Article

The Intersection of Islam and Confucianism in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner: A Philosophical Analysis through the Lens of Neo-Confucianism

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Abstract: This study explores the intersection between Islam and Confucianism by analysing the protagonist Aamir's development and salvation in Khaled Hosseini's novel, The Kite Runner, through the lens of Neo-Confucianism. This interdisciplinary approach broadens the scope of this intersection from religion to literature. This study examines the shared ideals and objectives of both civilizations, namely that kindness is innate to the human race and that becoming good is humanity's ultimate objective. This study adopts Zhang Zai's philosophical approach as the theoretical foundation to analyse Aamir's path to atonement, focusing on the epistemological propositions of "sincerity" and "changing temperament." The discussion centres on the three fundamental steps of self-redemption, namely acknowledgement of sins, confession, and redemption, and how Aamir achieves self-redemption by "changing temperament" under the guidance of "sincerity." Through this analysis, it demonstrates that Zhang Zai's ideas can be used to comprehend Islamic literary works with a redemption theme and present a new dimension to the study of Zhang Zai's philosophy. This study provides a novel route for the intersection of Islam and Confucianism and highlights the potential for interdisciplinary analysis in exploring cultural intersections.

Keywords: Islam; Confucianism; sincerity; self-redemption; The Kite Runner

Introduction

In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, Huntington predicts that after the end of the "Cold War," the major confrontations would occur between the alliances of "Western civilization" and "Confucian-Islamic civilization." He obviously confirms the intercommunication and mutual integration of Islam and Confucianism based on which it could possibly form a coalition to rival against its western counterpart. Huntington hypothesizes that religion plays a major role in the future challenges in faults of civilization. It is the determinant of the civilization gap (Khalkhali, 2016). Religion falls into one of the manifestations of civilization. Islam is a religion. Confucianism, in a broad sense, is a religion too. The integration of the two civilizations is based on their common religious beliefs, which lays solid foundation to the communication and understanding between each other.

Islamic culture is characteristic of both entering into the world and standing aloof from the world. It was not until Song Dynasty in the 10th and 11th century that Chinese culture also presented secularization and non-secularization features, thanks to Neo-Confucianism which has successfully merged the essence of Buddhism and Taoism (both encouraging people to stand aloof from the world) into Confucianism (advocating an active entry into the world). In this sense, Islamic culture and Chinese culture are basically isomorphic (Zhu Guangya, 2019). The interaction between Islam and Confucianism is but about time. The future survival and progress of humanity against the multicivilizational background, according to Du Weiming, depends on

the realization of a multi-level and multi-dimensional dialogue that transcends disputes, "the west and the east" and "the past and the present." (Du Weiming, 2014). The conversation between Islam and Confucianism must become one of the most important spiritual resources for the regeneration of global peace (Du Weiming, 2003), since both share some common values and beliefs deeply rooted in each other's civilization. The scholar's prophecy is ideal, but ideals grow in the context of time and gradually in the heart of society and are manifested in the form of common thoughts and values and the general will of the people and citizens and become a reality (Hafeznia, 2021).

The intersection of Islam and Confucianism can be traced back to as early as Ming and Qing dynasties. According to Jacqueline Armijo (John L. E, John O. V. & Osman. B., 2008), by the end of the Ming dynasty, there were sufficient Chinese Muslim intellectuals who had been thoroughly educated in the classical Confucian tradition for them to develop a new Islamic literary genre: religious works on Islam written in Chinese that incorporated the vocabulary of Neo-Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist thought. In their publications, Chinese Muslim academics Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, Ma Zhu, and Ma Dexin viewed the Qur'an through the lens of Confucian philosophy, which brought about a climax of the intersection between Islam and Confucianism (Lu Yun, 2012) Islam, in conjunction with Arabic literature via the Qur'an, defines the authorial milieu and value orientation of Arabic literary works. If the Qur'an can be rationally understood in accordance with Confucian philosophy, it makes sense to evaluate Arabic literature in the same manner.

The classic works of Afghan-American author Khaled Husseini are highly esteemed around the globe. *The Kite Runner* is his bestseller. It is the story of Amir, the young master of a once-wealthy Afghan family, about his growth and self-redemption. The story has a shocking background. Afghan is politically expedient and ethically problematic. Racial strife is becoming more intense, and the Taliban's tyrannical rule has chilled the blood of its citizens. Domestic strife and foreign invasion have wreaked havoc on the country, leaving it in ruins. Hunger, poverty, and death plague every inch of the land. The Afghan people have been permanently scarred by all their sufferings. Against such a historical background, the frailty of human nature is revealed, while its halo also shines. The repeated exposures of human nature in either positive or negative forms play a significant role in peeking at the evil and goodness of humanity. When confronted with a variety of sins and crimes, should individuals opt to ignore, hide, or flee from the reality, or should they courageously stand by justice in order to gain inner peace? In such a state of anxiety and adversity, when morality, friendship, and kinship are put into the test, is it possible for individuals to achieve peace of mind? If not, what is the way to redemption and how can "I" become a good guy once more?

Taking literature as the vehicle, this paper employs Neo-Confucianist Zhang Zai's philosophy to demonstrate the common beliefs between Islam and Confucianism. It interprets the self-redemption of Amir in the novel of The *Kite Runner* and looks into his redemption path through Zhang Zai's theory of human nature. It also aims at extending the domain of the intersection between Islam and Confucianism from religious field to literature thus facilitating better communication between two civilizations. we also intend to encourage more people from different cultural backgrounds to sympathize with the frustratingly and desperate situation of Afghan Muslims, the majority of which are civilians and they deserve the humanistic care from the international communities.

Theoretical Framework

1. Studies on Husseini's Works
The academics' critical theories applied to the analysis of the The Kite Runner have demonstrated a diverse development tendency, spanning from diasporic identity, Freud's psychoanalysis, trauma theory, and existential philosophy to emerging theories such as post-colonialism, new historicism, feminine eco-criticism, and literary ethics criticism, etc. *The Kite Runner*'s social significance lies in the author's efforts to transform a religious society into a people-centred society in modern world (Jefferess, 2009). Sadat Hekmatullah analyses the diasporic writers' literary texts based on the theories of literary sociology and new historicism in order to gain a deeper understanding of Afghanistan influenced by complicated factors, including politics, economy, culture, and history, among others. (Hekmatullah, 2006). The decisive factor in the construction of

power has shifted from physical strength and bravery to language power (Al-Sudeary, 2009). Hosseini's writings reveal the miserable existence of the Afghan people. Western liberalism could be attributed to cultural incitement, which is the primary cause of ethnic and religious extremism (Edwards, 2008). Specifically, trauma theory and literary ethics criticism (initiatively put forward by Nie Zhenzhao), may best interpret the redemptive theme and ethical values of the novel.

Wang Yan analyses the protagonist Aamir's mental state prior to and after a childhood tragedy and argued that the hero's self-redemption was rooted in traumatic memory (Wang Yan, 2017). On the basis of literary ethics criticism theory, Li Yihui explains Aamir's abandonment of evil and adoption of good morality through his ethical decisions, revealing the ethical significance of "goodwill and redemption." (Li Yihui , 2018) Naim dissects the theme of love and friendship, betrayal and loyalty, stoicism and redemption in Hosseini's works from the perspective of interpersonal relationships (Naim, 2015). Cultural, class and environmental factors give rise to the trauma of the characters in Hosseini's works. Facing the constantly repressed innermost feeing of guilt, Afghan people are struggling to pursue self-redemption (Magagula, 2021). Khaled Hosseini demonstrates universal human experiences such as guilt, shame, betrayal, forgiveness, and atonement. The Kite Runner is a mirror of human relationships, significant in a territory of conflicts and agonies juxtaposed with traditions and values. Redemption and forgiveness with the culmination of self-actualization take a long time to achieve（Cerik,2022）.

Scholars give an insight into the impact posed by ethnic tension, cultural clashes and socio-political climate to the survival of Afghan people, unveiling the ethical values and redemptive theme reflected in the novel via western critical theories. However, fewer researchers take a glimpse of the psychological subtlety of the protagonist in his pursuit of redemption from the viewpoint of the eastern philosophy typically represented by Confucianism which thinks highly of the practice of morality and ethics among a civilized society. Morality means the external code of behaviour. Ethics refers to the intrinsic moral ideal. Self-redemption is the self-reflection and regulation of an individual's intrinsic moral aspirations within the context of an external code of conduct. It is the practice of integrating societal morality with ethnic value. In this regard, a variety of Islamic beliefs and social values, including tolerance, self-restraint, honesty, reverence for God (Heaven), exhorting to be good and guarding against evil, active engagement in society, etc., are very congruent with Confucianism. In this way, the moral ethics of Confucianism may be able to deconstruct the works of Hosseini that deal with redemption. But whose common ideas are adequate for the comprehension of the redemption-themed Islamic literary works, and whose Confucian School philosophy may serve as the theoretical basis for the interpretation of Aamir's redemption?

2. The Study of Zhang Zai's Thoughts

Qian Mu argues in his book entitled *The Twelve Lectures on Chinese Culture* that Zhang Zai divides the theory of human nature into two categories-- "original nature" and "physical nature". "Changing temperament", a practice of sincerity, is the path for the realization of "The unity of Heaven and man" and "the unity of human nature and Tao", both of which are the core thoughts and main characteristics of Chinese culture. Zhang Zai initially explains two different ways of achieving the unity of Heaven and man through the bidirectional unity of the practice of "the inborn sincerity gives rise to intelligence" and "the intelligence acquired by education results in sincerity." (Ding Weixiang, 2020) Fang Guanghua and Cao Zhenming introspects and summarizes the scholars' studies on Zhang Zai's philosophy in the past thousand years (Fang Guanghua and Ying Zhenming, 2015), Lin Lechang has authored many papers on Zhang Zai's philosophy, and proposes that Zhang Zai's thought is a three-tier cosmic philosophy and there are three research dimensions of "Guanxue"(a school of Neo-Confucianism founded by Zhang Zai) : documentary dimension, philosophical dimension and historical dimension (Lin Lechang, 2018). Irae Kasoff, American scholar, has reconstructed Zhang Zai's ideological system in his book of *The Thought of Zhang Tsai*. The study of Zhang Zai' thoughts mainly deal with the inward research of literature reorganization, philosophical interpretation and ideological system reconstruction. It limits within the spere of philosophy, religion and history. However, this paper tries to broaden the study's scope to analyse the redemptive- themed Islamic literature.

To sum up, despite many scholars' dimensional discussions about the literal merits, moral and cultural values of the novel of *The Kite Runner*, together with some scholars from philosophical school having done critical studies and obtaining solid achievements, fewer researchers explore the cultural and practical significance of Husseini's works from the view of the convergence of Islamism and Confucianism and take Neo-Confucianist's philosophy as the theoretical basis to analyse the redemptive-themed Islamic literature. This paper takes literal works as the vehicle to dig out the common values of Islamism and Confucianism, which makes contribution to the convergence of both civilizations.

Methodology

This paper is based on both interdisciplinary and descriptive-analytic approaches. The data collection and classification are generally relied on library research. The descriptive analysis is highly on a basis of logic and reasoning. In library research, importance is attached to an investigation of the similarities between Confucianism and Islam in terms of redemption. "Changing temperament", "sincerity comes from intelligence" and the moral cultivation theory in Zhang Zai's philosophical system are applied to interpreting Amir's self-redemption, which   diversifies the critics of Husseini's redemption-themed literary works with philosophical dimension, extends Zhang Zai's philosophy study from being internal-oriented to be external-oriented and expands its theoretical application field from philosophy to literature. However, the books and literature that used in data collection may incorporate the ideological tendency and mind-set of both the original authors and translators. The findings may be confined within the scope of the books and periodicals' specific standpoints.

The Findings

1. Origin of Sincerity in Islamic values and Confucianism

The six fundamental beliefs (beliefs in God, the Angels, the God-Revealed Scriptures, the Prophets and Messengers of God, the Day of Judgment, and the predetermined fate) and the five Islamic worships (profession of faith, ritual prayer, fasting during Ramadan, charity to the poor, and pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca) reveal the theoretical and practical wisdoms of Islam. Ikhlas, an Arabic word meaning truthfulness, is the traditional name for the 112th sura of the Qur'an. It is also known as "Tawhid." Sincerity toward Allah is evidence of complete trust. In Islam, it is a key component of repentance and salvation. Muslims are particularly encouraged to exercise sincerity in their relationships with God, as sincerity is one of the most essential factors by which God evaluates the condition of a person's heart. Allah examines the heart and its contents based on intentions, not the appearance or form of the deeds. Muslims' actions are not deemed good unless they are performed with good intentions and for Allah's sake. The belief of Muslims in Allah might be viewed as the greatest good or the source of doing good things. Who will be revived on the day of Qiyamat (apocalypse) depends on whether he believes in Allah truly and performs good activities. Thus, Islamic beliefs begin with devotion to Allah, a focus on virtue, and culminate in the ultimate objective of being resurrected through the practice of performing good deeds.

Muslims must always persuade others to be good, protect them from evil, and repent by performing good activities, according to Islamic ethics. Confucius' concept of "benevolence" and Mencius' theory of the inherent goodness of human nature form the cornerstone of Chinese traditional ethics in traditional Chinese culture. Mencius' theory of benevolent governance, which advocated that "running a compassionate system of government with a sense of compassion, one would find it as easy to rule the world as to roll something on the palm of one's hand" (Zhao Zhentao, Zhang Wenting & Zhou Dingzhi, 1999), is based on his theory of the inherent goodness of human nature; henceforth, the concept of goodness became the central tenet of Confucianism. A superior man is the ideal character trait that Confucians strive for throughout their lives. A superior man is profoundly entrenched in magnanimity, justice, decorum, and sagacity. Therefore, being kind (good) is a prerequisite for the establishment of the better man's existence and the basis for being righteous, dignified, and wise. The search of becoming a superior man begins with "benevolence (goodness)" and "rests in the utmost goodness" according to Confucius. In this sense, the convergence of Islamic and Confucian

civilizations is largely based on the acknowledgement of the importance of righteousness and the notion of performing good deeds as the ultimate goal for believers on both sides.

People's devotion to nature and gods in traditional Chinese culture gave rise to the concept of sincerity. In the earliest sacrifice rituals, humans demonstrated their reverence and devotion to the gods of heaven and earth. During the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, the category of "sincerity" expanded from the devout belief in heaven and gods to the moral code for ordinary people, as it was believed that the rise and fall of the country, the arrival of fortune and misfortune depended not only on the role played by "Heaven (God)," but that human virtue also played a role in "Heaven's" ultimate decision. During the Zhou dynasty, moral and ethical characteristics were added to the definition of "Heaven." Consequently, human goodness acted as a link between "Heaven" and "man." "Sincerity" has transcended its basic definition to become the moral requirement of "Heaven" for worldly individuals, such as the ancient Chinese emperors. Since the inception of Confucianism, the notion of "sincerity" has gradually been theorized and developed into one of the most significant categories in Confucianism. It is the proposition that falls under the Confucian School of Zi Si and Mencius' theory of mind and nature.

According to Zi Si's The Doctrine of the Mean, "sincerity" is the connection between man and "Heaven." The book's detailed treatment of this thought elevates it to the level of a psychological, philosophical, and theological concept. Mencius emphasized the significance of sincerity when interacting with one's parents and relatives, as well as self-cultivation. Not until the Song dynasty did Zhang Zai, one of the key architects of Neo-Confucianism, argue that "sincerity" is the intrinsic essence of the "original nature" that Heaven has bestowed, highlighting the moral element of "original nature." He claimed, "The Dao of Heaven entombs the essence of everything. Therefore, man cannot comprehend each other unless he comprehends Heaven. Man can investigate the nature of humanity by understanding the nature of Heaven.

Zhang Zai's objective is to create an ideology that unifies man and Heaven. Dao of Heaven should be interpreted in accordance with Dao of Man, which covers its meaning. Both can be seen to be personified by the other. Knowing God requires knowing man, and knowing man requires knowing God. In his Letter on "Humanism," Heidegger argues that the question of Being in man is more fundamental than the question of God. And "only from the truth of being can the holy's essence be conceived" (Heidegger, 1998). In other words, man cannot approach God until he has genuinely revealed himself to himself. Allah, the one God of Islam, shares the same wisdom as the aforementioned philosophers when he says, "Worship the only God, be filial to your parents, be kind to your relatives, have mercy on the fatherless, relieve the needy, speak good words to others, observe ritual prayers, and pay Zakat." (2:83).

Clearly, Islamic text encourages Muslims to be decent and honest in their relationships with one another and to keep a consistent sincerity toward God by ritual practice, as this is the means by which they might get closer to God. In this regard, for both Confucians and Muslims, honesty acts as the epistemic bridge between man and heaven (God). The practice of morality demonstrates sincerity and helps the union of man and heaven (God). It cannot be realized until one exerts strenuous efforts at learning and earnest efforts at practice in his real life, either in the form of ritual practice or by exploring his authentic nature by interacting with others in order to approach Heaven (God). Thus, sincerity has dual epistemological and methodological connotations in Islam and Confucianism. Thoreau placed his heel in the honeycombed ice to determine when Walden would be available to the public. The transcendental experience has been acquired primarily through practice as opposed to meditation alone, as practice is the source of actual knowledge. An individual's emotional communication with Heaven (God) depends on the authentic knowledge obtained through the practice of sincerity, the connotation of which has transcended the pure religious belief or trust in God and expanded to the social moral code for believers to demonstrate their sincerity, and on the other hand, it becomes an initiative and creative way of self-cultivation to achieve emotional communication with Heaven (God).

2. Practice of Sincerity and Its Significance to Islamism and Confucianism

Sincerity is an ontological concept for Confucians, revealing the character of both man and Heaven. Since Dao of Heaven (the law of nature) operates impartially and treats all things with real justice and fairness, Dao

of Man (the knowledge of being a man) is expected to meet this moral standard. Moreover, it has the methodological significance of encouraging individuals to join the domain of man and Heaven's union through self-cultivation. How can an individual be developed? It begins once more with practice. "As they explore anything, their understanding becomes comprehensive. Since their views are comprehensive, they are sincere. Having true ideas, their hearts are then made whole. Their hearts are purified, and their bodies are developed." (Wang Wenjing, 2019) "Investigating things does not always involve scientific investigation and experimentation, but rather reflection based on what is already 'known' about 'principle.' True introspection is meant to make the mind all-knowing regarding morals, relationships, civic obligation, and nature. (Masashi, 2005)

Sincerity is a central tenet of Islam. Allah spoke to Musa, "I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed (to you). Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance" (The Qur'an, 20:13-14). Ritual prayer is viewed as a practice of sincerity that could lead to a constant and stronger emotional connection between man and God, which reveals the extent to which an individual is faithful, reverent, and sincere. Sincerity to God must be both stated and demonstrated by Muslims. Allah stated regarding ritual prayer, "Indeed, ritual prayer can protect one from scandals and evil." (The Quran, 29:45) The practice of namaz—religious prayer—seeks to arouse one's sub-consciousness, such as the power of the spirit and the light of faith, on the basis of which the practitioner will have moments of introspection and repentance and win the battle against evil and excessive desires to purify his heart, thereby drawing closer to God and having his request for redemption granted, because he has practiced sincerity to God. Furthermore, pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca is the means to explore things, obtain entire knowledge, and attain perfect faith by demonstrating sincerity to Allah, so establishing the tie between man and God. Along the road to Mecca, one's honesty and morals will be put to the test because the path to salvation is fraught with obstacles and uncertainty.

In both Islam and Confucianism, sincerity has dual ontological and methodological value. From its original philosophical and religious significance, it has evolved into the link between man and heaven (God). Learning by investigating, sincerity is realized in ritual or moral behaviour. Muslims and Confucians are strongly encouraged to be sincere in their interactions with God and with one another. Sincerity is tied to both social and intellectual values, including the pursuit of goodness (benevolence), justice, propriety, and wisdom, as well as trust. Sincerity is practiced by both Muslims and Confucians in order to maintain a balanced state of mind and a healthy relationship with God and their social peers. On the basis of a belief in the inherent goodness of man, on both a religious and a philosophical level, sincerity is a prerequisite for one's morality, which is attained via the practice of interacting with human beings, including the individual himself and the entire cosmos. People will be resurrected on the day of Qiyamat by virtue of their practice of sincerity, and in accordance with Confucian philosophy, they will attain moral perfection and realize the unity of man and heaven. Both discover the most amicable means of addressing their relationship with the heavenly superpower and maintain an inner calm.

Confucianism is the philosophical school that considers moral education an obligation. Against the backdrop of the predominance of Buddhism and Taoism throughout the late Tang and early Song dynasties, Neo-Confucianism founded by Zhang Zai emerged in an effort to revitalize the Confucian School. In competition with the other two religions, it focuses on the theory of mind and human nature, as this is the central theme of Buddhism and Taoism in China. It has steadily won the argument by merging the essence of China's three major religions, so supporting the union of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. It results in the combination of secularization and non-secularization within traditional Chinese culture. Islamic culture and Chinese culture are naturally isomorphic, as Islamic culture also exhibits secularization and non-secularization cultural features. Liu Zhi, a Chinese Muslim scholar during the early Qing Dynasty, produced a "real unification" based on the Neo-Confucianists' ideas, producing the concept of the unification of Allah and man, which constitutes a new conceptual framework for the mutual understanding between Islamism and Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism was finally refined on a metaphysical level, resulting in the development of the Chinese Islamic philosophy system. According to Zhang Zai, the unity of Heaven and man depends on the inner transformation (changing temperament) of "original nature" and "physical nature," two categories of

human nature. "Changing temperament" is the road to realizing "The unity of Heaven and man" and "the union of human nature and Tao."

Zhang Zai believes that humans are the effects of "qi," regardless of whether they are stern or gentle, slow or quick, talented or inept. The world is composed of "Qi," and humans are also derived from it. Each substance in the development of the world's objects possesses its own "qi," either in condensation or dispersion. Human natures are identical, but individual's qi differs, which explains why no two persons in the world are identical. This part of human nature produced by varied "qi" is referred to by Zhang Zai as "physical nature"; yet this aspect of human nature is not complete. He referred to the ideal human nature as "original nature." The physical nature of people emerged after their birth. Constantly contemplating the original nature, humans will eventually attain it. Evil qi causes "physical nature" to become ill. The weakening of Qi is made by human habit. Zhang Zai maintained that the "original nature" could only be restored by "changing temperament." The "original nature" should be applied to the "physical nature" to modify it. In order to improve a person's "temperament," it is necessary to rein in their physiological and physical desires. How to modify one's temperament and return from evil to one's "original nature" of being good corresponds to the Islamic concept of self-redemption. Zhang Zai stated that the method for altering one's temperament is a combination of the internal cultivation of emptiness and sincerity in the mind and the external accumulation of benevolence (goodness) through performing good deeds while controlling one's own desires. Being genuine and performing good deeds also fall under Allah's behavioural requirements for Muslims. Sincerity is an action, not a statement. It is essential for both the unification of Heaven and man and for "changing temperament." In reality, the latter is Zhang Zai's formulation of the approach to the unity of Heaven and man based on the combination of the "sincerity" tenet and the theory of human nature.

We have thus far created the theoretical foundation for this paper. In this study, we evaluate how Aamir, given the Islamic backdrop of The Kite Runner, has attained self-redemption from the philosophical standpoint of Zhang Zai. With the theoretical goal of extending the sphere of the intersection between Islam and Confucianism from religious field to literature, thereby facilitating the communication between two civilizations.

Discussion

1. Conviction: The Embodiment of The Original Nature Derived from The Theory of Good Nature
In *The Kite Runner,* characterization is not an affectation, but rather affection. The structure of plots is formed without distortion using artistic skill. After its publication, the novel garnered not only a big number of readers worldwide, but also a great deal of academic interest. Utilizing the theory of human nature, epistemology, and the "sincerity" proposition manifested in Zhang Zai's philosophical system, we deconstruct the protagonist Aamir's spiritual journey in The Kite Runner by exploring the intrinsic link and boundary between conviction, confession, and redemption, thereby elucidating the direction of self-redemption at length.

Aamir and Hassan, the lord and the servant, played together. Hassan was accidentally victimized during a kite-running competition when he caught the kite to win for his young master. On the other side, Amir turned a blind eye to Hassan's humiliation due to cowardice, racism, and selfishness. On the other side, out of envy and vengeance, he wanted Hassan to pay the price for Aamir's father's favouritism. When his companion needed assistance the most, he abandoned and betrayed him. According to Zhang Zai, "original nature" derives from "vast qi" and is the highest good. The origin of "physical nature" is the confluence of good and evil Yin and Yang. Human nature is a combination of "original nature" and "physical nature," a dualism used to evaluate the good and bad of human nature. Hassan was grotesquely raped by Assef, and Amir chose to stand aside and flee the scene of the crime in order to satisfy his thirst for vengeance. The positive aspect of human nature has been destroyed by Aamir's self-centeredness, while the evil aspect has been emphasized. Nevertheless, Aamir has admitted he was responsible in the depths of his mind, since from the moment he turned aside and fled after witnessing Hassan being brutally assaulted and even raped, he was continually questioned by his conscience every minute for more than two decades. He felt a tremendous amount of guilt, which caused him much suffering. He created stories that Hassan was the house thief in order

to convince his father to dismiss the servant. He expected to feel spiritually relieved when Hassan left, but the opposite occurred. Aamir's assortment of bad emotions signified nothing but the inherent kindness of human nature. He was tormented by the internal conflict between his natural goodness and his bad behaviours. All of the suffering he endured as a result of his transgressions demonstrated that the goodness obtained from "original nature" is the essential essence of human nature.

According to Great Change, Correcting Ignorance, the interaction between Yin and Yang has shaped the Tao of Heaven's operation. It also forms four aggregates, resulting in eight trigrams. Both hardness and softness are inherent to the Earth, therefore they both function by copying the law of the Earth. The Tao of Man is the premise of the established intrinsic character of humans, and it encompasses beneficence and morality. The "original nature" of humanity is represented by the intrinsic essence and moral fibre of humankind. Although Aamir has treated Hassan cruelly and unjustly, his consciousness of wrongdoing reveals his inherent goodness, which paves the way for his temperament to change in the future and enables the recovery of his "natural essence." As Zhang Zai stated in Sincerity and Clarity, Correcting Ignorance (Lin Lechang, 2021), "Human bodily nature emerged after the birth of people. Constantly contemplating the original nature, humans will eventually attain it. Therefore, the great man does not consider physical nature to be the perfect human nature." Although the idea that "physical nature emerges after humans are born" suggests that human nature is related with physiological characteristics and physical situations, it nevertheless incorporates the concept of "initial nature." "Restoration" refers to people who are adept at identifying "original nature" in human's physical nature in order to comprehend that the former is the ideal human nature. In this view, sin conviction is a prerequisite for recognizing virtue in "physical nature." It enables the achievement of self-redemption.

2. Confession: The Primary Reflection of "Sincerity"—The Moral Content of "Original Nature"

Amir was convinced of his culpability, but he was unwilling to confess. In front of his family and Hassan, he refused to acknowledge his cowardice and inactivity. To escape his intense sense of remorse, he lied to his father and made Hassan the scapegoat for his negative emotions. Hassan and his father were ultimately expelled, a situation which objectively led to the future misfortune of Hassan's family. Hassan was murdered by the Taliban, and his kid Solabo was used as a toy. However, Amir's sense of shame did not fade with Hassan's departure; rather, it intensified to the point where he was incapable of erasing it from his memory for more than 20 years. When he discovered that Hassan was his half-brother, Amir's conscience tormented him every second. Finally, he decided to return to his hometown after more than two decades and inquire about the fate of Solabo, Hassan's son who had gone missing. Amir's first step on the journey back to his hometown signalled that he had actually made his confession and had begun to confront his transgressions and embark on the path to self-redemption.

Amir's ability to transform conviction into salvation is contingent on his confession of guilt, which is incorporated into Zhang Zai's concept of "sincerity." "Sincerity" refers to the genuine intrinsic nature of all living things created by Heaven and Earth, as well as the ethereal spiritual world from which it emanates. According to Zhang Zai (2021), "sincerity exists in the pursuit of truth from emptiness." " One can only claim to grasp things by putting theory into practice; others who do not practice simply hear about them." (2021) An in-depth comprehension of objective objects must be based on experience; otherwise, it is merely knowledge. In the context of ethical ideology, "sincerity" manifests itself in the morality practiced by individuals, which exists in the unity of human nature and the Tao of Heaven. It is not only the essence of heaven's nature, but also the foundation of human ethics. Therefore, "sincerity" is the key to the "union of Heaven and man" since it allows for the identification of shifting temperaments. In addition, it illustrates the efforts that should be made to eradicate the evil in "physical nature" and restore "original nature" to its supremely good state. Aamir initiated the transition from conviction to confession when he set out on his trip home to find Solabo. This practice of morality helped him complete the transformation from conviction to confession. The confession based on "sincerity" has pushed atonement into the realm of effort, placing Aamir on the path to self-redemption.

3. Redemption - The Return of The "Original Nature" Through "Sincerity"

The relationship between sincerity and intellect is eloquently described in the Doctrine of Mean: "Intelligence derived from sincerity is our own nature; sincerity derived from intelligence is known as 'education.' If a person is sincere, he will be intellectual; if a person is intelligent, he will be sincere. (Wang Wenjing, 2019) It implies that certain people are born with the moral nature of sincerity, allowing them to act in an unambiguous manner in accordance with the established moral norms, whilst others must be schooled to be sincere. The outcome is the same regardless of whether sincerity leads to intellect or intelligence leads to sincerity. According to Sincerity and Clarity in Correcting Ignorance (2021), "the transformation from intelligence to sincerity demonstrates that a thorough understanding of human nature is predicated on the effort to explore Li (principle);" and "the transformation from sincerity to intelligence demonstrates that the goal of exploring Li can only be attained if one has a thorough understanding of human nature."

From above, we can see that intelligence and honesty are interdependent and mutually beneficial. "Exploring Li" is a discipline that needs the unification of inner perception and outward things, subject and object. "The human mind is the result of the unification of existence and nonexistence, internals and externals." In conclusion, subjective inner perception and objective exterior items should be combined into a single entity. People gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of all things in the universe through learning to ponder and investigate the universe's fundamental principles while engaging in social practice in person. After exploring the nature of Heaven and humans, the domain of "sincerity" takes form. Sincerity exists where human nature and the Tao of Heaven are together." (2021) It is the connection between Heaven and humanity, serving as a bridge between the two parties.

The concrete manifestation of "sincerity" is the pursuit of morals. "The enhancement of "physical nature" can approach "original nature" indefinitely, and it also serves as an excellent method to approach sincerity. As a result of the sublimation that "sincerity" has wrought in elevating human nature to the level of the nature of Heaven, the return of the "original nature" considered as the highest good will be attained through the efforts necessitated by altering temperament. Amir returns to his country with a sense of shame. He begins his path of self-redemption by rescuing Solabo, who represents the unification of inner perception and exterior things. Now that the prerequisite for "exploring the principle" exists, a comprehensive comprehension of human nature becomes feasible.

The first step towards altering one's temperament is to acquire knowledge. The quest of knowledge is synonymous with "exploring Li." It requires merging the inner with the outward. Therefore, only by practice can we understand the truth, acquire "knowledge from the mind" based on "knowledge from experience," realize the restoration of "original nature," and complete the path to self-redemption. Self-redemption is by no means simple, and the path to redemption is riddled with obstacles and frustration. Solabo, the son of Hassan, has fallen prey to Assef, who previously raped Hassan and has since joined the Taliban. Amir must overcome his cowardice and confront Assef, who has made his hair stand on end since infancy, in order to save Solabo. Twenty years ago, he did not assist Hassan due in part to his dread of Assef. Having witnessed a variety of Assef's atrocities, however, Amir was now resolved to punish the villain. He exacted vengeance on Assef for Hassan and ultimately saved Solabo's life. According to a metaphorical comparison by Qian Mu (2015),

"If a man who lives alone at night and is afraid of ghosts, glues to his chair with the lamp on, he may become even more scared if he remains stately and still. Even though he asks himself for not being frightened with a narrow margin, he may result in a deeper fear. He'd better take the lamp and walk straight forward into the darkness. When he realizes that there is no ghost there, he will get released at length."

Aamir faces up to his fear of Assef and kills the slaughterer, who is already dehumanized, with extraordinary bravery. He has been successful in saving Solabo. Amir achieved his objective of locating Solabo and successfully rescued him by the application of morals exemplified by "sincerity." As a result, Aamir is able to restore his "original nature" to his "physical nature." He finally attains self-redemption after overcoming decades of acute shame for betraying Hassan.

Conclusion

The paper's arguments attempt to describe Aamir's growth and redemption journey by studying his changing mentality in three states—acknowledgement of sin, confession, and realisation of redemption—using Zhang Zai's Neo-Confucian concepts of "sincerity" and "changing temperament." In order to achieve this objective, we investigate the relationship between Confucianism and Islam through interpreting their shared value of sincerity. Through practicing sincerity, one returns to his original goodness, which both cultures hold to be the ultimate goal of morality. Since, according to Confucian philosophy, the inherent goodness of humans is a characteristic of Heaven. Sincerity promotes the union of humans and Heaven. Sincere prayers and rituals, as well as all the attributes that guide individuals to perform the good deeds commanded by Allah, ensure a stronger bond between Allah and his followers. It offers Muslims with a means to achieve self-redemption. The article then examines the connection between honesty and "changing temperament." The achievement of the latter is contingent upon the combination of internal sincerity and external good deed performance. Changing temperament necessitates authenticity by definition. Some people are born with it, but the majority acquire it by researching things and eventually exploring their nature. Changing one's temperament also necessitates a comprehensive investigation of things and self-cultivation through practice. In this sense, the path to sincerity is similar to the path to modifying one's temperament, as both represent the key to the unification of man and Heaven (Allah).

Brecht maintains that writing should begin with the ugly and the new rather than the old and the nice. It is evident that a brilliant literary text seeks to show the frailty of human nature, which partially explains why *The Kite Runner* has become such a popular book since its debut. Philosophers have always been concerned as to how to overcome weakness and achieve mental harmony. In this study, we present a Chinese philosophical interpretation of self-redemption and the promotion of inner peace by decoding the redemptive protagonist Aamir in Hosseini's classic work from Zhang Zai's philosophical standpoint. We feel that the analysis of redemption-themed Arabic literature by Zhang Zai's philosophy offers a fresh viewpoint on Arabic literary studies. People could perceive the presence of evil in "physical nature"; consequently, they will appreciate the absolute good inherent in "original nature." Taking "sincerity" as the best method to "changing temperament," individuals will transcend themselves, restoring their "original nature" and completing the path to self-redemption. From a standard reading of the Qur'an to a study of Arabic literature with Confucianism, this paper blazes a fresh path to the intersection of Islam and Confucianism, thereby diversifying the interaction between two civilizations.

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