

Christianity vs. Everybody

Christianity vs. Taoism

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ORIGIN OF TAOISM

1. During the first 4 centuries of the Chou Dynasty, Chinese society lived in harmony based on a set of principles called the **Ritual-Music Culture**. This culture was based on the idea that there were certain **rituals** for doing things that were mandated by heaven, or what they referred to as the **Tao**. The idea, then was that social harmony would result when the **rulers** promoted a sense of civility, appropriateness, and virtue among the people. After those first 4 centuries, that harmony began to falter when the feudal states within China started to fight against each other for **land and power**.
2. Confucius pushed for a return to the precept of the Ritual-Music Culture; but the social conditions of China continued to deteriorate despite his efforts. During this time, a contemporary of Confucius named **Lao Tzu** actually held Confucius and his Ritual-Music Culture responsible for China's **state of chaos**. He contended that the imposing of **external laws** reflects the breakdown of **internal laws**; and therefore harmony will not result when laws are imposed on the people.
3. Lao Tzu, on the other hand, saw that the answer to the social chaos was to be found in the Tao (*pronounced 'dow'*) and in the principle of wu-wei, which is the **principle of purposeful inactivity**. Lao Tzu taught that if the people were going to realize harmony again, our only action should be to align ourselves with the natural flow of the Tao and let it work its **natural course** through us.

BELIEFS/PRACTICES OF TAOISM

1. The Tao is the **force of existence** from which all things flow; and it is also the pattern within that world. It is nonetheless a mysterious thing because the Tao is **unknowable** and **indescribable**. The Tao Te Ching is the scriptures of Taoism. It records in one passage:

"There is something undifferentiated and yet complete, which existed before heaven and earth. Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change. It operates everywhere and is free from danger. It may be considered the mother of the universe. I do not know its name; I call it Tao." (chap 25; Chan, 152). Therefore, from **nonbeing** has come **being**. In addition, the way in which the Tao flows always leads to **harmony**, **health**, and **peace**. By aligning ourselves with that underlying flow, we will experiment such things in our lives.

1. There is a pattern within each object that makes it what it is called **Te**. For us it is our **individuality** or **uniqueness**. Te is each person's **inner connection** to the

- universal Tao. Therefore, as we are true to who we are in our own unique nature, we will then work in harmony with the **natural flow of the universe**.
2. Wu-wei is the principle of purposeful inactivity. It is a purposeful **taking of no unnatural action**. It is a deliberate removal of one's hands from something and letting nature, or the Tao, take its course.
 3. Within nature, there exists two opposing, but at the same time, balancing and interacting forces called **yin and yang**. These opposing forces interact with each other, and by doing so **life and nature are produced**. With respect to the yin/yang duality, one does not try to avoid one or the other; rather it is important to live in harmony between them both, **never having too much of either**.
 4. Taoism is a compelling systems of ideas that are decidedly **naturalistic** in that nature is the measure of all things. While practical on every way, Taoism retains a sense of the mystical and unattainable in that the way can only be approached but never fully understood. In all the Taoist scriptures, the sage talks **about** the Yao, but never **to** the Tao.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO TAOISM

1. The Tao, the force of existence beyond knowability and description, is the source of all things knowable. Christianity, however, holds that the Ultimate Reality, Who is God, is personal and possesses attributes such as intellect, will, emotions, creativity, an appreciation for beauty, and morality. **It is clearly more sensible to say that we carry in part the attributes of the Source from which we derive in contrast to trying to comprehend the proposition of 'being from nonbeing'**. Since God is personal & not impersonal, He knows us and can be known by us. (Nah 1:7/Mt 6:8/Jn 17:3/Gal 4:9/Eph 17-19/I Jn 3:24,4:13-16,5:19-20)
2. In the yin/yang duality, opposing forces are yet interactive to bring balance to life and nature. These opposing yet interactive forces can not exist nor be known without the other; thus they are mutually dependent and coequal. **On the other hand, Christianity says that good existed prior to evil because evil is not eternal, God is. Evil then is not necessary for good to exist; for this would only serve to validate evil. Evil instead is a rebellion against and a denial of good.** (Isaiah 14:12-15/Gen 1:31/2:16-17,25/3:4-19)
3. Taoism is Lao Tzu's solution to social chaos. He says we must get in the natural flow (wu-wei) of the Tao and let nature take its course in order to experience transformation. First, how does a solution that is asocial fix social chaos? Second, how does a force without morality (Tao) fix subjects who possess morality (humanity)? Third, how is social chaos fixable by nature when nature does not possess moral standards? **Christianity purports that we rely on what God has accomplished on our behalf through Jesus Christ. Transformation comes continually as we repent of our sins, trust Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation, and submit to the indwelling of His Holy Spirit Whom leads and influences our living in every area of life.** (Romans 8, 12:1/I Cor 5:9-11/Col 3:1-15)
4. Taoist believe that after death, a person's individual consciousness ceases to exist. **In Christianity, a person's individual consciousness continues to exist either in eternal fellowship with God or eternal separation from God.** (Eccl 12:7/Jn 3:16/I Cor 15/II Cor 5:1/I Thes 4:13-18).