

The Philosophical Indoctrinations of Laozi (384–362 BCE)

Banwo Adetoro Olaniyi

Xiamen University, School of Humanities,
Department of Chinese History,
422, Siming South Road, Siming,
Xiamen, Fujian Province, 361005, P.R. China.

Abstract

Laozi lived in a time of turmoil and political strife, he was stricken by the political decay of his town and decided to move on, however in the process, he decided to live yet one of the most controversial documents that sets out the way to live an ideal life even in an unjust society.

The Dao de jing, a controversial document of its authorship provides an insight of achieving the ideal man that Laozi characterizes, he also sets out a precise philosophical ideal for the government to rule the state.

He propounds a theory that uses nature to understand human nature and personal events; he sees nature as an impartial judge that treats everything equally. He therefore tried to provide a collaboration of the concept of nature to that of the human life.

In view of this he tries to symbolize what the ideal man in this natural phenomenon would be, an ideal man would be that puts himself last and others first, one who welcomes any situation and values everything around him and acts in the simplicity of form but precious at heart

This work sets to examine the core concepts of Laozi, his moral claims, his philosophical ideas, political views and make a comparison with an important Chinese Ideology.

Key words: Dao (the way), virtue, nature, ideal, philosophy

The Philosophical Indoctrinations of Laozi (384–362 BCE)

Introduction

Laozi also known as Lao Tzu, Lao Tsu, Lao Tse, Lao Zi, Laotze or a number of other ways is said to have lived in the sixth century BCE according to the Chinese tradition. He is a major figure in Chinese philosophy whose historical existence is debated. Chinese tradition states that he lived in the 6th century BC but many modern scholars claim that he may have lived in approximately the 4th century BC, during the Hundred Schools of Thought and Warring States Period (475-221BC). He is credited with writing the seminal Daoist work, the Dao De Jing, and became a popular deity in the Daoist religion's pantheon.

Little is known about Laozi's life. His historical existence is strongly debated, as is his authorship of the Dao De Jing. Nevertheless, he has become an important culture hero to subsequent generations of Chinese people. Tradition says he was born in Ku County of the State of Chu, which today is Luyi County of Henan province, in the later years of spring and Autumn Period (770-476BC). Some legends say he was born with white hair, having spent eight or eighty years in his mother's womb, which is given as an explanation for his title, which can be both read as "the old master" and "the old child"

Laozi lived roughly the same time as Confucius, it was said that Confucius once consulted Laozi and respected him very much, saying, "Isn't Laozi just like a dragon!" Laozi brings forwards a systematic political philosophy; he argues further on the source of Dao, his idea of dao succeeds the dao in Zhouyi that penetrates through heaven and earth and human affairs. Wen (2012)

Laozi is said to have left the court when political conditions had deteriorated so far that there was no longer any hope for a restoration of order. According to a later tradition, he arrived at the provincial border at the mountain pass of Xian Gu, riding on the back of a black ox. The border official, Yin Xi, asked him to leave something in writing with him: at this request, Laozi wrote the Dao De Jing in 5,000 pictograms and gave it to him. He then went west, but nobody knows where. It is understandable that a further legend grew up around this tale, according to which Laozi went to India and got in touch with Buddha. In later disputations between Buddhism

and Daoism, each side claimed that the founder of the other religion had learned from the founder of their own. In reality, however, the Xian Gu Mountain is in the western part of what was then the state of Zhou, but no less in the heart of China. During the Han dynasty several emperors took to studying the Dao De Jing, in particular Han Wen Di (179-157 BC), whose peaceful and simple way of government has been considered a direct result of the teaching of the old sage. His son Han Jing Di (156-140 BC) gave the book the title Dao De Jing ('the classical book of Meaning and Life') by which it has been known in China ever since. Han Wen Di is said to have received the book from He Shang Gong ('the Lord of the River'), who is also supposed to have written a commentary on it. Nothing definite is known about this man, whose real name nobody knows. Some Chinese authors (though of a later era) have even had doubts about his very existence. Yet from this time onwards, commentaries appear more frequently. In the catalogue of the Han dynasty alone three of them are mentioned. The oldest of the reliable commentaries which are still in existence is by Wang Bi that marvelously gifted youth who died at the age of twenty-four in AD 249. After this, there have been ever-increasing numbers of commentaries of all kinds. Even the founder of the Manchu dynasty had a famous commentary published under his name. It would be beyond the scope of this introduction to go into this in any more detail. There is no need to prove that a work like the Dao De Jing had much to suffer in the storms of ancient times, and that consequently the text is not at all in good condition. Wilhelm (1985)

The Texts of Laozi

Texts of Laozi has been discovered in Mawangdui in 1973, whose transcription might date a bit early before the Han dynasty (version A) or during the early Han (version B), and the three Guodian bamboo slip texts discovered in 1993. The Guodian texts were transcribed before 300 B.C.E, this is the latest possible date of their burial, and the transcription must have been earlier than the burial itself. In the Guodian versions, Laozi's texts were read together with Confucian texts; this suggests that Daoism and Confucianism were not then considered antagonistic schools of thought. In particular, the vehemently critical words referring to basic Confucian concepts such as *ren* (humanness) and *yi* (righteousness). It could be said that the Mawangdui silk texts show an intermingling of Daoist and legalist thought, especially in the case of Huanglao boshu, whereas the Guodian texts show a certain intermingling, or at least a peaceful coexistence, of Daoist and Confucian thought. In the two Mawangdui silk versions of the Laozi, both version A and version B consist of a first part on *de* (virtue) and a second part on the *dao*, an order that is just the reverse of existing versions such as Wang Bi's, Heshang Gong's, and Fu Yi's. This fact has led to many historical hypotheses and arguments. But in the earlier Guodian Laozi, there is no order of this kind. It does not have divisions into chapters, and sometimes even the order of sentences is quite different from either the silk Laozi or other traditional versions. Shen (2002)

The Book of Changes 'Dao De Jing' explores the *dao* of *tian* for the purpose of understanding human affairs; the Daodejing explores the *dao* of water for the purpose of understanding personal events. Laozi infers many important conclusions based on his understanding of water, both subtly and powerfully. He declares that the highest good in the world is like water, for it benefits everything without struggle, since water dwells in places avoided by most, its way is similar to *dao*. The basic form of *dao* is like the ceaseless spring under the earth, the *dao* of heaven and earth forever produces things and events that destroy them. The cosmological *dao* of the myriad things is like a great fetal beginning, out of which everything flows. *Dao* is the road on which people walk and the words people say, it can be comprehended as the pattern human beings use to communicate with the world. This pattern is close to the way beyond names and language, the original state of communication with the world

beyond language. Dao connotes the way-making that human travels linking them to the world as soon as they begin to walk and talk. Wen (2012)

Philosophically, the following meanings of dao are the most important:

- First, dao as laws of becoming or laws of nature, especially when combined with heaven or heaven and earth, as in tian dao (heavenly dao) or tiandi zhi dao (the dao of heaven and earth). Shen (2002)
- Here is how Laozi describes the Dao: It cannot be seen, heard, felt, named, and is beyond all forms (Ch.1, 14, 35, 67). It exists before heaven and earth, is the mother and foundation law of the sky, earth and human, is independent, everlasting, and without end (Ch.25). It is impartial and treat everything equal (Ch.5). It is both small (no desire and takes no credit) and big (manifest all things) (Ch.34, 51). It is like a limitless valley/vessel which is the source of everything (Ch.4, 6, 11, 32, 34, 35). It is like water that nurtures everything, and can be found from the lowest/deepest place of the world (Ch.8). It is everywhere (Ch.34) Derek(n.d)
- Second, dao as the origin that gives birth to all things, as in Laozi's saying, "The dao gave birth to one. One gave birth to two. Two gave birth to three. Three gave birth to all things."
- Third, the dao as the always self-manifesting ultimate reality. The self-manifesting dao is "reality itself," whereas all we say about the dao is but "constructed reality," which is not and never could it be reality itself. This is as shown by Laozi's saying "The dao that could be said is not the constant dao," which can be found in all the texts except the Guodian bamboo slips. Shen (2002)
- Laozi had prescribed detailed methods to cultivate the Dao. First, one seeks to understand and transcend his "self" (Ch.33). One learns about the duality of yin and yang, and abides in the yin (Ch.28). One abides in the center/root, accept things as destiny and as normal (Ch.16, 26). Then one surrenders its "self" until non-self and non-doing (Ch.48). One practices "selfless" living, where one puts its "self" last, and treats himself foreign (Ch.7). One fills the holes where "the self" could arise, and

shuts the doors where the mind would scatter (Ch.52). One welcomes every phenomenon without attachment or resistance (Ch.23). One diligently says and acts on the Dao (Ch.41, 70). One fights with kindness, economy, selflessness (Ch.67). When encountering hatred, one dissolves it instead of returning hatred (Ch.79) Derek (n.d)

Political Thought of Laozi

Laozi advocates the political thought “So long as I do nothing’, the people will of themselves will be transformed. So long as I love quietude, the people will of themselves go straight.” He is a naïve naturalist that holds the concept of “through action less activity all things are duly regulated” and a “small state with a sparse population” as his political ideal. He is concerned with how to clear up the various disputes between people, how to guide people’s activities to follow the naturalness and spontaneity of the dao and how to make peoples life free from political interference.

“The government of the sage” he praises lies in:

Refrain from exalting capable men, so that the people shall not compete,

Refrain from valuing rare goods, so that the people shall not steal,

Refrain from displaying anything which arouses desires, so that the people’s heart will not be disturbed,

Therefore the government of the sage lies in:

Simplifying the people’s minds,

Filling their bellies,

Weakening their ambitions,

Strengthening their bones,

And always keeping the people innocent of knowledge and desires

The sage is the most perfect being in the mind of the Daoists, the personality of “the sage” in the mind of the Daoists differs from that of the Confucian School. The “Sage” of the Confucian School is the model of men of virtue, whereas the “sage” of the Daoist school identifies himself with what is natural and expands his internal life, taking “non-essentialness and motionless” and “non-competition” as the ideal way of life. So, the Daoist sage manages affairs by “non-action.” “Non-action” as expressed in Tao Te Ching actually means not to act willfully, not to pursue selfish ends assiduously, but to abandon all of one’s personal considerations and schemes and act in accordance with the principles of Heaven and Earth. Laozi’s remarks seething with anger are as follows:

When the Great Tao is abandoned,
 The doctrines of benevolence and righteousness will come to light,
 When knowledge and wisdom appear,
 Great hypocrisy will also emerge,
 When a family falls into dispute,
 Filial piety and parental affection to children will be advocated,
 When a country falls into disorder,
 There will be loyal ministers.

Laozi maintains that the metaphysical “Tao” is absolute and eternal, while everything dialectical is relative and changeable:

Therefore, by opposing each other,
 Existence and nonexistence come into being,
 Difficult and easy form themselves,
 Long and short are distinct,
 High and Low contrast,

Sound and voice harmonize,

Front and back emerge.

Relativism as expressed in the lines cited above is another principal theme running through “Tao Te Ching”. Moreover, these lines also disclose Laozi’s perseverance, his impossibility to stick to non-action forever, while paying attention to the government of his country; he is consistently elaborating the relationship between existence and non-existence. Sabrina (2012)

Laozi’s political philosophy concerns mostly the art of governing, which, for him, should refer to the dao, follow the dao, and unfold the de of all people and all things. An ideal state is, negatively, a state with no political domination and, positively, a place where people and things can spontaneously unfold their own virtue. The unfolding of the creative abilities or spontaneous virtues of the people is therefore the greatest wealth of a state. In order to attain this, the ruler should adopt a politics of non-action (wuwei). This does not mean ruling without any action; rather, it means ruling according to the dao—that is, no particular action or no action of particular interest but universal action, acting for all things; no artificial action but spontaneous action. The politics of non-action is a politics of nonintervention, of letting everyone be himself or herself. This kind of politics, not necessarily limited to a small country, embodies an ideal unit of political construction, exemplified in the *famous Chapter 80*:

“Let there be a small country with few people. Let there be ten times and a hundred times as many powerful utensils. But let them not be used. Let the people value their lives highly and not migrate far. Even if there are ships and carriages, none will ride in them. Even if there are armor and weapons, none will display them. Let the people again knot cords and use them in place of writing. Let them relish their food, beautify their clothing, be content with their homes, and delight in their customs. Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard. Yet the people there may grow old and die without ever interacting one with another.”

Many scholars maintain that, for Laozi, a small country with few people constitutes the best social and political environment. This view is based on an isolated reading of the chapter. Some even say that Laozi's position is very similar to what E. F. Schumacher calls "small is beautiful." Yet under scrutiny terms like "small" and "few" mean nothing quantitative. Laozi does not have any intention. On the contrary, a contextualist reading renders implausible the idea of returning to an ancient tribal society. Laozi has talked much about the art of governing a large state. Consider the following: Ruling a big country is like cooking a small fish. If the dao is employed to rule the empire . . . not only will the supernatural power not harm people, the sage also will not harm people . . . , and virtue will be accumulated. (*ch. 60*). A big country may be compared to the lower part of a river. It is the converging point of the world. (*ch. 61*) From these texts, it is clear then Laozi does not exclude the possibility of governing a large state. The question for him is whether one can apply the dao to rule the empire and both supernatural beings and the sage so as not to harm the spontaneous creativity of the people but let the country become a place for accumulating de. Therefore the most important question for Laozi is how one can establish a social political order by referring to the dao and the spontaneous virtue of people.

Chapter 59 answers this most clearly: In ruling the people and in serving heaven it is best to be sparing. It is because one is sparing, that one may be said to follow the way from the start. Following the way from the start he may be said to accumulate an abundance of virtue. Accumulating an abundance of virtue, there is nothing he cannot overcome. When there is nothing he cannot overcome, no one knows the limit of his capacity. When no one knows the limit of his capacity, he is fit to rule a state. He who possesses the mother (dao) of the state will last long. Moreover, Laozi has taught many lessons about attaining the large from the small and overcoming the difficult from the easier: Make the small big and the few many, . . . prepare for the difficult while it is still easy. Deal with the big while it is still small. Difficult undertakings have always started with what is easy. And great undertakings have always started with what is small. (*ch. 63*) Deal with things before they appear. Put things in order before disorder arises, a tree as big as a man's embrace grows from a tiny shoot. A tower of nine stories begins with a heap of earth. The journey of a thousand li starts from where one stands. (*ch. 64*)

It is possible then, for Laozi, to govern a large state if we begin by building up ideal political units. Laozi considers the dao, virtue, and wisdom the three preconditions of

establishing an ideal social and political order. Only when there are virtues and wisdom corresponding to the levels of body (self), family, community, country, and world, resulting from an authentic conversion to the dao, can a social and political order with intense spiritual communication be established. An ideal social and political order must begin with the self and progress through family, community, and larger units to the establishment of a large-scale political environment. For Laozi, political praxis is based on the praxis of virtue and wisdom, and the praxis of virtue and wisdom is based on the praxis of conversion to the dao.

What Laozi envisages is therefore an ideal social and political environment emancipated from all political domination. In this ideal state, men can communicate freely and are responsible for one another. But this cannot be realized without acquiring virtue and wisdom by communicating with the dao. Shen (2002)

Laozi, was concerned with the political affairs of the state, he had realized that the disease from which the realm was suffering was not one that could be cured by any - not even by the best – medicines, for the body of the nation was in a state that was fit for neither life nor death. Political conditions had been bad in earlier times, but then the evil had been embodied in some tyrant. The people had reacted angrily and forcefully by gathering around a noble reformer, and in this way had replaced the old order by a new and better one. But things were different in the time of the outgoing Zhou dynasty. Neither strong vices nor strong virtues prevailed. The people groaned under the oppression of their superiors, but did not have the strength for energetic action or for taking matters into their own hands. Their faults were not faults and their merits were not merits. A deep rooted inner falsehood had wormed its way into all relationships, so that although love of one's neighbor, justice and morals were still preached as high ideals, in fact greed and covetousness poisoned everything. Under these conditions, all attempts to put things right inevitably fuelled disorder. Such a disease could not be cured by external means. It was better to let the diseased body rest so that it could recover ultimately with the help of Nature's own healing power. This was the meaning of the testament Laozi left behind in the 5,000 words of the Dao De Jing, when he left the world.

It would be wrong, however, to separate Laozi entirely from the context of Chinese spiritual life, for he is involved with it in thousands of ways. While it is true to say that history does not come within the orbit of his work, he did have a sound knowledge of Chinese antiquity:

his work in the imperial archives gave him ample opportunity to familiarize himself with it. In his teaching he linked up with and had no reservations about using old adages of wisdom. His book is full of allusions; some are direct quotations, some - and probably most - are tacit references.

Laozi has shared the fate of other independent thinkers of all times, for while others took great pride in their 'glorious achievements' he often felt lonely in the current of contemporary life. But it seems that he did not find it too difficult to accept this fate. Unlike Confucius he did not found a 'school'. He neither needed nor wanted to do this, for he was not out to spread a doctrine. He looked into the great origins of the universe for himself, and with difficulty put into words what he had seen - leaving it to those of like mind in later times to consider his hints and suggestions, and discover for themselves the truths he had discovered. This he has achieved.

The Japanese commentary by Dazai Shuntai gives an excellent description of the principles followed by the two men. He starts with a short review of contemporary historical conditions. According to his account Confucius looked upon the people as children who had drawn too close to the fire or the water, and therefore had to be rescued at any cost. He had realized how difficult the rescue would be, but this did not relieve him of the duty to rescue them. He had tried every means of applying the ancient saints' teachings, for he considered this to be the panacea. And so he had wandered about restlessly for the better part of his life, trying to find a prince willing to apply these teachings. It had not been shallow interference or vainglory that had driven him to these desperate efforts, but the inescapable duty to help because he knew he had the means to provide such help. And, finally, when all his efforts proved to be fruitless because conditions had deteriorated beyond repair, and circumstances did not help him at all, he resigned. Even then he did not forget his duty. He established a tradition amongst his disciples and through his literary work so that at least the outlines of the good, old social order might be saved for posterity, and his teachings be preserved as seed-corn for future times, so that - if more favorable circumstances should ever come about - there might be a means of setting the world to rights once again.

These gleanings from Dazai Shuntai's commentary sufficiently explain Lao Zi's weariness of the world of current affairs, and why there is not one historical example in his small

book. In different rhythms and with different emphases, Rousseau preached the same truth in his 'return to Nature' in the mid-eighteenth century.

But in later times as well, many of those who had battled bravely through life as faithful disciples of Confucius came to self-reflection as a result of the blows life had dealt them. They turned their backs on both the riches and pains of the world to find a quiet place in the mountains or by the sea, where they could seek the meaning of their experience of life in the Dao De Jing. One example may suffice for many.

There is a mountain range near Qing-Dao called Lao Shan, which is renowned in Chinese literature as the Island of the Blessed. Romantic rock formations and gorges enclose hidden monasteries; from their seclusion in copses of bamboo, almost buried in luxurious subtropical growth, they open up a view on to the wide blue sea. In this seclusion many a high official who had lost out in the bustle of warring factions at the imperial court, found peace in the contemplation of pure nature, and in reflection upon the sayings of the Dao De Jing. There is a description of the famous places in the Lao Shan - copies of which were only distributed among the monasteries; it originates in those troubled times when the decaying Ming dynasty was displaced by the Manchu dynasty. An imperial censor made use of the unexpected leisure of his old age to take these notes. Almost every line shows the influence of 'the Old One'. The introduction itself begins with an exposition which reveals his spirit: 'A being receives its value from being able to shine forth its own light, because it has touched the depths of the world's foundation. However, great art has no ornament, a great life does not shine, and a great jewel has a rough outer appearance.'

How can these things make sense? Just through the recognition that the true light does not need to be acknowledged by men, that it is even almost ashamed of its brightness. The meaning of the good gifts of Heaven and Earth is not based on their usefulness for human purposes. One could even say that whatever does not have so much inner greatness that nothing more can be added to it from the outside does not deserve to be called great.'

But the effects of Laozi's teachings are not confined to China. The Japanese, who has already been mentioned, said of himself: 'Even though I was born 2,000 years later, I have tried faithfully throughout my life to co-operate in bringing about the doctrines of Confucius. But it

may be said that I over-estimated my strength. Now I am nearly seventy years old and my days are rapidly drawing to an end. My will-power is still unbroken but my physical strength is ebbing away. Here I sit and watch how all things, all circumstances change, how everything deteriorates. Even if a Man of Calling were to stand up among us, he could no longer help. Wilhelm (1985)

The Analects and the Dao De Jing

The *Analects* and the *Dao De Jing* are two of the most familiar, widely read, and important texts of the classical period (roughly the 6th to the end of the 3rd century BC) of Chinese philosophy.

The *Analects* (*Lunyu*), literally means the “classified teachings” or “ordered sayings”, and is said to be a record of the teachings of Confucius (551 – 479 BC) and his disciples. Since the Han dynasty (206 BC – AD 220), Confucius has been officially recognized as a great sage by the rulers of China and his teachings are required reading for any educated Chinese person. The *Analects* offers a powerful religious and moral vision and is still influential as a lesson for self-cultivation today.

The *Dao De Jing* simply means “the classic of Dao” and *De* literally means “way” and “virtue”. It is said to have been written by Laozi, an older contemporary of Confucius. The *Dao De Jing* seeks to undo the consequences of the misguided human views and practices due to their excessive desire and unique capacity to think, and lead people to return to the earlier ideal (natural state) when things simply were as they were and people acted out of pre-reflected spontaneity and were free from desire.

The *Dao De Jing* is the philosophical counterpart – the rival and the complement – to the *Analects* of Confucius. These two classics are the foundations of their respective traditions, Daoism and Confucianism, which may be said to constitute the yin and the yang of Chinese culture. The *Dao De Jing* is primarily reflective in nature, while the *Analects* is more activist. Both works consist of pithy lines mixed in with longer passages, but the *Analects* is rooted in concrete historical settings and deals with specific persons and problems. In contrast, the *Dao De Jing* is without obvious historical markers and gives the impression of timeless universality.

Beyond saying that these works have been traditionally associated with Confucius and Laozi, and that both works address central themes of a dramatic period of Chinese history (ca 500-350 bc) there has been no scholarly consensus on how to date or even define either one. Moss (2004)

Dao De Jing emphasizes the forces of nature and human interaction with them; the *Analects* emphasizes the social realms alone – human relationships, ethics, and political organization. The former stresses the relation of a inspirational Dao with the totality of its creation; the latter stresses hierarchical relations centering on the parent-child model and the particular obligations with clan and kingdom that are required of each person. For the former the highest authority is a maternal force that creates a scope of ten thousand phenomena, humans but one among them; the latter honors an ancestral heaven that sanctions patriarchal dominion and elite lineage. The former idealizes the self-effacing leadership of a wise man or sage (*shengren*), who governs himself and others by keeping to the Way, the latter idealizes the superior man (*junzi*), a public role model who may advise the patriarch or even serve as a potential ruler in a place of unfit heir. As for religion in the sense of a deity interactive with humans, Laozi ascribes no consciousness to the Way, while Confucius, committed to an exclusive focus on human relations, cautiously advises a follower to respect the gods but keep them at a distance (*Analects* 6.20), a sensible compromise that the Chinese have by and large adhered to over the millennia.

Confucianism and Daoism

Daoism and Confucianism disagree on several points on their understanding of how the world functions and the best role for a person to play in that world. It is difficult to say that one is a criticism of another, but there are comparable issues in which Daoist writings can be interpreted as directly addressing the more troubling aspects of Confucianism.

Confucianism tends to despise nature. Writings of Confucian scholars show nature to be cruel and symbolize the entire negative in the world. They fear it and hide from it. In his poetry, the Confucian Tu Fu uses the most frightening aspects of nature to show his discomfort in being out in the wild, "I feared wild beasts would hear her cries." Civilization is a place from where nature can be excluded. "Oh, to own a mighty mansion of a hundred thousand rooms, A great roof for the poorest gentlemen of all this world, a place to make them smile, A building unshaken by wind or rain, as solid as a mountain, Oh, when shall I see before my eyes a towering roof such as this?"(2002) He desires to take all the people, or at least his chosen gentlemen, of the world out of nature and hide them behind protective walls and roof.

Daoism enjoys the beauty in nature. The writings of Daoists seek to live in harmony with nature. The Daoist Paradise of *The Peach Blossom Spring* is a place where people live as a part of nature, not sequestered from it, "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 there, and crisscross paths skirted the fields." Ch'ien (2002)

There is a contrast between Confucianism and Daoism in how they view the role of a person in the world around him. Confucianism, while rebelling against the dictatorial role of Legalism, still takes a far more aggressive position than Daoism. Kapaj (2005)

Confucians desire to impose their will upon their world. They are burdened by the troubles of the world and take to task modeling things into a civilized system where all things are put into a proper place. The Confucian ruler would favor leading by example over coercion, but the desire for controlling behavior is present none the less. There is certain arrogance in the notion of always judging people to be good or evil. While the Confucian measure of goodness is

in actions towards other people, it is also measured in a distinct lack of kindness to those the Confucian judges to be evil, "Those in his village who are good like him and those who are bad dislike him." Lau (2002)

Daoists believe in a Natural Law where the world should be allowed to go on unobstructed. "Do not be disturbed; do not be frightened; all things will clarify themselves. Do not be upset; do not be startled; all things will order themselves." Cleary (2002) Rather than disturbing the balance of nature, or being themselves disturbed by things beyond their control, they allow nature to take on its own order and find peace in that setting.

When Confucius is questioned about the role of government, he first lists three things important to rule in society as being providing food, arms, and cultivating trust. When questioned on the relative importance, he first lists arms as the least important. But when further questioned, he spells out trust as being paramount among the three, "Give up food. Death has been with us since the beginning of time, but when there is no trust, the common people will have nothing to stand on." Lau (2002) This implies that it is more important for a ruling class to maintain control, and retain their status as a ruling class, than it is for the basic needs of the people governed to be provided for.

Daoism gives a very different view on how to govern, "The Sage's way of governing begins by emptying the heart of desires, filling the belly with food, weakening the ambitions, toughening the bones." Wu (1989) Rather than the Confucian priority of maintaining social structure, the Daoists would forgo the hierarchal structure altogether in favor of providing for the basic needs of the populace. Here is a sharp criticism of more discriminating and dogmatic philosophies that favor a ruling class, such as Confucianism and the more extreme Legalism. Where Confucianism seeks an absolute solution, Daoism purports the concept of wu-wei that is 'non purposeful action'. Kapaj (2005)

The ultimate difference between Confucianism and Daoism is their respective views on what is knowledge.

Confucius had no use for concerns outside ordering society. Upon spending a day in meditation, "I [Confucius] found that I gained nothing from it. It would have been better for me to have spent the time in learning" Lau (2002). Confucius also sees no point in spending time away from society, "One cannot associate with birds and beasts. Am I not a member of this human race?" Lau (2002) Rather, the Confucian scholar would spend a lifetime in learning to judge good from bad and how to promote his notion of virtue in society.

Daoism, on the other hand, seeks to appreciate that there is more to the world than can be readily studied. Human judgments and interpretations are inherently flawed by a lack of understanding the whole picture from its limited perspective and the limitations of language, the tool with which a person thinks. As expressed in the opening of the *Tao Teh Ching*, "Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao. Names can be named, but not the Eternal Name." The *Tao Teh Ching* directly comments on the common concept of knowledge, "To realize that our knowledge is ignorance, this is a noble insight. To regard our ignorance as knowledge, this is a mental sickness" Wu (1989). Here, if anywhere, is where Confucian ideals are directly refuted by Daoism. Daoism sees the most virtuous state of a person to be as a child with his mind unclouded by the very knowledge and judgments that Confucianism would regard as virtuous.

Confucius was concerned with matters of human relationships. His philosophy inspires scholars to take up civil service with the goal of building a society based upon their discernment of good and bad and to desire that which is judged to be good. Lao Tzu rejects such worldly concerns, limited knowledge and flawed judgments as creating an imbalance in the nature of things. The way of Confucius is to forge a moral society protected from the world, while the way of Lao Tzu is to allow man and nature to come into a harmonic coexistence.

References

- Cleary, Thomas Trans Wen-Tzu: Understanding the Mysteries. Shambala Publications, Inc.
Boston 1992
- Ch'ien, Tao. The Peach Blossom Spring James R. Hightower, Trans. The Norton Anthology of
World Literature Sarah Lawall, Ed., W.W Norton & Company, Inc. New York 2002
- Fu Tu. My Thatched Roof Is Ruined by the Autumn Wind. D.C Lau Trans, he Norton Anthology
of World Literature, Sarah Lawall, Ed. W.W Norton Company, Inc.: New York 2002
- Lau, D. C., Trans. "Analects". The Norton Anthology of World Literature Sarah Lawall, Ed. W.
W. Norton & Company, Inc.: New York. 2002
- Kapaj Luigi. <http://puppy.viahistoria.com> April 10, 2005
- Richard Wilhelm (trans.) (1985) LAO TZU | TAO TE CHING: The Book of Meaning and Life.
Trans. into English by H.G. Ostwald. Arkana.
- Roberts Moss, Dao De Jing: The Book of the Way. University of California Press, May 24, 2004
- Knight Sabina (2012): Chinese Literature: A Very Short Introduction Paperback
- Shen, Vincent. 2002. —Laozi (Lao Tzu). || In Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy: 紀伊國屋
書店, ed. Antonio S. Cua, 355–361. New York: Routledge
- Tzu, Lao. Tao The Ching (7). John C. H. Wu, Tranns. Shambala Publications, Inc: Boston 1989
- Tzu, Lao. Tao The Ching (3). John C. H. Wu, Tranns. Shambala Publications, Inc: Boston 1989
- Tzu, Lao. Tao The Ching (145). John C. H. Wu, Tranns. Shambala Publications, Inc: Boston

1989

Wen Haiming(2012) Chinese Philosophy, Chinese Political Philosophy; Metaphysics, Epistemology and Comparative Politics.