

# Taoism and confucianism assignment

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Taoism (Daoism) and Confucianism are two of the most ancient, deeply rooted philosophies of the Eastern world. Arising in China within the same time period, the two philosophies are a likely reflection of the social instability and political conflict which marked the final centuries of the Chou and Warring States Period (Roberts 143). While the two schools of thought are noticeably distinct, Taoism and Confucianism both profoundly impacted Chinese society through the pursuit of harmony within the Chinese way of life.

The philosophical principles of both Taoism and Confucianism are attributed to the ideas of individual men in Chinese history, and their subsequent texts. Confucianism was the first of the two to attract attention by the concepts of well known thinker, K'ung-fu-tzu, or his European name, Confucius (Roberts 143). Unsatisfied with the ruling practices of the government, Confucius sought to reform the ways of corruption to the fundamental ways of order and moral truth. The philosopher believed that prior to his time, there had been natural inclination towards individual integrity, which lied in the roots of his present society.

Through teaching, he aimed to restore structural ideals to create political and social harmony. His wisdom is recorded in texts known as the Thirteen Classics, which later served to shape centuries of Chinese political leaders to the perceived standards of Confucius. Unlike Confucius, however, there is little known of the founder of the Eastern philosophy of Taoism, Lao-Tse. Though, like Confucius, he was believed to be the main influence in the infiltration of his philosophy into the wide reaching audience of Chinese culture.

Lao-Tse is the presumable author of the Tao Te Ching, a series of verses composing the sacred Taoist text (Mannion 173). To restore balance and harmony following the unstable era of the Warring rule, the principles of Taoism and Confucianism sought to achieve a similar objective, but through varying approaches. First, the two major philosophies differed in their areas of focus. Confucianism focused upon practical matters of daily living to create social order, in contrast to Taoism, which incorporated a broader aim to be in harmony with the forces of the universe (Roberts 146).

To restore social order, its primary goal, Confucianism emphasized the role of human relationships in ethical behavior, which include: authority to subject, parent to offspring, husband to wife, eldest to youngest, and person to person (Mannion 178). In contrast, Taoism places emphasis upon the overall balance between a person, other individuals, nature, and the universe itself. Another aspect of distinction between the two is its ideological framework. While Confucianism outlines specific practices for proper behavior and understandings, Taoism is much more vague.

Confucianism outlined concrete principles to be easily put into practice by ordinary people, while Lao-Tse's Tao Te Ching merely describes the abstract descriptions of life's driving force, called the Tao. It seeks to guide individuals on a path to harmony, which is never specifically defined (Mannion 179). The two philosophies also vary in their relationship to the supernatural. Confucius' ideas yielded little value in the spiritual sense. His principles were based solely on moral behavior in daily life, as opposed to a plan of salvation for an afterlife (Roberts 145).

A central goal of Taoism, on the other hand, is the spiritual aspect of alignment of one's self with the incomprehensible power that governs all of existence. As with many schools of thought, it is difficult to distinguish between philosophy and religion. Both Taoism and Confucianism, however, may easily be described primarily as philosophies. Neither Confucius, nor Taoist leader, Lao-Tse was considered divine or a messenger from a God, as found in religions such as Christianity or Judaism (Mannion 178). Unlike Confucianism, however, Taoism entails a sense of spirituality, reaching beyond the tangible aspects of day to day life.

Therefore, it may also be considered a religious following in addition to a philosophy. Although both philosophies seek to improve the quality of life and the state of individuals involved, they are clearly distinguishable ideologies. While Taoism is allusive and spiritual in nature, Confucianism promotes concrete guidelines of ethics, seemingly less complicated for people to understand and practice. Though Confucianism is the more dominant of the two, both set of teachings have had a tremendous influence on Chinese culture throughout much of history.