

Critical Thinking Questions For "Sacred Texts Unit"

Author: Lao Tzu

Title: Tao Te Ching

Name : Mickelly A.

1. What do you think the work's main argument, point, or conclusion might be?

The work is mainly a description of Taoism. It offers guidance and is considered a source of reflection in Chinese tradition. It covers large areas of philosophy from individual spirituality to other realms like interpersonal dynamics or political techniques. It highlights points involving Wisdom, Modesty, Yin and Yang, Identity, Leaders, War etc.. It is a reference for proper spiritual, moral or ethical behaviors.

2. Give three ways the text(s) address the natural world and/or man and woman's place in it:

- a. The text thoroughly addresses the aspect of identity. It discusses the outcome of loving the universe as ourself and our meshing with it "[But] When the universe becomes yourself, when you love the world as yourself, all reality becomes your haven, reinventing you as your own heaven. Only then, will you transcend tense to fully be here now. Only then, no harm will the universe profeer nor you to her, for you will be not you but she and both-The universal Integrity". We can clearly see how two seperate entities become one, which strongly reinforces our place and our constant interaction with nature, the universe.

- b. The text also illustrated the concept of the yin and the yang of Asian philosophy. Which is often used to describe how complementary opposite forces are interconnected and independent in the natural world. Based on the nature of our universe, everything involves both yin and yang characteristics, the passive and the active, day and night, energy and matter and so forth. According to Lao Tzu "Yin and yang aren't sentimental, they exist without moralizing. They act regardless of our wishes" just like gravity acts regardless of our wishes, they are vivid forces of nature and governed by physical and cosmic laws.

- c. Another reference by Lao Tzu is illustrated in "Life's Spirit" we can clearly notice an emphasis on the spirit of life and how it never dies. "It is the seed of yin, the spark of yang. Always elusive, endlessly available."

3. How might the historical period and location (i.e. context) have affected how the content of the text(s)?

Tao, meaning the 'Way' and 'Te', meaning virtue. Agreed by many, The Tao Te Ching, the Book on the Way and Virtue, has been a very difficult text to interpret. Although it is illustrated with simple directness, however it conveys ideas that are very elusive and that have been discussed for thousands of years and with no common agreement. It is written in an artistic fashion, in fact a poetic manner however the vague aspect of it leaves ambiguous conclusions in many interpretations or translations. It is considered to be a text that was designed as if it belonged to some futuristic era. Hence, it possibly carried the same confusion with it in the 6th century.

4. During the time period when the work was created: what social groups (for example: economic class; religious affiliation; political group; ethnic/linguistic group; gender) was being addressed? Why do you think so?

It was primarily centered for Chinese tradition.

5. What is the role of the human being in the text(s) in the world? In the cosmos and/or afterlife?

The primary responsibility of the human being is to be a modest, wise, loving and God fearing individual. The 'Tao Te Ching' could not have emphasized enough on modesty, wisdom and ultimately love. The idealistic way to treat our peers is pointed out in several instances, the importance of not giving way too quickly to judgmental thoughts or behaviors but instead to show signs of tolerance and to mostly be free of prejudism. It focuses on our utmost duty to love and care for our neighbors known or unknown, taking the needs of all people as if they were our own. It is really a utopic way of thinking, but don't those characteristics define a true and sincere heart? Those were the aspirations of Lao Tzu and how human beings ought to be.