

How Did Daoist and Legalist Views Differ?

TAOISM (Daoism) – Taoism, a Chinese philosophy traditionally attributed to Lao-tzu (old master), originated in the 6th century BC, about the same time as Confucianism. Taoism teaches the necessity of the individual's having a sense of nature, understanding his or her part in it, and adapting to it.

The Taoists believed there was a natural order to existence and that people should do as little as possible to change the natural order. By accepting things as they are, people could live in harmony with the natural laws. Taoists opposed the existence of large bureaucratic government and many governmental laws. Individuals should seek to find their own nature and place in the natural world and act according to instinct, since human instincts are good, and it is learning and custom that have taught them to be bad. Once people rid themselves of the burden of unnatural laws and customs, they can find the Tao (or way) of the universe.

Like Confucianism, Taoism was not widely accepted, however, over the years it underwent many changes. It borrowed from the old Chinese folk religions and became a religion with priesthood, ceremonies, and elaborate rituals. Some Taoists practiced alchemy (trying to change inferior metals to gold), some practiced magic, and others did ritual exercises.

LEGALISM – The Legalist philosophy originated in the same period as Confucianism and Daoism. Philosopher Hanfeizi founded it. The Legalists assumed that human nature was evil and that the people must be restricted by laws. They believed that through harsh punishments people would be forced to obey these laws. They taught that a strong central government was essential to maintain peace and order, and that the ruler should be an unquestioned authority. They also believed that only two occupations should be allowed: farmer (to provide sustenance) and soldier (to support the ruler).

Questions: Answer the following questions below.

1. How did the Daoists and Legalists view the idea of human nature (instincts)? _____

2. Regarding government, contrast the ideas of Daoists with the Legalists. _____

3. Define Tao. _____

4. Define Alchemy. _____

5. If you had to choose, would you rather be a Daoist or a Legalist? _____. Explain.

Create a chart comparing Legalism and Daoism.

<u>Daoism</u>		<u>Legalism</u>
	<u>Founder</u>	
	<u>Government</u>	
	<u>Teachings</u>	
	<u>Religious Practices</u>	
	<u>Nature of People</u>	