Topic 5 - Compare the role of the Tao in *the Analects* and in the *Tao Te Ching.*

**Thesis (this is just a draft-thesis written to keep my ideas on the right track)**

Tao, which means ‘the way’ in Chinese language is worshipped in two texts, The Analects, and Tao Te Ching. The Analects is a collection of says from Confucius or Confucian Masters, and was assumed to have been constructed by his disciples after his death. Tao Te Ching is considered by several scholars as a compilation of anthology of a number of authors, who are difficult to identify. In the two texts, Tao – or the way – is utilized to express different values and qualities. In The Analects, Tao means proper understanding of an individual’s assigned social role and status within the society and also means ultimate level of happiness that can be found in one’s moral life. In Tao Te Ching, Tao is very vaguely signified as an essential conception that can lead to focus on fulfilling an individual’s only corporeal needs and desires while neglecting all worldly values, in order to achieve internal euphoria. This essay discusses the difference between the usages of the term Tao in two texts.

**Analects**

* What is Tao?
* According to Schwartz, it “refers to nothing less than the total normative socio-political order with its networks of proper familial and proper socio-political roles, statuses and ranks, as well as ‘objectives’ prescriptions of proper behaviour (ritual, ceremonial and ethical) that govern the relationships among these roles. On the other side, it obviously also embraces the ‘inner’ moral life of the living individual. One might say that a central problematique of the *Analects* involves the relations between the two.”
* Therefore, Tao is important. Confucius relies on Ren and Li in order to achieve Tao.
* What is Ren?
	+ Raymond Dawson in the Oxford edition chose to translate it as ‘humaneness’ to render the profoundly human nature of the virtue. It encompasses all the social virtues, describing how human beings should behave between themselves. It refers as much to the internalization of ideal human qualities than to the behaviour displayed by the agent in possession of them.
* What is Li?
	+ Both Schwartz and Dawson agree to say, “the attitudes of reverence appropriate to religious ritual are seen as permeating other activities in life”. Schwartz sees Li as the “cement of the entire normative socio-political order [which] largely involves the behaviour of persons related to each other in terms of role, status, rank and position within a structured society”, hence its close link with Ren.
* How does relying on Ren and Li help in terms of achieving Tao?
	+ Confucius longs for the good time (when Tao used to prevail). He argues that noble men must dedicate their energy to learning, to the practice of the li with Ren and to good service in government. In other words, before the restoration of a natural order, conscious efforts and dedication from voluntary and noble men are actively required
* How does it affect actions and words of people with different statuses in the society?
	+ People follow their own social orders and also keep their inner side moral by following Tao.
	+ Everyone, by following the Tao, contributing to uniting the society, can participate for the good of the country.
* How would this affect the society as a whole?
	+ If everyone follow the Tao, people would be contented with their own position within the society, there would be no competitions, wars, and social or internal disorder or conflict.

**Tao Te Ching, (unlike in The Analects)**

* What is Tao?
	+ Unlike in The Analects, it is no longer an all-encompassing natural socio-political order, but it refers more to a mystical reality. What does it mean? Reading the Tao Te Ching, we can’t help noticing the absence of description or definition. The Tao is too great to be expressed in words; it is unutterable (or ineffable). However, it is a reality essential to the nature of life; it is an underlying unity that holds together the empirical parts. It composes of different opposites and extremes, so that it cannot be defined.
* What is Wu-wei?
	+ The Tao in Tao Te Ching is realized in Wu-Wei. Wu Wei is particularly relevant in the political arena. Lau explains: “The Empire is as much part of the natural order as the world of inanimate objects and, being part of the natural order, will run smoothly so long as everyone follows his own nature.
* Why is Wu-wei inportant?
	+ There was the warring period in China, and Tao Te Ching strongly advocates contentment. This is because not being contented and ambitious instead will create competition and then more wars – which then leads to a big Chaos.
* How does relying on Wu-wei in terms of achieving Tao?
	+ By doing NOTHING (Wu-wei), and feeling content, there will be peace and full of healthy people 🡪 how the society should function and be ordered.
* How does it affect actions and words of people with different statuses in the society?
	+ Indeed, Lau believes both that each man has to behave in accordance with the Tao but also that a good ruler is a Taoist ruler.
	+ Inspired by a Taoist ruler, everyone has to focus on satisfying the desires sprung from their biological nature.
* How would this affect the society as a whole?
	+ As this was also a warring period in China, people can all be safe and healthy in their minds and body by following Tao.