

A comparison of the oncological philosophies of rene descartes, lao tzu, al- razi,...

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The Search For Truth: A Comparison Of The Oncological Philosophies Of Rene Descartes, Lao tzu, al-Razi, and Lame Deer It seems that no matter the circumstances under which a culture and society develops its people instinctively develop a method, or a reason, for their existence. This aspect of human beings to long for a reason or purpose to life is distinct to human beings opposed to other living creatures of the earth. For thousands of years philosophers have argued and explored what the nature of existence is, and even questioned whether or not they existed themselves.

In researching the philosophies of Rene Descartes, Lao tzu, Rhazes, and Lame Deer I have discovered a variety of explanations of the nature of existence. Although the theories of these four philosophers may vary greatly, I have found even more interesting the similarities present between them. Separated greatly by space and time these philosophers have developed distinct and unique purposes to existence that share some intriguing and extraordinary similarities as well as differences. The purpose and meaning of the search for truth of these four philosophers can be most simply categorized by the differences between rationalism and empiricism.

On the rationalist side of the spectrum are philosophers Descartes and Rhazes who both agreed that reason should be used in all aspects of one's life. Both philosophers were monotheistic and believed that the ability to reason was a gift from God to humans. They both spoke of a distinction between the mind and body and would agree that the mind is more important than the body because of its ability to use reason and rationalize. Although both philosophers were religious and were thankful to their God for their ability to rationalize, they practiced different religions.

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Rhazes was extremely critical of “revealed religions”, including his how religion of Islam, where followers base all of their beliefs and actions on faith alone. According to Rhazes, a person’s ability to use reason and acquire knowledge was a characteristic of humans that God wanted humans to use. Descartes was a devout Christian, and his pursuit of a reason for his existence was to find some sort of proof, besides the faith of his religion, that he, himself, did exist. Rhazes would have admired Descartes’ method of radical doubt in confirming his existence, and takes the nature of existence to the next level.

Rhazes’ doctrine of two truths follows, though not chronologically, Descartes’ method of Radical Doubt by explaining how faith must adhere to reason in order to be true. Both philosophers questioned themselves endlessly and believed that the only way to find truth was to thoroughly examine one’s own life. Because Rhazes claimed that God gave humans the ability to reason and rationalize he decided that ignorance is considered an act of hate to God, and therefore being unjust and ignorant were acts of ungratefulness.

He felt that the abuse of knowledge and the ability to reason could be expressed as any act of causing pain to a living thing undeserving of it. From this Rhazes derived that humans should treat not only one another with respect and care, but other creatures of God as well. The empirical views of Lao tzu and Lamé Deer value the human relationship with animals on a much deeper level than Rhazes. Both Lao tzu and Lamé Deer viewed existence in this world as a single entity working in an endless cyclical motion. They felt

the relationships between humans, animals, and all other aspects of nature were androgynous.

The purpose of being, for both of these philosophers, was to live in harmony with nature and to achieve personal homeostasis with the world surrounding them. Another similarity between the philosophies of Lao-tzu and Lame Deer is their idealistic views of the mind and body, as well as their pantheistic views of nature and God, or the Great Spirit. Descartes and Rhazes, as materialists, believed that the mind and body existed separately of one another, but both would agree that the mind, because of its ability to reason, was a more important aspect of one's being than their body.

Both the philosophies of Lao-tzu and Lame Deer are considered philosophies of naturalism. Each of these philosophers developed a unique concept of responsibility. Descartes, in particular, believed he had a responsibility to only himself in believing that he must rest all things he deems true in this world by deductive reasoning, starting with the truth of his existence he claimed by his method of radical doubt. Descartes searched for truth within himself and believed that a person could only find their own truth within themselves.

Although Rhazes also believed in using rationality to explain his existence, he felt a responsibility to God to use the gift of reason he and all other humans were given. Rhazes, like Descartes, also believed that humans had an individual responsibility to search for truth through knowledge and justice. Revelation, and any form of practicing faith, would prevent someone

from fulfilling their responsibility to themselves, and to God, to reason and deeply examine their own lives.

Lao tzu and Lame Deer would greatly disagree with Rhazes' view of revelation by stating that there is no purpose to separate faith and reasoning. Lao-tzu would instruct Rhazes and Descartes to meditate in silence and simply listen to the natural world around them, rather than take any form of action in analyzing their reason for being. The approach to determining one's purpose in life through certain methods and idealistic views was one of essentialism in the eyes of Descartes and Rhazes.

Contrarily, Lao tzu and Lame Deer were perspectivists who spent their entire lives listening to and interpreting nature as they were exposed to it. Lao tzu's belief in the energies of wu-wei was a bit different than Lame Deer's belief in that all of life and death revolves continuously in circles within circles. The symbol of wu-wei represents the non-existence of dualism by everything in the world being composed of some qualities of its opposite. The Native American symbolizes circles as representations of the endless cycle of life and death, with an emphasis on the emergence of life from death.

Taking an analogous "view from nowhere" Lao tzu and Lame Deer would say that Descartes' and Rhazes' use of reason to find the nature of their existence as a counter-productive attempt, and would argue that the two absolutists would not be able to figure out the truth of their nature unless they stopped trying and made a passive attempt at interpreting the

constantly changing world around them . The concept of knowledge is unique to each of these four philosophies.

Although Descartes and Rhazes both seek truth and knowledge through reasoning they have developed slightly different definitions of knowledge. On one hand, Descartes would define knowledge as the ultimate truth derived from a fundamental set of definitions discovered by deductive reasoning. Truth and knowledge are the same in the eyes of Descartes and also in the eyes of Rhazes. Rhazes, however, would say that knowledge is an obligation of every individual philosopher, and could be defined as the concept of proper judgment and the moderation of pleasure that appeals to God.

Descartes philosophy states that the purpose of life is to find knowledge and truth synonymously. The nature of existence and purpose of life, according to Rhazes, is to develop knowledge of what is just in the eye's of God and to live a life of moderate pleasure to thank God for the gift of reason. The definition of knowledge may seem similar between Lao tzu and Lame Deer, but these philosophers also have their own unique concepts of knowledge.

According to Lao tzu, to obtain knowledge one must understand the relationship between all living things. If one understands the relationship of all living things than one can live harmoniously with nature and succeed in living a peaceful and stressful life. Lame Deer would agree with Lao tzu's definition of knowledge regarding the relationship of all living things, but would define that nature as a cyclical essence of life and death and that to truly understand this one must understand that all things are given a purpose by the Great Spirit.

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Although Lame Deer does not specifically comment on his definition of knowledge, it can be inferred that he would agree that recognizing that the Great Spirit has given purpose to all living and non-living things will increase one's knowledge of the world around them. Naturally, there always has been, and always will be, multiple points of view in which to view the world. The oncology of people as individuals and culture's will never be universal.

Exploring the extreme differences and interesting similarities of Descartes, Rhazes, Lao tzu, and Lame Deer has provided a deep philosophical insight on the purpose of life. Should our focus be on discovering our purpose, like Descartes and Rhazes, or should our focus be on fulfilling our purpose of life like Lao tzu and Lame Deer? It is safe to say that there is no single answer, but to agree to disagree and use the abundance of oncology's in our world to guide our own individual lives.