

Philosophical Foundations of Confucianism in Contemporary China: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

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Abstract: Confucianism, one of the oldest and most influential philosophical systems in East Asia, has long been integral to the cultural, social, and political fabric of Chinese civilization. In contemporary China, marked by rapid economic growth, technological innovation, and a complex interaction with globalized values, Confucianism is experiencing a revival. This resurgence is not merely a nostalgic return to traditional values but represents a dynamic adaptation process to modern challenges. To explore the philosophical foundations of Confucianism and its evolving role in contemporary China, focusing on how traditional Confucian principles are being reinterpreted to bridge the gap between heritage and modernity. Examining a possible connection among Confucianism and the philosophical idea of a global society of shared future from the viewpoints of its historical origin, context, and content is the main goal of the research. The resurgence of Confucian thought in education, governance, and ethical discourse highlights its adaptability to current societal challenges, such as moral decline, environmental crises, and rapid technological advancements. By analyzing key Confucian tenets like *ren* (benevolence), *li* (ritual propriety), and *yi* (righteousness), this investigation examines their relevance in fostering social harmony, sustainable development, and ethical leadership in modern China. It also investigates how Confucianism aligns with global philosophical trends and dialogues while preserving its unique cultural identity. The findings underscore the potential of Confucianism as an intellectual framework to guide China's pursuit of modernization without severing its historical and cultural roots, offering a model for integrating tradition with progress in a globalized world. The research concludes by emphasizing the potential of Confucianism as a framework to guide China's modernization while preserving its ethical and cultural identity.

Keywords: Confucianism, Contemporary China, Tradition, Modernity, Philosophical Trends

1. INTRODUCTION

Confucianism, is one of the most influential philosophical traditions in China, has undergone significant transformation as it engages with the challenges of modernity. Emerging from the teachings of Confucius (Kong Fuzi) during the spring and autumn period (551-479 BCE), Confucianism emphasizes ethics, social harmony, and the cultivation of virtue, all of which continue to shape Chinese culture and society at present (Bresciani, 2023). Despite its historical roots, Confucianism remains deeply relevant in contemporary China, where its principles have been reinterpreted to address the complexities of modern life. This evolving relationship between Confucian thought and modern Chinese society, often described as the bridging of tradition and modernity, is the subject of ongoing philosophical, political, and social discourse. At the heart of Confucianism is the concept of *ren* (benevolence or humaneness), which underpins its moral framework and stresses the importance of individual responsibility toward family, community, and the state (Rošker, 2023). Central to Confucian ethics is the cultivation of virtues such as *li* (ritual propriety), *xiao* (filial piety), and *yi* (righteousness), which serve as guides for personal behaviour and social interaction. These values emphasize a hierarchical, yet harmonious, order within a society, with each expected to fulfil their roles by their place within the family, community, and broader social structures. Confucianism also promotes *junzi* (the noble person), a model of ethical and moral excellence, and advocates for the importance of education and self-cultivation in achieving moral perfection. In contemporary China, the role of Confucianism has shifted, influenced by rapid modernization, globalization, and the rise of socialist ideologies. The fall of the Qing Dynasty, the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) led to the suppression of Confucian ideas as a part of the broader ideological push to reform Chinese society and create a new socialist order (Schurmann, 2022). However, since the late 20th century, particularly with China's opening to the world and economic reform under Deng Xiaoping, Confucianism has experienced a revival, largely as a response to perceived social instability and the search for cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world (Hossain, 2024). This resurgence is especially prominent under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the 21st century, with Confucian values being

promoted as a means of fostering social harmony, national pride, and ethical governance (Wang, 2023). For instance, Confucianism has been incorporated into the official discourse on Chinese soft power, emphasizing its potential as a source of cultural diplomacy. At the same time, the Chinese government has utilized Confucian teachings to bolster state legitimacy, calling on traditional values to create a morally grounded society amidst the challenges posed by modern capitalism and consumerism. Moreover, the reinterpretation of Confucian thought has become a key feature of intellectual debates in contemporary China. Scholars debate whether Confucianism can coexist with or be adapted to modern concepts such as democracy, human rights, and individualism, which often conflict with its traditionally collectivist orientation. For instance, while Confucianism emphasizes respect for authority and the collective good, modern political and social movements in China demand more individual rights and freedoms. Thus, the question of how to reconcile Confucian ethics with the realities of a modern, dynamic society remains a central philosophical and political issue (Angle, 2021). The concept of *ren* has been revisited in modern times, and the philosophical implications of Confucianism in addressing global issues such as environmental ethics, economic inequality, and international relations are explored in contemporary scholarship (Chu, 2023). Some specialists argue that Confucianism's emphasis on balance, harmony, and moral governance offers valuable insights for resolving modern conflicts and promoting sustainable development.

In contrast, others view its principles as incompatible with the demands of global modernity (Wong & Wang, 2021). The philosophical foundations of Confucianism in contemporary China illustrate the complex relationship between tradition and modernity. While Confucian thought faces challenges in adapting to the contemporary world, it continues to influence Chinese society, shaping debates on ethics, politics, and social responsibility. The ongoing dialogue between Confucianism and modernity underscores its enduring relevance in the construction of China's national identity and its engagement with global philosophical traditions. As such, Confucianism remains a vital force in the intellectual landscape of contemporary China, offering both a foundation for understanding the past and a guide for navigating the future (Li et al., 2024). Figure 1 presents the symbol of Confucianism.



Figure 1: Symbol of Confucianism

<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/409827634820391981/>

2. THE TRADITIONAL LEGACY OF CONFUCIANISM IN CHINESE CIVILIZATION

Confucianism, a key component of Chinese civilization, has a significant influence on how the Chinese state is constituted. It might be incorrect to assume that Confucius was the founder of the Confucian tradition, as shown in Figure 2, by using the Western name "Confucianism". Even though he was a major contributor to the development of Confucianism, Confucius described himself as "a believer in and lover of ancient times, a transmitter and not an innovator" (Abbasi et al., 2023). The late Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BC) was when Confucius lived. The two previous dynasties served as the foundation for Zhou civilization. Zhou culture is just very rich! I am a Zhou follower. The Xia and Shang Dynasties, the two previous generations, began around 2070 BC. Consider it further: Chinese civilization existed long before the period of Confucius. It's interesting to consider that the Confucian tradition has included nostalgia in general for the past. The Confucian tradition's history and core are better reflected by the Chinese term for it, (ruxue), which translates to "intellectuals' teachings."



Figure 2: Confucius

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d5/Confucius%2C_fresco_from_a_Western_Han_tomb_of_Dongping_County%2C_Shandong_province%2C_China.jpg

2.1 The State of Religion

At least in pre-modern periods, every civilization is religious, with the odd exception of China. Confucianism, which dominated pre-modern China's social philosophy, is widely acknowledged as a humanist and rationalist intellectual tradition (Lodén, 2023). Pre-modern China, of course, was home to a wide variety of native and naturalized faiths. No religion has ever been designated as the state religion, regardless of the ruler's personal beliefs. As a result, individuals in China may choose to practice any religion or none at all, and several religions may coexist there as they do. Chinese civilization has been secular, and the Chinese state has been secular since ancient times; secularism is defined as the liberty of belief and unbelief and the division of religion and state. Since China does not have a state religion, a divine transcendent being cannot validate the state. Stated differently, in pre-modern China, the authority of the state had to be grounded in the human world, which included both the ruled and the ruler. Because what is transcendent in the Chinese context is immediate or essential to humanity, it should be stressed that the Chinese concept of Heaven is not precisely the Chinese equivalent of the Christian God (or any god). "Heaven" only makes meaning when it is united with mankind, which is accomplished in this world by human self-improvement and self-cultivation rather than in Heaven (Yao & Wang, 2024).

"If Confucianism were just one more set of teachings (yi men), just another ideology, it wouldn't be worth studying. It is not just for scholars, it is the path by which all of humanity can find refuge. There are no racial or religious borders: Confucianism can solve the problems of the entire world..."

2.2 Rule of Law vs. Rule of Virtue

A legal ruler in China should be a good person because, according to Confucius, a ruler should build their government on moral values. Although the rule of law is respected in Confucian society, the rule of virtue is favoured. The stories of two wise kings from early Chinese civilization, Yao and Shun, serve as examples of the ideal of moral leadership (Mahapatra & Grego, 2021). Both Yao and Shun were famous for their personal qualities and their use of shanrang, a system of succession and abdication in which the current king would voluntarily surrender the throne when the time came. Throughout Chinese history, the shanrang principle has been highlighted, and some kings have even engaged in shanrang throughout the throne inheritance system. During the Chinese dynasty cycle, a ruler's lack of morality was a major factor in their downfall.

Although there is disagreement on the veracity of these stories, the immortality of shanrang has been repeatedly extolled several times throughout Chinese history (Wang, 2021).

“If you govern the people with laws and regulate them with punishments, they will avoid punishment but have no sense of shame. If you govern them with virtue and regulate them with rites, they will have a sense of shame and moreover will correct themselves.”

2.3 Meritocracy and Intellectualism in China

Meritocracy is a defining feature of the bureaucratic Chinese state. Despite being declared extinct since the Xia dynasty, the shanrang system persisted in hiring government servants. Gradually, the idea of "selecting those of virtue and ability" took hold, and officials were mostly chosen from among those with reputable references and those who had received formal training. Except for the king, all officials have been guided by this idea since the Qin Dynasty (Yūjirō, 2020). The Sui Dynasty's civil service examination system, which required people to have a good education and pass a variety of tests, further standardized the procedure. The examination system worked to choose the best candidates to rule the state, and this tradition guaranteed educational equality, which in effect produced political equality. Chinese people have traditionally valued education, regardless of their family's background. A unique Chinese literati-official heritage was created by the civil service exam system, which combined the meritocratic concept with Confucian intellectualism. The examination system managed to choose the best candidates to rule the state, and this tradition guaranteed educational equality, which in effect caused political equality.

2.4 Self-government in Civil Society

Pre-modern China's state-society interaction was mostly self-governing because of Confucian morals, especially Confucian families. The family served as the model and center point of social connections in the Confucian worldview, and the rules and ideals that governed family ties were additionally applicable to other relationships in society (Chan et al., 2024). The spirit of Confucian families was represented in the state's laws, family, clan, and lineage regulations, as well as in local organizations and associations. These ideals and standards were established at many levels. Therefore, there was minimal need for official supervision in pre-modern China as civil society was able to manage itself. Pye states that Chinese society had strong self-regulation mechanisms built in and that government

involvement to uphold regular order was uncommon due to family, clan, and other associational traditions. According to the Chinese proverb, "The Heaven is high and the Emperor is far away," pre-modern China's civil society was self-governing.

2.5 A Universal Language and a Coherent Culture

The cohesion and survival of Chinese individuals and society as a country were greatly aided by the Chinese language and culture. Confucian educational equality made the Chinese language accessible to everyone by unifying it throughout the Qin Dynasty domain (He, 2021). Because of this, Chinese culture was successfully transmitted from intellectuals to the general public, resulting in the creation of an "imagined community." Chinese multiculturalism emerged from the open system of Confucian culture, which accepted cultural diversity and coexisted happily with Buddhism, Taoism, and other traditions. The Chinese tradition was a strong unifying force in preserving the Chinese people's collective identity, despite its openness. According to Jacques, imperial China began in 221 BC, when modern China first developed. China has been contemporary since ancient times; thus, it does not fit the Western duality of tradition and modernity. In contrast, the West brought forth diversity, open classification, independent civil society, rationalized bureaucracy, educational equality, a united language, and secularisation. Chinese culture was respected and praised by prominent Enlightenment intellectuals such as Matthew Tindal, Christian Wolff, Leibniz, Francois Quesnay, and Voltaire. Converging with Confucian tradition, Enlightenment Sinophilism waned as the West gained power through industrialized imperialism.

3. THE REVIVAL OF CONFUCIANISM IN MODERN CHINA

The Confucian withdrawal from East Asian political, economic, and social phases to the end of the 19th decade meant that the Confucian control was mostly partial to a narrow region. It appears to be viable only among those who share traditional beliefs and is only a topic of philosophical and religious (Gardiner & Engler, 2024). One of the first academics in the West to focus on the connection between Confucianism and modernity, "Confucianism" was the dominant "world religion" that was least conducive to capitalist economic growth. As East Asian nations expanded their interactions with the West from the latter part of the 1800s, they started to reject this long-standing custom. Embracing Confucianism

had become the definition of modernity for the great majority of East Asians. Of course, this is just one side of the issue. It is difficult to cut the umbilical cord that binds the Confucian legacy to contemporary East Asia and China (Bell & Pei, 2022). Confucian tradition has been passed down to the present in a variety of forms, either covertly under Communist or Nationalist ideologies or values or subtly beneath the entire framework of Chinese society. For example, Sun Yat-sen's three principles of the people (*sanmin zhuyi*) and the Confucian Grand Unity Society (*datong shehui*) are so closely related that it is difficult to argue that the former is not in some ways a continuation of the latter (O'Dwyer, 2024). Conversely, the communists were so greatly influenced by the Confucian ethical principles that, despite their differences in appearance, the Chinese communist principles and Confucianism are not all that different in practice. Therefore, even after many years of its tradition being disrupted, this invisible history has planted the seeds for Confucianism's resurgence. Figure 3 presents Confucianism in modern China.

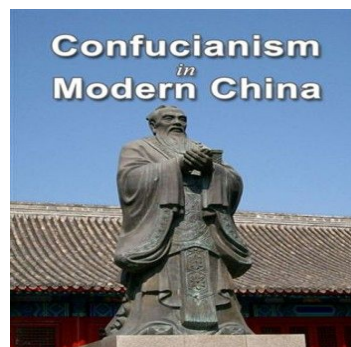


Figure 3: Confucianism in Modern China
<https://ru.pinterest.com/pin/129619295550559288/>

3.1 Confucianism and Modernization Dynamics

While the advanced industrialised nations became stuck in a vicious circle of stagnation and the Arabic states found it impossible to resist industrialisation and democratisation, East Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore continued to thrive during the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1980s, the resurgence of culture and the alteration of customs have also been linked to the recent awakening of Confucian consciousness; the two aspects that can be interpreted as "Confucianism as the source of ethical values" and "Confucianism as the structure of a society," or as "idealistic and cultural Confucianism" and "dynastic and social Confucianism," are prioritised types of Confucianism (Jing, 2024). Therefore, even though old Confucianism's social and political framework has long since been deconstructed, its idealistic principles and ideals remain

embedded in Chinese psychology and highlight the attitudes and actions of East Asians. Confucianism has been regaining popularity in several East Asian nations, but the causes and incentives for this trend vary greatly from one nation to the next. This naturally sparked a lot of debate over how Confucianism contributed to East Asia's modernization, especially in terms of politics and the economy.

3.2 Role in Modernization of East Asia: Ethical Values, Social Structure, Political Implication

Politicians were the first East Asians to publicly and fervently support the notion that Confucianism was the driving force behind economic growth. The statesman of Singapore has used Confucian principles under the pre-tense of "Asian values" to defend restrictions on the democratic processes (Zheng, 2022). In the same way, several authoritarian regimes in the area have invoked Confucian principles to emphasize how much better their political and economic structure was than the West. Despite the argument that it has nothing to do with modernisation, Confucianism is quickly regaining some of the mental space it formerly possessed. Confucian ideals are no longer reviled as they were a century ago, and some of them have even gained popularity. When contemporary characteristics were combined with Confucian principles, business executives in China are referred to be "Confucian entrepreneurs" (*rushang*) for exhibiting these principles, which include honesty, sincerity, and humanity. Combining the contemporary knowledge of the nature and goals of Confucianism with efforts to revitalise and rehabilitate Confucian organisations, demand in the Confucian educational structure is increasing. For instance, after almost a century, China has partially embraced the ancient civil service examination, which is heavily influenced by Confucian principles as a contemporary method of hiring public workers (Tao & Wen, 2023), as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Principles of Confucianism

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism#/media/File:LifeAndWorksOfConfucius1687.jpg>

4. CONFUCIANISM AND GLOBAL PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS: A SHARED FUTURE

The shared-future-community awareness and the Confucian philosophical emphasis on the predominance of public spirit and harmony without uniformity have further basic reciprocal, convergent connections, but these distinctions do not negate or contradict one another (Yu, 2023). Rather, their mutual ties much exceed their differences in many aspects. One may argue that Confucian ideas of harmony and public spirit without uniformity provide historical weight to the philosophical idea of a human community with a common future that has some Confucian roots. Furthermore, in the framework of modern international relations theory, the latter is an unexpected theoretical expansion of the previous Confucian ideas. "Force was used to establish almost every empire, but it may also continue one. For a universal norm to be effective, it must convert force into obligation". A state's political will could never surpass that of its equally powerful neighbours. Diplomacy was founded on the ideas of exclusive independence and nations' legal equality.

4.1 Confucianism's Vision of Global Harmony

Confucianism is unique in that it promotes "harmony without homogeneity" and stands for managing international relations between states in the spirit of "benevolence and harmony" (Ho & Barton, 2022). This is due to Confucianism's belief that differences may be settled by dialogue and mutual understanding, while war and violence can only result in permanent damage and a lose-lose situation. As a result of Confucianism's intellectual impact, the Chinese perspective on global order was very different from the Western Hemisphere's institutionalized system. The prevailing ideals of Chinese society, which spring from Confucius's teachings, differ from the Eurocentric moral principles of the various Western-Hemisphere systems. "Confucius, was more interested in fostering social peace than in the dynamics of power; the concepts of compassionate governance and the observance of proper ceremonies were central to Confucianism" (Yuan et al., 2023). The alternative response to the perplexity of the autumn and spring phases was Confucius's teaching that the "Way" of a peaceful and just society had already been realised. To put it another way, according to Confucianism, the primary spiritual mission of humanity was to restore this right order, which was already in danger of disappearing. In the meanwhile, it is used to create a new,

harmonic, and representational inter-civilization order or ritual.

4.2 Global Philosophy and Cultural Identification

"Cross-cultural identification" is the acknowledgment of cultural universality and human mankind that overcomes all cultural differences (Shiraev & Levy, 2020). One of the most important practical issues nowadays is the capacity to see beyond oneself and develop cross-cultural identity to have productive cross-cultural relationships. Their inclusiveness and capacity to let go of ethnocentrism and incorporate many cultural viewpoints are demonstrated by their cross-cultural identification. Chinese cross-cultural identity initiated by Confucianism and "international development strategy to adapt to the interrelation of human societies with a view of world peace and development" can be inferred from the idea of a community with a shared future as a sort of "global view" that transcends national boundaries and ideologies. Because of "facilitating exchanges and mutual learning among world civilizations, promoting common development of cultures of all," Through experimentation in society and performance, the community of shared goals for humanity encourages a cooperative approach to global leadership and calls on all significant, pertinent international members to strengthen economic, political, and ethnic mutual trust and dispel mistrust and communication barriers.

4.3 Shared Future of Confucianism

Additionally, the idea of a community of shared future for humanity raises new questions about how to better reinterpret some of Confucianism's most notable intellectual ideas, like public spirit and harmony without homogeneity in the modern era, transitioning from individualism to the state and then to a global system that transcends cultural boundaries (Shi, 2023). Instead of trying to create hostile intercultural and trans-civilization situations, the idea of a worldwide community of a common future similarly aims to integrate diverse, different civilization organizations in a global village of similar fundamental problems and global challenges. The concept of a worldwide community of shared futures is not intended for maintaining Han Chinese civilization's predominance or domination, which is based on Confucianism, over other distinct civilization entities. Rather, it predicts that no single humanity in the modern era will be entirely capable of handling incredibly complex and challenging issues on its own without some form of inter-civilization convergence. From the standpoint of international stability, the idea of a

community of shared futures for humanity and public spirit may, to a great extent, support and preserve the peace and security of both individual states and global society. "Complementary beliefs promote harmony and cooperation, while contradictory or irreconcilable differences in core beliefs about national, political, and social identity promote conflict" (Odak & Odak, 2021). The concept of a public energy of great course and harmony rather than uniformity, on the contrary, builds on the notion that states and international actors can maximise the likelihood of peaceful and harmonious interaction even in the face of significant variations in government, politics, and organisational institutions and mechanisms. This is accurate as long as the disparities can be effectively managed and subordinated. In the past, the Han Chinese civilization, which was based on Confucianism, was unable to conquer many of its neighbours. In an international-order setting, the idea of a global population of shared futures is strongly related to the Confucian principles of civilization non-interference, convergence, and acceptance. This order ought to go beyond the prevalent international relations language in the West. To improve inter-civilization, and worldwide involvement beyond traditional geopolitical mindset, a historical method of examining philosophical ideas with a Confucian theme is required.

5. KEY ASPECTS OF CONFUCIAN TENETS

A philosophical tradition developed by several schools of thought, traditional Confucian philosophy was inspired by Confucius, Mencius's and Xunzi. In the 14th to 15th centuries, Neo-Confucianism intellectuals revived it to produce a more logical and approachable secular version. Confucian ethics promotes virtues such as ren (benevolence), yi (righteousness), li (moral propriety), zhi (wisdom), xin (trustworthiness), Zhong (loyalty), xiao (filial piety), and jian (frugality) (Guo, 2024). These virtues, known as the "five constants," were shown in Figure 5. For more than two thousand years, they were having a profound impact on every facet of intricate innovations. The three out of the five constants, ren, li, and yi that are typically considered the most important components of Confucian and the concepts that are most widely discussed in studies on Confucian management were the subject of particular attention among those principles. Therefore, it is useful to avoid applying rigid Aristotelian categories to understand their significance. Their desired contextual flexibility is diminished when their meanings are unnecessarily restricted

and circumscribed by precise and accurate definitions. Importantly, no tenets can be comprehended in isolation from its dynamic relationships with the others. As a result, although exact definitions are difficult to come by, a deeper understanding may be gained by addressing ren, yi, and li indirectly rather than directly, as is usual in China. Thus, by consulting the old Confucian classics, it is feasible to investigate and expound upon what can be considered the proper meanings of these qualities.

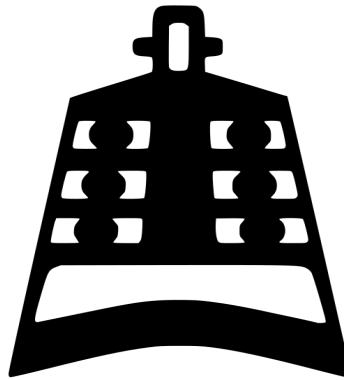


Figure 5: Five Constants Virtues

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Fundamental_Bonds_and_Five_Constant_Virtues

5.1 Ren (Benevolence)

The "humanness" of people is referred to as ren, a central idea in Confucian virtue ethics that is essential to human nature, interpersonal interactions, and government. Although Confucius does not provide a clear definition of ren, he does hold that being "human" is synonymous with being ren (Lee, 2022). Ren is defined as "to love others" and is exemplified by the five virtues of compassion, diligence, generosity, respect, and trustworthiness. These attributes are valued and well-known by others because they represent courage, knowledge, dependability, and unwavering commitment. Ren serves as a reference point for reflection and insight, unifying all virtues and serving as the spring from which other virtues emerge. The Chinese character ren is made up of the words "human" and "two," suggesting that being human means having an unbreakable bond with another. Confucian people are not atomistic beings; rather, they are inherently the result of social interactions. They must build connections and engage with others to live as singularities in and of themselves. Since ren is defined by Confucians as a component of the social totality, a person who possesses inner ren and is virtuous is unavoidably sociable. Ren, a word used to describe the act of caring for others, is a selfless compassion that conveys the beneficial aspects of human feelings. Its foundations are

found in the innate love and affection that people have for their parents and brothers, who are regarded as the most precious parts of ren. A person's primary relationship is kinship, and a clear division among family and strangers is not always required. Rather, ties radiate outward from the family center to less intimate connections with other people. Because one cannot love adversaries as much as one's friends or strangers as much as one's parents, Confucians have no faith in the equality of love. Ren offers an internal foundation for charity, even if it emphasizes filial affection and close relationships. The ethical foundation for loving society as a whole is family love, and one's love continually focuses on those closest to oneself. Ren starts with loving one's parents and then progressively spreads to other people in a circle that keeps getting bigger.

“[Confucius] interests are connected with how human beings could become better and more

humane human beings in human ways. He is concerned with establishing a good person, a

good society, a good human relationship, a good state, and a good world; and good means

benevolence, righteousness, decency and elegance, wisdom, and trustworthiness as connoted

by the concepts of virtues such as jen, yi, li, chin, and hsing.”

5.2 Yi (Righteousness)

The concept of yi, which translates to "righteousness or rightness," combines qualities and directs judgment. It evaluates a virtue's possible goodness to the larger whole as well as its applicability to a particular circumstance (Gong, 2021). Yi is the ethical responsibility and moral duty that results from integrating Confucian values; it is particularly pertinent in difficult circumstances. People must strike a balance between their immediate practical requirements and the inconspicuous benefits of leading a moral life. Living on the cheapest food, drinking cold water, and bending the individual arms for a cushion might bring them joy, according to Confucius. However, if the person doesn't yi, they become wealthy and powerful. Actions and results are only deemed acceptable by yi if they are deserving of acceptance, and qualities are deemed deserving of acceptance. In every situation, fundamental Confucian values such as ren, li, zhi, and xin must be explained within the bounds of yi. A good character might not be truly good without yi. Yi is the best course of action and the benchmark for assessment in any circumstance. It suggests judgement and decision-making skills, which enable Junzis to evaluate events thoroughly and

respond appropriately in certain circumstances.

5.3 Li (Ritual Propriety)

Li originally referred to regulations pertaining to religious rites or rituals. The diligent observance of proper ceremonial and procedural standards of behaviour, which include both procedural specifics and general moral precepts, is known as Confucian ritual propriety (Zhan, 2023). These laws, which encompass a variety of events including court ceremonies, and ancestor sacrificial and polite behaviour, are detailed and explicit. By implementing qualities like compassion and righteousness through a variety of ceremonial rites, li humanizes the dynamic interaction between individuals and shows them in operational and behavioural terms. Li, a kind of social structure founded on familial ties, is how the virtue of ren is realized. It establishes societal standards for civil behaviour and governs interactions between friends, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and rulers and subjects. The performance of a traditional courtier in many contexts, for instance, shows a dedication to ceremonial protocol and the principles of honesty, loyalty, humility, and respect. In the presence of the self-governing, the courtier's performance exhibits friendliness, directness, respect, and swift actions. The significance of loving and respecting others is reflected in this social hierarchy. Li is a socially integrated pattern of habits or behavioural inclination that gives engagement a patterned consistency and is a sign of human virtue (ren). Without the core virtue of ren, obedience to li is superficial and lacking in human decency, according to Confucius. Rituals and inherent virtue are inextricably linked; without the former, processes and rituals lose their meaning and become monotonous. By following such rituals, one might actively endeavour to live a moral life that is represented by continuous self-cultivation. Li is derived from the fundamental need for morality and is shown in moral conduct. It also has implicit governance requirements. According to Xunzi, li serves as the foundation for the hierarchical standards and laws that determine a person's social standing, control human nature, and dictate behaviour. It is the responsibility of a wise ruler or leader in a preferred position of authority to improve the populace by illustrating these ideals.

6. CORE CONFUCIAN VALUES AND THEIR REINTERPRETATION FOR THE MODERN ERA

Confucianism's impact has been limited to those who value

traditionalism, and it has mostly remained inside a narrow sphere of East Asian education since the late 20th century. It was no longer an orthodox philosophy but rather a "doctrinal furnishing" of feudalism and aristocracy in mainland China (Zhao, 2022). Radical liberals and reinterpretation seriously damaged Confucian principles and values. Confucianism was viewed as a relic of the past, a representation of a weak, primitive China. Consequently, social identity disappeared, Confucian institutions and organizations disappeared and the spiritual significance of rituals was reduced. Confucianism decreased to a theory or ideology that had no bearing on contemporary living and no real-world application. Modern China has a strong Confucian history, with aspects of it being transmitted down to the present through Communist and Nationalist ideologies, values, morals, public perceptions, and bureaucratic elite structures. The organization of Chinese populations, whether they are communist, socialist, capitalist, or nationalist, is subtly based on this tradition. The Confucian concept of the Grand Common Wealth Society and Sun Zhong Shan's three principles of the people are so closely related that few would contest the existence of a succession from the latter to the former. After years of delayed progress, Confucianism can resurface because of its buried legacy.

6.1 Revival and Reinterpretation of Confucianism

Confucianism has been gaining popularity in East Asia since the 1980s, with different reasons for its rise. The revival is not a return to tradition or a complete restoration of old practices and learnings. It is increasingly crucial to revive culture and alter traditions to reimagine cultural identity and guide political as well as economic development. Two sections comprise traditional Confucianism: "Confucianism as the source of moral values" and "Confucianism as the structure of a traditional society" (Billioud, 2021). This division aligns with Ninian Smart's distinction between "doctrinal Confucianism" and "religious Confucianism", or Modern New Confucians' division between "the Confucian tradition" and "Confucian China". The cultural and psychological significance of the Confucian claim (*jiazu zhuyi*) for East Asian civilizations is frequently cited as the reason for Confucianism's applicability to contemporary life. Confucianism is not the same as traditional clanism, despite the fact that family values are necessary for continuity and stability. Clanism cannot be the Confucian virtue in modern life for three reasons: Asia's quickly changing clan structure; traditional family relationships have not kept up with the demands of modern society in terms of equality, mobility,

flexibility, and democracy; and Confucianism and clanism together create a social fabric that prioritizes interpersonal relationships over public behaviour norms, which operates counter to the core ideas of modernity. Figure 6 shows the Religious Confucianism.

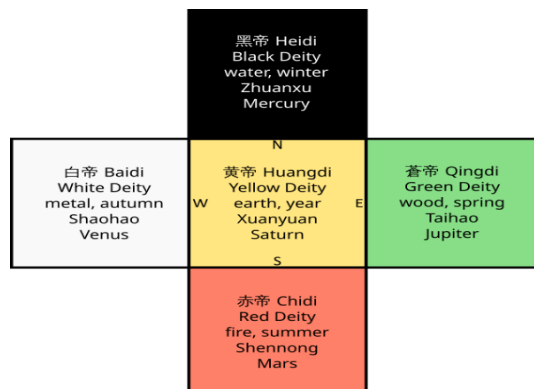


Figure 6: Religious Confucianism

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FReligious_Confucianism&psig=AOvVaw0PHnVNwRIzSnmMIF7xUqVZ&ust=1735300727895000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBQQjRxqFwoTCKiKgZGxxYoDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE

6.2 Economic Modern Era of Confucianism

In East Asia, traditional clanism has produced negative by-products including hierarchy, seniority, favouritism, patriarchal views, and moralism that prevent the adoption of market economies and economic change (Marshev, 2021). Emerging East Asian economies are being driven by family values, but competition and global market economies are posing problems for "clan businesses." According to recent data, East Asian nations are being forced to abandon their old clan-based economic pattern as traditional family businesses are turning into more of a challenge than a benefit. As a result, a more contemporary approach to economic reform and modernization is currently necessary. Three key values are moral responsibilities, the transmission of values, and a humanistic understanding of life. These principles support the development of a responsible morality and motivate the creation of an all-encompassing educational system. Confucianism can help people find the ultimate purpose of their fleeting existence.

7. CONFUCIANISM IN MODERN CHINESE SOCIETY: BRIDGING TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The modernisation procedure is based on the "general" conceptual premises of modernity while simultaneously relieving the key paradigms that

have significantly impacted philosophical discussion in Euro-American economical, social, and ontological discourses, those who are older must also be taken into consideration (Hartoonian, 2023). These discussions centered on the terminological significance of modernity rather than just explaining a particular social condition, which typically manifests as a critique of reason. The meanings of the "conscious discontinuity of the new from the old" or the "modern" from the "traditional" are also included. One of the most significant theoretical currents in modern Chinese philosophy is the revival of the Chinese tradition. Many academics view it as the Asian counterpart "protestant ethic" due to its harmonic compatibility with capitalism and potential for stabilizing societal function (Kadri, 2021).

7.1 Post-Confucian Hypothesis and Modern Capitalism

This perspective is referred to, in contemporary Sinology, as the "post-Confucian hypothesis," which holds that East Asian nations have benefited economically from Confucianism, but have also been able to develop a distinct form of capitalism and modernize differently than the West (Rošker, 2020). Supporters of contemporary Confucianism in the second generation were mostly convinced that a certain modernisation paradigm known as "Confucian capitalism" was largely responsible for the prosperous growth of contemporary East Asian civilizations. Strong governmental leadership, a well-established administrative framework, a social hierarchy, families, a robust web of social ties, and a strong focus on education are the key characteristics of this model. The modernization is not predicated on a critical assessment of Enlightenment ethics; he acknowledges that any ethics that seeks to construct something more than its potential for exploitation by authoritarian governments must accept Enlightenment norms. There is no chance of a "radically different ethics" in this situation. Instead, contemporary Confucian philosophers critique Western Enlightenment models for their overemphasis on instrumental rationality and individuality (Hsiao-yen, 2023).

7.2 Bridging Tradition and Modernity

Human alienation and a disconnection from nature are caused by modernism and tradition, the two foundations of modernization. It promotes "multiple modernity" and offers a fresh perspective on the contemporary era in Chinese traditions, particularly Confucian traditions. Since "modernity" and "tradition" are no longer mutually exclusive, he feels

that Chinese modernization should not be compared to Westernisation (Zheng, 2024). Since Confucianism is an atheistic ideology based on subjective morality, current Confucians believe that it may create a vision of modernity that eliminates the social separation and commitment that define Western ideals. The group's contributions to modernization theories were limited to abstract debates on societal transformation. No member proposed a critical social theory for modern Asian social systems. A post-New Confucianism (Hou xin ru jia) should focus on social issues and subjects as moral beings. The foundation of Confucian philosophical courses should be the actual experiences of people. Modern Confucians are criticized for exaggerating the intellectualization of Confucianism, which can hinder social and political praxis. In its "broad humanistic spirit," it highlights the potential for social stability, cultural identity, and economic growth that may coexist with the institutionalization of state-building. In addition to being disrespectful, Western culture's assumption that sees "its own" current as an opportunity for all other civilisations is totally out of context. They contend that just because Chinese tradition has failed to offer the necessary conditions for industrialisation and a modern economic structure, it is indeed possible for it to achieve so in an alternate historical setting. These assumptions are questionable, according to some Western academics. Since the concept of pure advantage or profit was seen negatively by early Confucianism, the fastest expansion of P.R. China is the most obvious illustration of the East Asian "economic miracle" that the majority of modern Confucians promote (li) (Zoppolato, 2023). However, it is impossible to deny that several factors contributed to China's quick ascent to prominence as a global superpower, including a brutal capitalism run by an autocratic government and economic policies that disregard morality and the law and have led to numerous environmental disasters.

8. CONCLUSION

The enduring relevance of Confucianism in contemporary China demonstrates its adaptability and potential to address modern challenges while preserving its ethical and cultural identity. The revival of Confucian thought in areas such as education, governance, and ethical discourse reflects its capacity to contribute to the development of social harmony, sustainable growth, and ethical leadership. By reinterpreting core Confucian principles like ren, li, and yi, the research shows how Confucianism can bridge the gap between tradition and modernity,

offering a philosophical framework for China's modernization that remains deeply rooted in its cultural heritage. Moreover, Confucianism's alignment with global philosophical trends underscores its relevance in the context of a shared global future, suggesting that it can play a significant role in fostering cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation. Ultimately, Confucianism presents a model for integrating tradition with progress, offering valuable insights for navigating the complexities of globalization and technological advancement without losing sight of core ethical values.

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