, presenting a sharp contrast to the Chinese expression “*tian xia yu le* 天下雨了” which hints at Chinese worship to *tian* and their regarding it as the very source of all weather and climate changes. In addition, although the plural form of the word “heaven” means the same as its singular form, it is “now the ordinary prose form for the visible sky.” Both “it” and “heavens” are reasonable translations.

Translation 3:

- (1) Then the clouds collect densely in the heavens, they send down torrents of rain,

⁹² Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau., Penguin Books, 1970, 54.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

and the grain erects **itself**, as if by a shoot.⁹⁵

(2) Before the **heavens** were dark with rain,

I gathered the bark from the roots of the mulberry trees,

And wove it closely to form the window and door of my nest;

Now, I thought, ye people below,

Perhaps ye will not dare to insult me.⁹⁶

(3) There is **heaven** so high; there are the stars so distant. If we have investigated their phenomena, we may, while sitting **in** our places, go back to the solstice of a thousand years ago.⁹⁷

As mentioned above, both “heavens” and “heaven” refer to the canopy above us, which justifies the translation here.

Translation 4:

(1) But if the **Heavens** then fill with clouds, and rain falls in sheets, the shoots burst into life again.⁹⁸

(2) Before the **Heavens** darkened with rain,

I gathered up mulberry roots,

wove tight window and door.

Now those people down below –

how could they disparage me?⁹⁹

(3) **Heaven** is high and the stars distant – but if you attend to the facts, you can calculate solstice for a thousand years without ever leaving your seat.¹⁰⁰

Generally speaking, the data so far collected demonstrate that *tian* is usually translated as “**Heaven**” when it denotes a tinge of almightiness just as will be illustrated in the following examples. Thus “Heaven” here in its capitalized form is differing from its average usage. Whatever the translator intends to imply through capitalization, “heaven” in its physical sense already declares itself a legitimate translation of the physical *tian*.

⁹⁵ Mencius, *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 75.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 331-332.

⁹⁸ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. David Hintar, Counterpoint, 1998, 9.

⁹⁹ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. David Hintar, Counterpoint, 1998, 53.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

The renderings of *tian* show an interesting fact that though *tian* is only a physical existence equal to “heaven” in its material sense, every translator nevertheless chooses different words to replace this single word – Leonard Lyall translates it as “sky” and “heaven”, D. C. Lau, “sky”, “it” and “heaven”, James Legge “heavens” and “heaven”, and David Hinton “Heavens” and “Heaven”, which seem somewhat burdensome and cumbersome for the reader, and yet may be a deliberate effort to make English as colorful, diversified and elegant a language as possible. However, it does not make sense when readers encounter “it” and “Heavens” that might lead them astray from the intended physical sense. Probably behind each word is looming certain connotation that informs of the translator’s unique understanding of the ST text. All translations are not impulsive choices but products of much deliberation on the part of the translator. Generally speaking, all the equivalents of *tian* discussed above are seemingly reasonable and acceptable translations.

In addition to examples in ancient classics, the physical *tian* and its translation in modern Chinese is also worthy of noticing. For example, *tian beng di lie* 天崩地裂 is rendered into “heaven falling and earth rending.”¹⁰¹ *tian* in the ST phrase is in its physical sense, and “heaven” therefore is a proper translation.

3.1.2 the ruler *tian* and “heaven”

By “the ruler *tian*” it is meant that *tian* is an anthropomorphic and all-powerful ruler governing the world and taking charge of man’s affairs in a mystically unknown way. Chinese people, though holding it in awe, are more concerned with human affairs.

(1) 获罪于天，无所祷也。¹⁰²

1) If I offend **heaven**, I can (or need) ask for nothing.¹⁰³

2) He who sins against **Heaven** has nowhere left for prayer.¹⁰⁴

3) Who sins against **heaven** has nothing to pray to.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ “天。”《汉英词典》，詹文滢主编，外语教学与研究出版社，1997。

¹⁰² 孔子，《论语·六经》。

¹⁰³ Confucius, *The Lun Yü: Being Utterances of Kung Tsz, Known to the Western World as Confucius*, trans. T. F. Wade, 1869, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Arthur Waley, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1997, 30.

- 4) When you have offended against **Heaven**, there is nowhere you can turn to in your prayers.¹⁰⁶
 - 5) If you offend against **Heaven**, there is no one to pray to.¹⁰⁷
 - 6) He who has put himself in the wrong with **Heaven** has no means of expiation left.¹⁰⁸
 - 7) If one has sinned against **Heaven**, there is no one to pray to.¹⁰⁹
 - 8) Having offended **heaven**, there would be nowhere to pray.¹¹⁰
 - 9) A person who offends against *tian* 天 has nowhere else to pray.¹¹¹
 - 10) Once you've offended **Heaven**, there's no where to turn.¹¹²
- (2) 天与之者，谆谆然命之乎。¹¹³
- 1) If **Heaven** gave it, was the Bidding loud and clear?¹¹⁴
 - 2) Does this mean that **Heaven** gave him detailed and minute instructions?¹¹⁵
 - 3) ...did **Heaven** confer its appointment on him with specific injunctions?¹¹⁶
 - 4) If **Heaven** gave it to him, did it also school him in the details of its mandate?¹¹⁷

In general, *tian* in this case is translated into three words: “Heaven”, “heaven”, and pinyin “*tian* 天”. *tian* owes its translations of “Heaven” and “heaven” to their sense of holiness as God’s domain. God and heaven belong together and heaven is a substitute designation of God and marked symbol of His sovereignty. In other words, heaven’s superiority lies in what it represents rather than what it does – it is God’s sovereign deeds that make Him almighty, an attribute expanded to cover His domain. This is contrasted with *tian* which as “the anthropomorphic ruler” is believed to “do” something.

¹⁰⁶ Ezra Pound, *Confucius*, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1951, 203.

¹⁰⁵ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, Penguin Books Ltd., 1979, 69.

¹⁰⁷ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Raymond Dawson, Oxford University Press, 1993, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Confucius, *The Analects of the Conversations of Confucius with His Disciples and Certain Others*, trans. William Edward Soothy I, Oxford University Press, 1937, 22.

¹⁰⁹ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Chiehming Huang, Oxford University Press, 1997, 62.

¹¹⁰ *The Lun Yu in English*, Confucius Publishing Co., Pre. Ltd., 1998.

¹¹¹ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames & Henry Rosemont Jr., The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998, 85.

¹¹² Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. David Hinton, Counterpoint, 1998, 24.

¹¹³ 孟子：《滕文公上》。

¹¹⁴ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Leonard Lyall, Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, 143.

¹¹⁵ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau, Penguin Books, 1970, 143.

¹¹⁶ Mencius, *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 355.

¹¹⁷ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. David Hinton, Counterpoint, 1998, 167.

In this sense “Heaven” or “heaven” is not a proper translation of *tian*, which is both a domain and an “anthropomorphic” figure, that is, it has the qualities of a god with its unpredictable and uncontrollable domination of the world. And “Heaven” or “heaven” on the other hand is void of any anthropomorphic connotation. Roger Ames & Henry Rosemont Jr. make it explicit that *tian* is rendered as “*tian* 天” on account of the fact that “Tian is a term that we have chosen not to translate, largely because we believe its normal English rendering as ‘Heaven’ cannot but conjure up images derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition that are not to be found in China.”¹¹⁸, the statement of which indicates their full realization that *tian* and “heaven” as the underlying words of the two different cultures are predestined with uniqueness.

The Chinese proverb talked of at the very beginning of this thesis serves as a good example here.

谋事在人，成事在天。

Man proposes, God disposes.

Man proposes, Heaven disposes.

The key to the difference between the two versions lies in “God” and “Heaven”. As mentioned above, *tian* in this proverb is an anthropomorphic figure and its daily usage in modern Chinese puts a lot of emphasis on its almightiness in deciding human affairs, producing a sharp contrast to men’s inability. In a strict sense it can be translated into neither “God” nor “Heaven” because of the incompatibility between *tian* and God or Heaven on account of the distinction between the two cultures. However, in terms of the function they fulfill, “God” rather than “Heaven” is a more appropriate translation since it expresses the almightiness of the ruler in the SL text and can arouse equivalent feelings among the TL readers.

3.1.3 the fatalistic *tian* and “heaven”

(1) 死生有命，富贵在天。¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Confucius. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames & Henry Rosemont Jr., The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998, 46.

¹¹⁹ 孔子，《论语·颜渊》。

- 1) ...live or die, as it is ordained; they are wealthy or honourable, as **heaven** [desireth].¹²⁰
 - 2) Death and life are divine dispensations, and wealth and honours are with **Heaven**.¹²¹
 - 3) Death and life have their scaled orders, riches and honours are from **heaven**.¹²²
 - 4) Life and death are a matter of Destiny; wealth and honour depend on **Heaven**.¹²³
 - 5) ...death and life are predestined, and riches and honours depend on **Heaven**.¹²⁴
 - 6) Death and life are the decree of **Heaven**; wealth and rank depend upon the will of **Heaven**.¹²⁵
 - 7) Death and life lie with Fate; wealth and rank rest upon **Heaven**.¹²⁶
 - 8) ...life and death are predestines, riches and position are up to **heaven**.¹²⁷
 - 9) Life and death are a matter of one's lot;

wealth and honor lie with *tian* 天.¹²⁸
 - 10) ...that life and death are matters of destiny, that wealth and renown are matters of **Heaven**.¹²⁹
- (2) 若夫成功，则天也。¹³⁰
- 1) To end the work rests with **Heaven**.¹³¹
 - 2) **Heaven** alone can grant success.¹³²

¹²⁰ Confucius, *The Lun Yü: Being Utterances of Kung Tzu. Known to the Western World as Confucius*, trans. T. F. Wade, 1869, 16.

¹²¹ Confucius, *The Analects of the Conversations of Confucius with His Disciples and Certain Others*, trans. William Edward Soothill, Oxford University Press, 1937, 117.

¹²² Ezra Pound, *Confucius*, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1957, 244.

¹²³ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, Penguin Books Ltd., 1979, 113.

¹²⁴ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Raymond Dawson, Oxford University Press, 1993, 45.

¹²⁵ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Arthur Waley, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1998, 146.

¹²⁶ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Chichung Huang, Oxford University Press, 1997, 126.

¹²⁷ *The Lun Yü in English*, Confucius Publishing Co., Pro. Ltd., 1998.

¹²⁸ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames & Henry Rosemont Jr., The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998, 154.

¹²⁹ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. David Hirton, Counterpoint, 1998, 138.

¹³⁰ 孟子, 《孟子·梁惠上下》。

¹³¹ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Leonard Lyall, Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, 33.

¹³² Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau, Penguin Books, 1970, 71.

3) As to the accomplishment of the great result, that is with **Heaven**.¹³³

4) Your own success depends upon **Heaven alone**.¹³⁴

The fatalistic *tian* is closely related to “the ruler *tian*” which, however, functions with different emphasis. The fatalistic *tian* emphasizes the uncontrollability of men’s destiny, not necessarily hinting at some all-powerful dominator in charge of their destiny, whereas the belief in *tian* as an anthropomorphic ruler stems from Shang Dynasty when *tian* used to be worshipped as an almighty god.

The English equivalents of *tian* in this case are mostly “Heaven”, “heaven” and “*tian* 天”. For Confucius and Mencius, men should fight against their destiny and embrace whatever results. *tian* as something beyond men’s control is therefore beyond their concern, and what they should do is to face the reality. For westerners, however, though destiny is beyond their power, they have the opportunity to reach the final bliss as long as they follow God’s decree. In other words, destiny in this world is beyond men’s control but in the other world is predestined with two alternatives: heaven or hell. Thus to fight for a better future in the secular world is doomed to end in failure and what men should strive for is heaven: their final and only destiny. In a word, the fundamental distinction between *tian* and “heaven” determines that “*tian* 天”, compared with “Heaven” and “heaven”, is the more appropriate translation.

This problem remains in today’s use as well, as it is clearly seen in the translation of *ting tian you ming* 听天由命 “submit to the will of Heaven.”¹³⁵ This phrase is often used in modern Chinese to express men’s submission to and acceptance of fate when facing something beyond their control. With such a discrepancy between *tian* and “heaven” as analyzed above, this translation is hardly as successful one as it is intended to be. Besides, heaven in Christian culture is a designation of God’s domain and thus is impossible to possess such faculty as “will” as God does, which further proves the illegitimacy of the translation of this phrase.

3.1.4 the naturalistic *tian* and “heaven”

¹³³ Mencius, *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 179.

¹³⁴ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. David Hinton, Counterpoint, 1998, 37.

¹³⁵ “天,”《汉英词典》, 詹东亚主编, 外语教学与研究出版社, 1997.

The naturalistic *tian*, peculiar to Xunzi's doctrine, is rather a Xunzi's invention. It refers to **not** only the objective world operating according to its own innate principles but a natural state of things, i.e., naturalness.

(1) the objective world operating according to its innate principles

(1) 天行有常，不为尧存，不为桀亡。¹³⁶

- 1) **Heaven** has a constant regularity of action. Yao was **not** necessary to support its order, nor could Ch'ie destroy its order.¹³⁷
- 2) **Heaven's** ways are constant. It does **not** prevail because of a sage like Yao; it does **not** cease to prevail because of a tyrant like Chieh.¹³⁸
- 3) As **tian** maintains the constant routines of the heavenly bodies, it did **no** special act toward Yao's survival, nor toward Jie's fall.¹³⁹

(2) 天不人为之悲寒也，辍冬。¹⁴⁰

- 1) **Nature (T'ien)** does not suspend the winter because men dislike cold.¹⁴¹
- 2) **Heaven** does not suspend the winter because men dislike cold.¹⁴²
- 3) **Tian** does **not** abandon winter because of humans' dislike of cold.¹⁴³

(2) a natural state of things

凡性，天之就也，不可学，不可事。¹⁴⁴

- 1) Whatever belongs to original nature is the gift of **Nature**. It cannot be learned. It cannot be worked for.¹⁴⁵
- 2) The nature is that which is given by **Heaven**; you cannot learn it, you cannot acquire it by effort.¹⁴⁶

As mentioned above, *tian* is the objective world operating with its own law as well as

¹³⁶ 荀子，《天论》。

¹³⁷ Xunzi, *The Works of Hsün-tze*, trans. Homer H. Dubs., Arthur Probsthain, 1928, 173.

¹³⁸ Mozi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1964, 79.

¹³⁹ Edward J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the T'ien Lun*, State University of New York Press, 1993, 9.

¹⁴⁰ 荀子，《天论》。

¹⁴¹ Xunzi, *The Works of Hsün-tze*, trans. Homer H. Dubs., Arthur Probsthain, 1928, 178.

¹⁴² Mozi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1964, 79.

¹⁴³ Edward J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the T'ien Lun*, State University of New York Press, 1993, 108.

¹⁴⁴ 荀子，《性论》。

¹⁴⁵ Xunzi, *The Works of Hsün-tze*, trans. Homer H. Dubs., Arthur Probsthain, 1928, 303.

¹⁴⁶ Mozi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1964, 119.

a natural state of things. Obviously “heaven” in Christian tradition has no such connotations and hence by no means a proper translation. Edward’s “tian” is certainly an undesirable and yet wise choice, a clear indicator of the uniqueness of Chinese culture. However, what deserves our special attention is Homer’s translation of the verse in which “Nature (T’ien)” is applied. According to *OED* “nature” can denote “The creative and regulative physical power which is conceived of as operating in the material world and as the immediate cause of all its phenomena,”¹⁴⁷ a meaning corresponding to the sense of *tian* signifying the objective world operating according to its innate principles and proves “Nature (T’ien)” in this case a proper translation. Apart from its material sense, “nature” in general is more like human or animal’s inherent dispositions, i.e., *xing* 性 in Chinese whereas *tian* means a natural state in which human nature is made. Therefore *tian* and nature here are different notions that deny “Nature” as an appropriate rendering.

The translation of “*tian wu* 天物” as in the idiom “*bao tian tian wu* 暴殄天物” in modern Chinese is a related topic in that *tian* is rendered into “nature” and the whole phrase “products of nature.”¹⁴⁸ Obviously *tian* here refers not to “heaven” but the whole objective world of which heaven is just a part, a notion echoed by “nature” in the sense that it is “The material world, or its collective objects and phenomena, esp. those with which man is most directly in contact; freq. the features and products of the earth itself, as contrasted with those of human civilization.”¹⁴⁹ So “nature” in this case expresses what *tian* means and thus a good translation for the latter.

3.1.5 the patriarchal and ethical *tian* and “heaven”

(1) 唯天为大，唯尧则之。¹⁵⁰

1) **Heaven** alone is great, and Yao did like unto it.¹⁵¹

2) Only **Heaven** is great, and only Yao answers to its standard.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ “nature,” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, Oxford University Press, 1989.

¹⁴⁸ “天.”《汉英词典》，崔公亚主编，外语教学与研究出版社，1997。

¹⁴⁹ “nature,” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, Oxford University Press, 1989.

¹⁵⁰ 孔子，《论语·泰伯》。

¹⁵¹ Confucius, *The Lun Yü: Being Utterances of Kung Tzû, Known to the Western World as Confucius*, trans. I. F. Wade, 1869, 50.

¹⁵² Confucius, *The Analects of the Conversations of Confucius with His Disciples and Certain Others*, trans. William Edward Soothill, Oxford University Press, 1937, 77.

- 3) ...only the **heaven's** working is great, and Yao alone on **that** pattern.¹⁵³
 - 4) It is **Heaven** that is great and it was Yao who modeled himself upon it.¹⁵⁴
 - 5) It is only **Heaven** that may be deemed great, but **only** Yao modeled himself upon it.¹⁵⁵
 - 6) There is no greatness like the greatness of **Heaven**, yet Yao could copy it.¹⁵⁶
 - 7) **Heaven** alone is greatest! Yao alone could imitate it!¹⁵⁷
 - 8) How magnificent that great is **heaven**, that Yao was comparable!¹⁵⁸
 - 9) Only *tian* 天 is truly great, and only Yao took it as his model.¹⁵⁹
 - 10) **Heaven** alone is truly majestic, exalted and majestic, and **only** Yao could equal it.¹⁶⁰
- (2) 尽其心者，知其性也，知其性，则知天矣。¹⁶¹
- 1) He that goes to the bottom of his heart knows his own nature: and knowing his own nature he knows **Heaven**.¹⁶²
 - 2) For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know **Heaven**.¹⁶³
 - 3) He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows **Heaven**.¹⁶⁴
 - 4) To fathom the mind is to understand your nature. And when you understand source your nature, you understand **Heaven**.¹⁶⁵

This is the central meaning of *tian* and it depicts the nature of Chinese culture. Both Confucius and Mencius take *tian* as the final resort of the ethical values. Yao's greatness lies in his modeling upon the great *tian* and thereby his attainment of the ethical values

¹⁵³ Ezra Pound, *Confucius*, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1957, 227.

¹⁵⁴ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, Penguin Books Ltd., 1979, 94.

¹⁵⁵ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Raymond Dawson, Oxford University Press, 1993, 30.

¹⁵⁶ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Arthur Waley, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1998, 101.

¹⁵⁷ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Chichung Huang, Oxford University Press, 1997, 99.

¹⁵⁸ *The Lun Yu in English*, Confucius Publishing Co., Pre. Ltd., 1998.

¹⁵⁹ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames & Henry Rosemont Jr., The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998, 124.

¹⁶⁰ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. David Hinton, Counterpoint, 1998, 86.

¹⁶¹ 孟子: 《尽心·上》。

¹⁶² Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Leonard Lyall, Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, 202.

¹⁶³ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau, Penguin Books, 1970, 182.

¹⁶⁴ Mencius, *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 448.

¹⁶⁵ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. David Hinton, Counterpoint, 1998, 235.

that *tian* represents. Compared with his predecessor – Confucius, Mencius further regards those ethical values as human nature, the knowing of which grants the knowledge of *tian*. Though in Xunzi's works seldom appear sentences with *tian* denoting the patriarchal and ethical sense, his firm belief in the power of those ethical values in transforming men's evil nature has already secured his status in the history of Confucianism. Despite these nuances the ethical values in Confucianism are always inseparable from their affinity with the stratified family-oriented society that makes human relationship a relationship of domination and subordination by manipulating men in the name of love and care, hence, constituting an invisible fetter too inherent and natural to break loose in spite of its suppressing nature and effect repeatedly felt throughout Chinese history. The ethical values in actuality are invisible shackles for men and *tian*'s significance lies in its justification of these repressing values and it thereby reveals the nature of Chinese culture.

Not bound by the family-oriented society in which inequality marks human relations, the western culture is, comparatively speaking, of more freedom and equality, and heaven as the domain of God generates a spirit completely different from that of Chinese culture. It calls for men to do good deeds, a token of obeying God and of being with Him forever. The ethical values are far from being the origin of inequality since all men are God's children as long as they abide by His mandate. The only one to whom they are subject is no other than God, the role of whom in Chinese culture is usually played by father, elder brother, and husband who are all servants to the king, which explains why filialness is cherished as the utmost value in Chinese culture. For a Chinese love is stratified within his own family while for a Christian love means to love his neighbor, the fraternity among all God's children.

"heaven", "Heaven" and "*tian* 天" are all applicable for the translation of *tian* in this sense. The fundamental difference between *tian* and "heaven" elaborated on above denies the legitimacy of the first two translations and again gives the laurel to the third one "*tian* 天".

A full view of the different versions of the translation of the term *tian* in Confucian classics is provided in the following table:

Version \ Sense	the physical <i>tian</i>	the ruler <i>tian</i>	the fatalistic <i>tian</i>	the naturalistic <i>tian</i>	the patriarchal and ethical <i>tian</i>
T. F. Wade 1869		heaven	heaven		Heaven
Homer II. Dubs. 1928				Heaven, Nature (T'ien)	
Leonard Lytall 1932	sky, heaven	Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
William Edward Soothill 1937		Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
Ezra Pound 1951		heaven	heaven		heaven
Burton Watson 1964 D. C. Lau 1970	sky, it, heavens	Heaven	Heaven	Heaven	Heaven
James Legge 1970	heavens, heaven	Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
D. C. Lau. 1979		Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
Edward J. Machle 1993 Raymond Dawson 1993		Heaven	Heaven	tian	Heaven

Chichuang Tuang 1997	Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
Arthur Waley 1998	Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
David Hinton 1998	Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
David Hinton 1998	Heavens, Heaven	Heaven		Heaven
Lun Yü ¹⁶⁶	heaven	heaven		heaven
Roger T. Ame & Henry Rosemont, Jr. 1998	<i>tian</i> 天	<i>tian</i> 天		<i>tian</i> 天

The data so far collected clearly show that *tian* has been translated into “heaven” (or “Heaven”) in most cases while only a few translators adopt pinyin “tian” in order to preserve the uniqueness of this word. The majority of the translators may take “heaven” (or “Heaven”) as the best word for the sake of convenience of translation in spite of their obvious awareness of the cultural differences. Perhaps the ease of cultural communication in their eyes outweighs the originality of the SI text since the Chinese concept of *tian*, compared with “heaven”, would very possibly constitute a barrier for westerners to understand the Chinese culture, and would give rise to misunderstanding owing to the fundamental distinction between the two words. Thus so far as it can be seen, any attempt to replace the Chinese term *tian* with any English word has proved to be futile (except the physical *tian*) and the best way out of the dilemma seems to be nothing but not translating it, i.e., rendering it as *tian* with additional explanations.

tian in the patriarchal and ethical sense is found well in use in modern Chinese. For example, “*tian lun zhi le* 天伦之乐” nowadays is usually taken as “family happiness”¹⁶⁷ depicting a loving picture in which family members enjoy their reunion. However, *tian lun*

¹⁶⁶ *The Lun Yu in English*, Confucius Publishing Co., Pte. Ltd. 1998.

¹⁶⁷ “天,”《汉英词典》, 曹泰运主编, 外语教学与研究出版社, 1997.

(天伦 natural order) in Chinese culture is in actuality *ren lun* (人伦 human relationship), a word immediately reminding us of the stratified family-oriented society in which men's behavior is defined by rigid behavioral norms characterized by their lord-and-servant relationship. Such distortion on the other hand is regarded as the most natural thing for it is based on the differing degrees of affection among family members and friends which is as natural as if it were inborn. In this way the artificial moral rules *ren lun* 人伦 are subtly transformed and reinforced by the natural human law *tian lun* 天伦.

Notwithstanding the underlying distinction some compatibility can still be found between *tian* and "heaven" in their empirical significance. Confucius has been respected for thousands of years as the archetypal virtuous man and the ethical values he strongly upholds constitute a series of principles for men's self-perfection, which helps the establishment of a harmonious society in which men are encouraged to do good deeds. Comparably in the west, heaven functions in a similar way. Men's longing for the final bliss drives their arduous effort in following God's decree that on one hand thematizes their absolute obedience and on the other the practice of good deeds, which makes the society more stable and people more obedient. And this is partly why Christianity, a heretical belief persecuted by rulers in its beginning years, was adopted as the orthodox religion and has dominated the western culture for some two thousand years.

3.2 "heaven" and *tian*

The translation of *tian* certainly goes hand in hand with that of "heaven". In Chinese the English term "heaven" is usually rendered as "*tian tang* 天堂", a word literally denoting only spatial preference since "*tang* 堂" is literally a hall, and such a rendering deprives "heaven" of its temporal significance in the sense that its creation is prior to that of Adam and Eve and it is where one is bound to reside after the Final Judgment. But, interestingly, convention and its extensive use make this translation so widespread and well acknowledged that "*tian tang* 天堂", as a spatial term has acquired its temporal connotation after centuries' use.

In addition to this, the translation of another word deserves our attention as well. God in Catholicism is translated into "*tian zhu* 天主". As man's lord "*zhu* 主" is justifiably a

proper translation, whereas “天” was added by the translator to facilitate a better acceptance among Chinese people since *tian* in popular Chinese folklore is a holy place where deities live, and thereby “*tian zhu* 天主” in their eyes is understandably the most supreme spiritual being. The foreign element combined with the local Chinese culture has secured a successful translation and the guarantee of easier cultural integration.

The investigation of *tian* and “heaven” as well as their translation draws our attention to some problems in cultural communication. Neither *tian* nor “heaven” can be easily translated without considering in a broader view their cultural background. As fundamental concepts of the Chinese and western culture, *tian* and “heaven” are not a perfect equivalent for each other and their forced match can inevitably be misleading and in some cases could only end in failure. Therefore in translating *tian* to preserve pinyin “tian” with some extra explanations might be an undesirable and yet the only acceptable alternative available.

Conclusion

tian and “heaven” are two concepts **not** only closely related to men’s daily life but highly culturally-loaded because of their underlying status in two distinct cultures. *tian* is the key to understanding Chinese culture for its justification of the values of the traditional stratified family-oriented society. “Heaven”, in contrast, underpins a God-centered culture largely cherishing equality and freedom. And the distinctiveness of the two cultures prepares for the notion that the translation between *tian* and “heaven” in most cases is hardly satisfactory, or to be exact, hardly possible.

The five senses of *tian* investigated in this thesis are in actuality interrelated with each other, converging on “the patriarchal and ethical *tian*” that reveals the nature of Chinese culture. High above men, *tian* is basically a physical existence where natural phenomena take place and to a larger extent the objective world operating with knowable and exploitable innate principles. Perhaps the spatial priority gradually confers it with ideological privilege, that is, *tian* is at the same time regarded as a supreme dominator and destiny caused by men’s frustration and incompetence when they are fighting against the indifferent and imposing world. Generally speaking, Chinese people are not devoted to exploring the nature of *tian*, i.e., whether it is the physical existence or an anthropomorphic ruler. Their strong interest in human affairs explains why in later times the distinction between men and *tian* by and large intimates that between artificialness (a state with human interference) and naturalness (a state without human inference), which in some cases designates human nature where two great wits conflict and converge. Mencius, believing that ethical values are all inborn and the most natural part of humanness, holds that human nature is basically good, whereas Xunzi, believing in the evilness of human nature, states that ethical values are something artificial and when imposed on humans in the way of behavioral norms, serve to contain and regulate it, and thus transform the evilness of human nature into good. Confucius, though making no direct comment on human nature, strongly upholds those values in culturing men. From the three sages ensues Chinese people’s belief that a truly virtuous man is the one who abides by the

ethical values, an idea not only serving self-cultivation, but more importantly, ushering in the central meaning of *tian*: the patriarchal and ethical *tian*. In traditional Chinese culture, the ideal of social equality is often satirized by the stratified family-oriented society in which the strict practice of the ethical values brings about distorted human relations: domination and subordination between father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and husband and wife. However, such relationship is obediently accepted because of the immanent love and care among family members who therefore regard their compliance with the fettering ethical values as their innate responsibility. *tian*, as the final source of this complicated system, thereby serves to fulfill its role of justifying the manipulating ethical values, thence the social inequality.

Though “heaven” in its physical sense corresponds to *tian*, its theological dimensions nevertheless draw a clear line between the two words. It engenders and mirrors a completely different culture in which God plays the major tune and men as God’s children are born to the brotherhood of equality and freedom. An investigation of “heaven” in the *Bible* suffices for knowledge of this term in western culture immersed in Christian tradition. As God’s domain, heaven functions as the substitute designation for God and symbol of His sovereignty, which predestines its significance as the residence where the virtuous are granted the eternal bliss. However, to enter heaven is by no means an easy undertaking for human beings. Adam and Eve’s original sin causes their expulsion and the doomed misery of their offspring who, due to their sinful deeds, violate the covenant with God, ruining the opportunity to enjoy the eternal happiness. Notwithstanding, men’s arrogance does not stop God’s benevolence, and in fact, He has never given up His efforts to save human. It is Jesus, the Son of God, that brings heaven down to the earth and makes the earthly paradise a possible reality instead of a mere utopian dream. His teachings bring men’s pious belief and conduct, and his Crucifixion purges them from sin and opens for them the gate of heaven.

Heaven’s significance in men’s salvation exerts great influence in the secular world. The conviction that the final bliss lies in the hand of men themselves calls for their steadfastness in belief and persistence in charitable acts. Moreover, belief and conduct for the sake of entering heaven are by no means truly religious. A real Christian should be the

one who firmly believes in God and strictly follows His decree without any expectation of reward, and the sole and true reward he can receive is no more than the fact that he has done good deeds – the evidence of God’s grace. This helps to establish a harmonious society in which everyone is encouraged to sincerely strive for moral perfection and thus paves the way for Christianity’s being accepted as the orthodox religion.

The distinctiveness of the meaning of the two words makes their translation hardly an easy job. Apart from their material sense, similarities can be found, yet with too many differences to be negligible, thus making any match-making efforts on the part of the translator futile. The table recording the different versions of the translation of *tian* (except the physical *tian*) in the third chapter reveals that most translators replace it with “heaven” or “Heaven” with only a few exceptions where they are translated as “Nature (Ti’ien)”, “Nature”, pinyin “*tian* 天” and “*tian*”, words either the products of context-based translation or the proofs of the translators’ awareness of the cultural uniqueness of *tian* and “heaven”. “Heaven” is not a justifiable rendering in spite of some people’s argument that it is the only word at hand to facilitate cultural communication since its theological significance is somewhat analogous to *tian* in its function as an anthropomorphic ruler. However, “heaven” only represents God’s sovereignty and yet is devoid of any ability to “do” something as the ruler *tian* does in traditional Chinese people’s mind. The other senses of *tian* make it a concept completely unique to Chinese culture, which proves that “heaven” as the rendering of *tian* undermines rather than assists cultural communication. Perhaps a proper way of dealing with this word is not to translate it at all, i.e., simply to put it into pinyin “*tian*” with additional explanations.

The Chinese translation of “heaven” is not unproblematic either. The widely-recognized *tian tang* 天堂 proves a partial translation, only conveying the spatial connotations of “heaven” since “*tang* 堂” literally means a hall, and thus fails to express its temporal significance. However, use and convention overcome this problem and the semantic dimensions of *tian tang* 天堂 are gradually expanded to include both spatial and temporal senses.

Another problem associated with *tian*’s translation deserves our attention as well. For Chinese people, *tian* is always a unified multi-layered term. In spite of its five senses, no

one will deny that this word is a perfect integration of those five aspects, which therefore unavoidably casts some doubt on *tian*'s translation recorded in the table in the third chapter. Generally speaking, the prevalent method is that the different senses of *tian* are translated into different words for the convenience of cultural communication, which inescapably destroys the integrity of the word and its senses that sustain *tian*'s cultural uniqueness. And the westerners, therefore, could hardly be aware of the unity of the senses on account of the unrelatedness of such renderings as "sky", "heaven", "nature", and so on.

A good translator must be a master of words as well as cultures behind them. In some cases translation is less an issue of mere replacement of words than that of cultures, a close study of which may reveal not only their inner complexity but their discrepancy, which make translation both indispensable and on more than one occasion, impossible, a situation where the so called translation equivalents could end only in distortion or failure as a result of their cultural uniqueness. In other words, the uniqueness of the culturally loaded words might deny any possibility of translation. The case of *tian* and "heaven", which is the subject of the paper, could be counted as one of such examples.

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