



Confucian Adaptation and Vitality in the Twenty First Century
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Self-cultivation, based on self-reflection of human limitations, involves transcendence and thus transforms society. This social construct is based on the idea of looking to the self to change society. Spirituality became linked to the self, society, and nature, rather than to a single or pantheon of salvationist gods as in other traditions, or to the ideal of leaving this world. In the case of Confucian self-cultivation, rationalism does not conflict or compromise spirituality, because spirituality and transcendence are linked to the relationship between the self and society, thus the model includes a concept of spirituality.

The findings in this literature suggest how the scholarly tradition (ruxue) is linked to social norms and social identity. These social thinkers remained effective in much the same way that modern social scientists and policy makers do, by adapting and expanding the critical literature and social dialogue to encompass the current issues of the time. These thinkers were primarily concerned with issues of the self in society and society as a system. Periods of war, social, political and economic collapse, moral impoverishment, and ideological intrusion raised the concerns of individuals who were initially professional ritualists and teachers. What is most striking is that these thinkers looked beyond the practice of rites and their own economic needs to redirect their attention to the chaotic social and political situation of the times. These seminal social thinkers established lines of thought that evolved into comprehensive intellectual debates. As these lines endured they became influential in how the Chinese see the world, such as in Weberian (Max Weber) and Marxist lines in the Western social theoretical literature.

Confucian Syncretic Conditioning

The term syncretism expresses the process of harmonizing ideas, principles or cultural aspects. In the context of the present model, it expresses the method by which Chinese intellectuals merged two or more ideas into a general impression within the Confucian core value system.⁸ Within Chinese literature, we can identify a pattern of ideological resilience in response to a succession of ideological and territorial intrusions that challenged Confucian assumptions and identity, and describes the nature of social transitions. Change in China is related to a process of absorption and synthesis. The model begins with the Zhou ideal and continues to the present intrusion of the Western Enlightenment and merchant-class mentality. Today the challenge of the syncretic process is in relation to the current social, political and economic reform in China, with particular focus on the resilience following the cultural revolution and resistance to so called "wholesale Westernization" and the Capitalist economy, thus at this juncture, another Confucian cycle of synthesis is being observed by the adaption of the free market and Scientism.⁹

The next step in supporting the argument that China's transition to modernity is being resolved in a Chinese fashion is to discuss this line of intellectual debate in the context of Western models of change and development. Here it is useful to analyze and critique Max Weber's analysis of development and social change in China in order to explain a unique Chinese i.e., Confucian model in relation to Post Modernism.

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