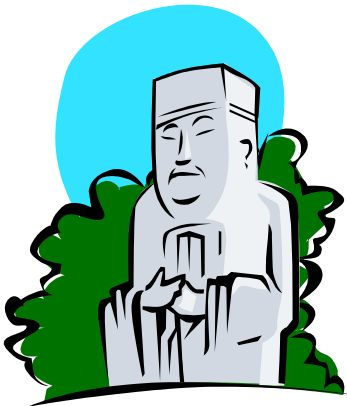


New Philosophies for the Ancient Chinese people:

Confucianism

Daoism

Legalism



Confucianism

During the late Zhou Dynasty, a major problem had arisen in China: the Chinese society was falling apart. While there was a king, the real power was in the hands of warlords. Many philosophers, or teachers, called *Shi*, attempted to come up with ways to restore order in China. One such person, **Confucius**, became the most influential thinker and teacher in Chinese history. Confucius is a western form of the Chinese title of "Master Kong" or "Kongfuzi."

Confucius was born in 551_{BCE} and grew up in extreme poverty, but he became a dedicated student in his teenage years. Little is known about how he received his formal education, but he mastered many subjects, including music, mathematics, poetry, and history. He served in a few minor government positions, and then became a teacher.

Confucius felt that China was overrun with rude and dishonest people. Upset by the disorder and people's lack of decency, Confucius said that the Chinese needed to return to **ethics**, or moral values (doing the right thing). His teachings and ideas became known as **Confucianism**.

Confucius wanted China to return to ideas and practices from a time when people knew their proper roles in society. These are basic guidelines that Confucius thought would restore family order and social harmony:

- Fathers should display high moral values to inspire their families.
- Children should respect and obey their parents.
- All family members should be loyal to each other.

Confucius's ideas about government were similar to his ideas about family:

- Moral leadership (leaders doing the right thing), not laws, brought order to China.
- A king should lead by example, inspiring good behavior in all of his people.
- The lower classes would learn by following the example of their superiors.

Confucius's ideas were very rigid. You had to follow his specific code of behavior, because it honored ancestors and ancient rituals. By following his code exactly, China would return to order because the people would have returned to ethical behavior.

As Confucius traveled to many different regions, he earned the reputation of a respected teacher. His ideas were passed down through his students and later compiled into a book called *The Analects*.

Because Confucianism focuses on morality, family, society, and government, people often think of it as a **philosophy**, or way of thinking. But it is much more. Confucianism is a unique teaching that is both philosophical and religious. It has been a guiding force in human behavior and religious understanding in China for centuries.

Confucius believed that when people behaved well and acted morally, they were simply carrying out what heaven expected of them. Eventually, Confucius's ideas about virtue, kindness, and learning became the dominant beliefs in China.

Main Ideas of Confucianism

**QUICK
FACTS**

- People should be respectful and loyal to their family members.
- Leaders should be kind and lead by example.
- Learning is a process that never ends.
- Heaven expects people to behave well and act morally.

Daoism (Taoism)

Daoism (DOW-ih-zum) takes its name from *Dao*, meaning “the way.” **Daoism** stressed living in harmony with the Dao, the guiding force of all reality. In Daoist teachings, the Dao gave birth to the universe and all things in it. Daoism developed in part as a reaction to Confucianism. Daoists didn’t agree with the idea that active, involved leaders brought social harmony. Instead, they wanted government to stay out of people’s lives.

Daoists believed that people should avoid interfering with nature or each other. They should be like water and simply let things flow in a natural way. For Daoists, the ideal ruler was a wise man who was in harmony with the Dao. He would govern so effortlessly that his people would not even know they were being governed.

Daoists taught that the universe is a balance of opposites: female and male, light and dark, high and low. In each case, opposing forces should be in harmony.

While Confucianism focused its followers’ attention on the human world, Daoists paid more attention to the natural world. Daoists regarded humans as just a part of nature, not better than any other thing. In time, the Dao, as represented by nature, became so important to the Daoists that they worshipped it.

Laozi (LOWD-zuh) (604 – 531_{BCE}) was the most famous Daoist teacher, and the founder of this belief. He was searching for an idea that would avoid the constant warfare and other conflicts that disrupted society during his lifetime. He taught that people should not try to gain wealth, nor should they seek power. Laozi is credited with writing the basic text of Daoism, *The Way and Its Power*. Later writers created many legends about Laozi’s achievements.

Daoism was not a religion, it was a philosophy. Daoists believe that if you look at life and think about things in the right way, you’ll be much happier. To find peace, one should live in harmony with nature. People should live simple lives and not disrupt the balance of the natural world. There are no prayers to any gods. Daoists seek answers to life’s problems through inner meditation and outer observation.

Daoists believe it’s very important to understand The Way Things Are. This means it is important to recognize and trust our own Inner Nature, and to discover who we are. In the story of “The Ugly Duckling,” when does the duckling stop feeling ugly? When he discovers he’s a Swan. **When he recognizes who he really is**, a beautiful swan, he finds his **Way to Happiness**.

Daoism started as a combination of psychology and philosophy, but evolved into a religion in 440_{CE} when it was adopted by the government as a state religion. At that time Laozi began to be worshipped as a god. Daoism joined with Confucianism and Buddhism to become one of the three major religions of China.

Daoists also thought it was possible to find a substance that would make them immortal (live forever).

- The goal for everyone is to become one with the Dao.
- Development of **virtue** (doing the right thing) is one's chief task. One should seek compassion, moderation, modesty, and avoid the pursuit of wealth, power, and knowledge.
- One should plan in advance and consider carefully each action before making it.
- Daoists are kind to other people, largely because they believe they will get back what they give.



The Yin and Yang are two principles in Daoist philosophy. They represent opposites in forces of the universe. *Yin* is the dark colored portion of the symbol and represents the female, passive, earthly, and cool aspects of the universe. *Yang* is the light colored part of the symbol and represents the male, active, light, and heavenly aspects of the universe. ALL MUST BE KEPT IN BALANCE.

Legalism

Legalism, the belief that people were evil by nature and needed to be controlled, was very different from both Confucianism and Daoism. Unlike the other two beliefs, Legalism was a political philosophy without any religious concerns. Instead, it only dealt with government and social control. Followers of Legalism disagreed with the moral preaching of Confucius. Legalists also rejected Daoism because it didn't stress respect for authority.

Legalists felt that society needed strict laws to keep people in line and that punishments should fit crimes. For example, they believed that citizens should be held responsible for each other's actions. A guilty person's relatives and neighbors should also be punished. This way, everyone would obey the laws.

Unity and efficiency were also important to Legalists. They wanted appointed officials, not the nobles (who were like a dynasty), to run China. Legalists wanted the empire to continue to expand. Therefore, they urged the state to always be prepared for war. The Legalists became the first to put their ideas into practice throughout China in 221BCE when Qin Shi Huangdi came to power.

One of the main beliefs of Legalism is that the ruling class is much more important than the common people. Legalists strive for a strong, central government that holds absolute power and control over the people by the threat of extreme and harsh punishment.

The justification of Legalists is that they believe people will only look out for themselves first, and thus, people are selfish and evil by nature. Legalists believe the only way to control an evil person (which all people are), is with the threat of violence and punishment.

Legalists felt the government had to control every aspect of people's lives so they would have the discipline to work hard both on the farm fields and on the battlefields.

While Legalism has no official founder, one of the most important individuals for Legalism was a philosopher known as Han Fei-Tzu. He believed in the "Two Handles" of government. These handles were rewards and punishments. You should reward those who do well, and punish those who practice evil.

Here are some basic beliefs of Legalism:

- You can get obedience by using the government to control everything.
- You can control people's actions through strict laws and harsh punishments.
- You can gain obedience to these laws by encouraging people to spy on each other, and to report any wrongdoing to the authorities. The authorities will then reward the informer and punish the wrongdoer severely.
- Legalists believe this much control is needed because people are naturally evil.

Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism

Directions: Write down 5 important beliefs of Confucianism below. Make sure you use complete sentences!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Directions: Pretend you are a leader in China and you believe in Confucianism. What are **two** laws that you would write to help China become a better place? Make them specific and appropriate!

Directions: Write down 5 important beliefs of Daoism below. Make sure you use complete sentences!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Directions: Pretend you are a leader in China and you believe in Daoism. What are **two** laws that you would write to help China become a better place? Make them specific and appropriate!

Directions: Write down 5 important beliefs of Legalism below. Make sure you use complete sentences!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Directions: Pretend you are a leader in China and you believe in Legalism. What are **two** laws that you would write to help China become a better place? Make them specific and appropriate!

Directions: Answer the following questions ON YOUR OWN!

1. Which belief system do you agree with the most? Why?

2. Why don't you agree with the other two?