

Legalism

Definition: The definition of Legalism is simply that the interest of the ruling class is much more important than the interest of the common people. Legalists strive for a strong, central government that holds absolute power and control over the people by the threat of extreme and harsh punishment. In history, many people have been labeled legalists.

First Emperor Qin was a legalist. In ancient China, Qin accomplished an amazing amount of change. He united China. He built the great wall. He organized a system of weights and measures. He established laws that were the same for all people. But, he did not accomplish things kindly. Much of his rule was cruel. It was illegal to whine about Qin's government. If you said that things could improve, you could be put to death. Emperor Qin was a legalist and ran his dynasty with absolute control and extreme and harsh punishment.

Justification: The justification of legalists is that legalists believe man will always look out for himself first, and thus, man is evil by nature. Legalists believe the only way to control an evil man is with the threat of violence and punishment.

To sum it up: Beliefs of Legalists

- Legalists believe in strict laws
- Legalists believe in harsh punishment
- Legalists believe in firm management
- Legalists believe these things are needed because people are naturally bad.

Converting Beliefs into Action: To convert legalistic beliefs into action might read something like this:

- You can obtain obedience by using government institutions to control.
- You can control people's actions with laws and harsh punishments.
- You can gain obedience to these laws by encouraging people to spy on each other, and to report any wrongdoing they see to someone in authority. That authority then is to reward the informer and to punish the wrongdoer severely.