

Urban Landscape Design Based on the Concept of "Harmony Between Heaven and Man"

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Abstract: "Harmony between Heaven and Man" not only embodies the essence of ancient Chinese thought but is also a core theory in the field of aesthetics. It emphasizes the close connection between humans and nature and advocates seeking a balance of harmony between heaven, man, and nature. This concept has significant implications for contemporary urban landscape planning. Faced with the challenges of "uniformity in a thousand cities" and "standardized development" in urban construction, it is crucial to incorporate this philosophical thinking into the design process. Design solutions and methods should be considered from multiple dimensions, such as urban ecological balance, harmonizing human life needs with the environment, regionalism and cultural heritage, as well as respect and protection of the ecological environment. Whether in overall planning or specific implementation, the profound meaning of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" should be explored to better showcase the harmony between humans and nature in urban landscapes and promote the city's health and sustainable development.

Keywords: Harmony between Heaven and Man, Urban Landscape, Design

1. Introduction

In the current rapid urbanization process, many cities often prioritize economic growth and practicality, neglecting their unique cultural and ecological characteristics. This not only leads to a homogenization of cities, causing many to lose their cultural distinctiveness but also strains the relationship between humans and nature. Therefore, it is necessary to reexamine and uncover the profound meanings of traditional philosophy and aesthetics.

"Harmony between Heaven and Man," as a core concept in ancient Chinese philosophy, emphasizes the harmonious relationships between humans and nature, humans and society, and humans and themselves. It advocates that humans should coexist peacefully with nature rather than blindly exploit and destroy it. Based on this, we propose incorporating the spirit of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" into urban landscape design to explore a new urban planning strategy that respects nature and integrates culture and society.

With the help of this classic philosophical concept, we aim to chart a new design direction, allowing cities to pursue economic prosperity while maintaining a harmonious relationship with their environment, culture, and ecology. In the following sections, this paper will delve into how to flexibly apply the philosophical principles of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" in modern urban landscape design practice, with the aim of shaping a development path that combines traditional wisdom and modern design thinking.

2. Research Background

2.1. Basic Concepts

The concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" emphasizes the close connection between humanity and the natural world. Here, "Heaven" symbolizes the boundless expanse of nature. This philosophical idea underscores that true inner and outer harmony can only be achieved when humans deeply integrate with nature. In the field of urban landscape design, our goal is to create an environment that is both ecologically distinctive and imbued with a natural ambiance, satisfying people's desire for spiritual nourishment and finding a peaceful coexistence between humans and nature. This is the guiding principle we pursue in urban landscape design.

2.1.1. The Significance and Essence of the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" Concept

"Harmony between Heaven and Man" embodies the fusion of human consciousness and nature. Our thinking should be in harmony with the natural world, rather than attempting to conquer or confront it. We should respect nature, act in accordance with its laws, and base our progress as individuals and society on this [1]. This philosophy advocates the practice of harmonious coexistence with nature in modern society, enabling a state of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature [2].

In the pre-Qin period, whether it was Confucianism or Daoism, both explored the concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man," but they had differing interpretations. Daoism views humans and the natural world as a unified whole, making no deliberate distinction between "Heaven" and "nature," and regards humans as a component of nature [3]. Confucianism, on the other hand, emphasizes the viewpoint of harmonious coexistence with nature and advocates the application of benevolence to care for and cherish nature. Despite their differences, both stress the deep connection between humans and nature.

2.1.2. The Significance of Urban Landscape Design

With the acceleration of urbanization, people's lives have become busier and more stressful. At this time, it is crucial to focus on the spiritual needs of urban residents and enhance their sense of spiritual satisfaction. Urban landscape design plays a critical role in this context, providing citizens with spaces for relaxation and rejuvenation, allowing them to temporarily escape the busyness and pressures of daily life, thus improving their quality of life. In the design process, we should not only pursue creative novelty but also have a deep understanding of the needs of citizens, emphasize the culture and artistic features of the city, and satisfy people's dual material and spiritual pursuits. However, with the acceleration of urbanization and population growth, the ecological environment of cities is also being tested and threatened. This prompts us to focus more on ecological balance and sustainability in our designs [4]. Efficient and forward-thinking urban landscape design can bring positive benefits to the protection and restoration of the urban ecological environment. Such designs aim to maintain the ecological health of cities, reduce adverse environmental impacts, and create better conditions for future urban living [5]. As urban landscape gains increasing attention, governments at all levels are increasing their investment in urban environmental planning and

maintenance, employing more scientific and practical strategies for layout. In this context, ecological protection is no longer just empty rhetoric. It enhances the visual appeal of cities while genuinely optimizing the ecological quality of urban areas. Modern urban landscape design places a greater emphasis on the harmonious integration of nature, culture, and architecture, blending modern aesthetics and artistic elements to significantly enhance the beauty of the city.

What's more crucial is that meticulously planned urban landscapes create numerous places for residents to socialize and engage in activities, such as tranquil bamboo groves, flowing streams, and spacious parks. These spaces have gradually become the preferred venues for urban residents to host various cultural activities, meeting their diverse leisure needs. Well-designed urban landscapes not only add a unique visual scenery to cities but also play a positive role in air purification, humidity regulation, and the diversity of soil microorganisms, further enhancing and perfecting the overall ecological quality of the city.

2.2. Analysis of Current Research Status

The concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" is closely connected to urban landscape design. In the existing research on urban landscape design, we can clearly see the positive influence of the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" philosophy.

2.2.1. Current Research Status of the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" Philosophical Theory

The concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" is deeply rooted in the core of ancient Chinese philosophy and has been further developed and expanded by subsequent scholars. For example, in the study "On the Temporal Disease View of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon's 'Harmony between Heaven and Man' Thought" by Sun Yaoyao and Ju Baozhao, they provided a detailed interpretation of the relationship between the "sequence of time" and the "sequence of Heaven" within the context of "Harmony between Heaven and Man." They pointed out that from the perspective of "Harmony between Heaven and Man," people should strive for harmony and unity with the universe, achieving the ideal state of "I live with Heaven and Earth, and I am one with all things." This not only emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of humans with nature but also highlights the subtle connection between Heaven and humanity. On the other hand, Huang Chengyong, in his paper "Exploration of Zhuangzi's 'Harmony between Heaven and Man' Thought," delved into Zhuangzi's views on "Harmony between Heaven and Man." He believed that, in Zhuangzi's view, "Heaven" is not merely a symbol of the natural world but represents the essence of nature. Zhuangzi recognized both the differences and the magical fusion between Heaven and humanity, much like the two sides of a coin, each with its unique characteristics yet inseparable. These research findings demonstrate that the ancient concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" continues to have rich research significance and broad exploration potential in today's context [6].

In the collaborative work of Zhang Haiying and Yan Yue, titled "The Ecological Significance and Contemporary Implications of the 'Harmony between Heaven and Man' Thought," they extensively explored the importance of the concept of harmony within "Harmony between Heaven and Man," especially in the context of the relationship between nature and humanity [7]. This philosophy advocates reverence, conformity to nature, and harmonious coexistence with it, with the aim of promoting a balance with nature while achieving individual self-improvement. Such ideas continue to hold clear guidance for contemporary society, reflecting the significant value of ancient Chinese philosophy in the modern world.

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to integrate the vigorous development of Marxism in China with the profound essence of traditional Chinese

culture. To ensure the firm foundation of Marxism in China, we need to deepen our understanding and experience of the historical heritage of Chinese civilization. After a thousand years of development, Chinese culture has become a precious treasure of our nation, gathering the essence of Chinese wisdom [8]. Among them, the concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" is prominently mentioned and is closely related to current issues such as green development, contemporary interpretations of Marxism, and social progress. It also reflects our deep confidence in Chinese history and culture. This proves that ancient thoughts continue to contribute to innovation and progress in modern society [9].

2.2.2. Current Research Status of Urban Landscape Design

As the nation's development progresses, the importance of urban landscape design is increasingly evident. Many scholars are devoted to exploring its deeper meanings and values. Ren Yarui believes that the charm of urban landscape design lies in its ability to vividly showcase the uniqueness of a city. She conducted an in-depth analysis of the history of urban design, the development of horticultural art, and the influence of modern art on it. On the other hand, Jiang Naixuan emphasizes the importance of design strategies, stating that design needs to be forward-thinking and innovative, focusing on the integration of landscape elements, structures, and the environment. Such perspectives further highlight the contributions of landscape design to society. In addition, Chen Suning mentions that, to enhance the attractiveness of cities, we must implement scientific landscape design strategies that align with the actual needs of the city, thus contributing to the comprehensive improvement of the city's strength.

2.2.3. Current Research Status of the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" Thought in Urban Landscape Design

The concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man" plays a crucial role in urban landscape design. In Zhu Wenwen's "Confucianism and Urban Landscape Design," she emphasizes the idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. In the design process, we should follow the laws of nature rather than attempting rigid alterations. Hu Xueyuan and Qiu Hongfei's articles provide a detailed analysis of the flood prevention and recreational functions of urban waterfront landscapes. He Wenhong, in his study of public sculpture design in Huizhou ancient villages, also points out the guiding role of traditional philosophy and aesthetics, especially the emphasis on the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. These suggestions clearly highlight the significant value of the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" concept in modern urban design.

2.3. Current Issues in Urban Landscape Design

With the progress of society and technology in China and the emergence of new materials, urban landscape design is constantly evolving. However, at present, we are facing the problem of urban landscapes being too uniform and the development being homogenized, leading to many cities lacking uniqueness.

2.3.1. "One Face, A Thousand Cities"

With the rapid rise of technology and the economy in the mid-20th century, urbanization advanced rapidly, and public expectations for urban landscape design also increased. However, along with this process, we face a clear problem: the landscape designs of many cities are becoming increasingly similar, resulting in a trend referred to as "one face, a thousand cities." Despite the emergence of diverse design styles, many cities still lack unique styles and charm, presenting an image of "low

perception" and "low recognition." This is not only an issue of aesthetics but also, at a deeper level, may lead to questions about the cultural value and spirit of innovation in cities.

The main reason for this phenomenon is that in urban landscape design, there is often a lack of in-depth research and representation of a city's unique culture and history. True urban design should reveal its unique identity, create a distinct urban character different from other cities, while combining history, culture, and modern elements. To prevent cities from losing their uniqueness, we need to focus on how to integrate tradition and modernity in design to make it a representative of the city's culture. Today, many scholars and designers are expressing concern and reflection on the issue of "one face, a thousand cities."

2.3.2. Homogeneous Development

Urban landscape design is facing an increasingly serious problem of homogenization, primarily reflected in the high degree of similarity in design layout, planning strategies, and architectural forms. The imitation and repetition of design elements, functional configurations, form choices, and construction techniques between different cities have reached a concerning level. To meet people's pursuit of a higher quality of life, we should aim for more personalized, immersive, and experiential designs in urban landscape design.

To break free from this homogenization constraint, urban landscape design should dig deeper and showcase the uniqueness of each city. This means we should not simply replicate, imitate, or blindly adopt the design concepts of others but should conduct in-depth research into the natural environment, regional culture, and residents' needs of each city to tailor unique design themes. Furthermore, emphasizing humanism is crucial, especially in an era of information overload where genuine communication between people is becoming increasingly rare. We should use design to cleverly integrate regional culture with the local residents' way of life, ensuring that design, space, style, and details complement each other, creating a unified and distinctive urban landscape. This way, we can truly overcome the homogenization dilemma.

3. The Necessity of Incorporating the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" Philosophy into Urban Landscape Design

Chinese philosophy of "harmony between heaven and man" advocates a balanced relationship between humans and nature. In urban landscape design, this relationship not only connects people with their living environment but also carries the cultural heritage of the city. To ensure continued development, aesthetic innovation, and practical functionality, integrating this philosophical principle into design is crucial.

3.1. From a Sustainable Development Perspective

The "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy, with its emphasis on the "unity" of humans and nature, aligns with the core values pursued in urban landscape design. The primary objective is to achieve harmony between humans and nature, society, and among individuals while ensuring sustainable development. In the Party's 20th Congress, sustainable development was clearly identified as a significant development direction, emphasizing the protection and development of the ecological environment. Incorporating the concept of "harmony between heaven and man" into urban landscape design will further promote ecological sustainability.

3.2. From an Aesthetic Innovation Perspective

Urban landscape design must strike a balance between nature and aesthetics, using artistic techniques to enhance its beauty without compromising ecological stability. The key is to highlight the uniqueness of the city and avoid excessive homogenization. Design should harmonize with the surrounding ecological environment, ensuring overall coherence. If the pursuit is solely for aesthetics, neglecting integration with the local environment may lead to conflicts between design and nature. Integrating the philosophy of "harmony between heaven and man" not only facilitates a perfect blend of design and nature but also ensures that urban landscapes showcase regional characteristics without sacrificing creativity.

3.3. From a Functional Perspective

The core of urban landscape design lies in meeting people's living needs while respecting and preserving ecological and cultural values. Combining the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy, we emphasize the balance and coexistence between humans and the natural world. This mindset aligns with the vision of urban design. Incorporating this philosophy into design not only enriches the visual experience but also enhances the city's cultural features and local sentiment, ensuring that the design is both distinctive and full of local character.

4. Urban Landscape Design Principles Based on the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" Philosophy

Within the philosophical framework of the "harmony between heaven and man," the primary goal of urban landscape design is to break away from homogeneity and avoid the situation of "a thousand cities with the same face." This requires the adoption of clever design strategies to promote the sustainable development of urban landscapes and protect cultural heritage. The focus should be on environmental coexistence, human care, distinctiveness, and historical heritage. Leveraging this philosophical perspective enables us to enhance the creativity of designs and deepen the harmonious interaction between people, landscapes, and the environment.

4.1. Adhering to Site-Specific Design Principles

In urban landscape design, considering the natural environment and urban morphology is of utmost importance. Inspired by the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy, we should emphasize the harmony and coexistence with nature in the design process while respecting existing ecological systems and urban structures. This approach not only contributes to promoting the sustainable development of landscapes but also adds harmonious elements to the design. Therefore, in site selection, layout, nodes, and function determination, careful consideration should be given to ensure the satisfaction of needs without disrupting the natural environment.

Urban landscape design is not merely the integration of the natural environment and human creation; it also involves the intersection of urban culture and social perception. Within the framework of the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy, we should understand that "heaven" represents not only nature but also the social environment. Designers should recognize the impact of design on the social environment and public perception to ensure that the design interacts with society, achieving genuine regional and cultural adaptability. This approach efficiently utilizes resources while creating unique and meaningful landscape spaces.

4.2. Adhering to the Principles of Emulating Nature

Urban landscape design based on the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy should comprehensively consider the needs of urban residents, including not only basic physiological needs but also emotional needs. The focus of urban landscape design should not only be on environmental aesthetics but also on how to meet the actual needs of people. In the design process, we should gain a deep understanding of the core objectives of urban landscape design and integrate residents' lifestyles, interests, and emotions, allowing the design to truly become a part of their daily lives and promote interaction within the community. Furthermore, residents are not just recipients of the design but can also become its creators and participants. Therefore, urban landscape design should reflect the emotional connections between people.

Inspired by the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy, we can infuse emotional elements into the design, increasing interaction and fun between people and the design. This not only enhances people's sense of identity with the design but also strengthens its public value. At the same time, urban landscape design should focus on the relationship between people and nature. Our goal is to create a living space where people and nature harmoniously coexist, respecting and protecting nature while constructing an ecosystem that maximizes the utilization of natural resources to achieve the regeneration and sustainable development of urban landscapes.

4.3. Adhering to the "Harmony between Heaven and Man" Principles

Guided by the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy, urban landscape design should seek the harmonious integration of nature and culture. This requires designers not only to maintain a harmonious relationship with nature but also to respect and incorporate local cultural features. For example, the landscape design of the Banyan Tree Lijiang Resort successfully combines the natural beauty of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain with the courtyard design of the hotel, displaying an image of harmonious coexistence with nature. Such designs not only showcase the beauty of nature but also emphasize the inheritance and respect for local culture. The pursuit of a design concept that achieves dual harmony with both nature and culture is a manifestation of the "harmony between heaven and man" philosophy in modern urban landscape design.

5. Conclusion

Urban landscape designers play multiple roles in the process of reimagining and reshaping spatial environments. They serve as coordinators of environmental ecosystems and as protectors and inheritors of regional cultural traditions. When faced with the issues of "a thousand cities with the same face" and homogenized development in current urban landscape design, we can draw inspiration from the philosophy of the "harmony between heaven and man" to view and understand urban landscapes in a new light. This philosophy emphasizes not only the balance between humans and nature but also the inheritance and respect for local culture, traditions, and history. In practical design, we should actively seek and cultivate design languages and approaches that harmonize with local nature and culture. This ensures that urban landscapes are not only functional and economically efficient but also reflect unique cultural charm and ecological wisdom.

The philosophy of the "harmony between heaven and man" provides us with a broader perspective, making us realize that urban landscape design is not just a form of artistic creation but also an important social responsibility and historical mission. By incorporating this philosophy into design practice, we can better balance the relationship between urban development and natural preservation, cultural heritage, and innovative development, contributing to the sustainable development and uniqueness of urban landscapes.

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