

Reflect upon and discuss comfusionism vs taoism

Literature



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Confucianism vs. Taoism Confucianism vs. Taoism Confucianism reflects a Chinese ethical and philosophical system that was founded on the ideologies of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. This complex system holds a moral, political, and quasi-religious thought that remarkably influenced the history and culture of East Asia. Countries like China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam have been greatly influenced by Confucianism while some of them took up this system as state religion. At the same time, Taoism is a quasi-scientific and religious concept that notably influenced the living of East Asian people for more than 2, 500 years. Evidently, the doctrines of Confucianism and Taoism disagree on several aspects. According to Kapaj (2003), both the concepts hold different view on ' how the world functions and what the best role for a person to play in the world'. Although Taoism intends to address several troubling aspects of Confucianism, we cannot argue that it is better than the other one. The Confucianism reflects strong dislike toward the nature and highlights all negative aspects of the world. From the writings of Confucian scholars, it is clear that they fear nature and tend to hide from it. In his poetry, the Confucian Tu Fu says, " I feared wild beasts would hear her cries" (Tu Fu 1384) with intent to indicate the most frightening aspects of nature. He wanted all people to hide behind protective walls and roofs so as to save them from nature. In contrast, Taoism greatly enjoys the beauty of nature. The Taoist writings advised that people must live in harmony with the nature. According to Taoist perceptions, The Peach Blossom Spring is a place where people highly integrate with nature. A famous Taoist writing T'ao Ch'ien (1360) says, " After a few dozen steps it suddenly opened out onto a broad and level plain where well-built houses were surrounded by rich fields and pretty ponds. Mulberry, bamboo and other trees and plants grew

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there, and criss-cross paths skirted the fields” (cited in Palandri, 1988). Evidently, Confucianism and Taoism hold different views on the human relationship with the nature. Similarly, there is a difference between Confucianism and Taoism in interpreting a person’s role in his surroundings. Although Confucian concepts oppose the ‘dictatorial role of Legalism’, it follows a more aggressive path than Taoism. Confucians are always frustrated by the troubles of the world and hence they desire to impose their likes and dislikes upon the world. On the other hand, the Taoists believe in a Natural Law and they allow the nature to continue in its own order rather than disturbing its balance. In the view of Confucius, ‘providing food, arms, and cultivating trust’ are the three important things to rule in a society (cited in Yao, 2000, p. 284). He says that arms is the least important thing among the three while trust is paramount. Confucius does not give too much emphasis on food as he believes that the death has been with human since his birth. Hence, it is obvious that the Confucian views give more focus on ruling than meeting the basic needs of the people. Taoism gives an entirely different concept on how to govern the society. This system gives first priority to the basic requirements of the populace rather than maintaining a social structure. To be more specific, Confucianism mainly deals with social structure and controlling practices while Taoism is concerned about basic human values. Likewise, both concepts hold entirely different views on what is knowledge. Confucian views argue that practices like meditation have little role in human life; instead they claim that it would be better to spend a lifetime in learning to differentiate virtue from vice. Confucianism also suggests people to spend more time with the society; whereas, Taoism teaches that people get more knowledge from nature than from studies.

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Confucianism believes that childhood is the most virtuous state of a person as he/she does not get affected by the evils of the world during this life term.

In total, the ideals of Taoism directly refute the Confucian views. The main difference between Confucianism and Taoism is the way they consider nature. Similarly, both these concepts show a strong disagreement with regard to a person's role in his living environment. Confucianism greatly emphasizes on social structure while Taoism severs basic human needs.

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