# Introduction

Confucianism is the Chinese intellectual and social tradition that has gathered around the teachings of Confucius (Kong Qiu) for more than 2,500 years. To understand it more fully, one may begin in its homeland, but it is necessary to follow its trek across East Asia, especially to Korea and Japan, and take note of its emerging place in centers of global conversation in the West and beyond in the contemporary era. Confucianism encompasses a broad array of moral, social, philosophical, and religious ideas, values, and practices. It is an ancient and immense tradition of great subtlety and complexity. Nonetheless, in the 20th century, it was reviled by Chinese intellectuals from the 1950s to the 1980s who spoke of it as "yellow silt clotting the arteries of China" or as "an effete, patriarchal ideology whose welcome demise is making long needed cultural transformation possible." However, at the turn of the 21st century, Confucianism experienced a revival both in China and worldwide. Even in Western universities and scholarly assemblies and conferences, Confucianism gradually came to be recognized as a tradition with much to contribute to both comparative and constructive philosophy and humanisms.

The name "Confucianism" suggests a unified tradition with a single founder, being Confucius (551–479 BCE), whose Chinese name was actually Kong Qiu, aka Kong Zhongni. He came to be better known as "Master Kong" (Kongfuzi), and that name was Romanized by 16th-century Jesuit missionaries as Confucius. Confucius stands within Chinese culture in the tradition of learned scholars known as Ru. These figures were experts in the practicalities of government conduct and the behaviors and customs of elite society, called the "rites" (*li* #). Actualizing these in one's life came to define what it was to be an exemplary person (*junzi*) as understood by the tradition. The Ru were ritual masters and teachers in the courts of the various rulers of the states functioning during the time Confucius lived in the Zhou dynasty. Confucius was one Ru teacher among many. In fact, 3rd-century BCE thinker Han Fei gave us an account of eight Ru traditions (*rujia bapai*).

In his own understanding of the place of humans in history and culture, Confucius looked to the customs and literature of the Zhou dynasty (1045–256 BCE), regarding it as the period that had preserved the best of the wisdom of the sages and kings of the distant and misty past of China's beginnings. He lived during troubled times, and his intention was to transmit the classical teachings about government and humaneness (*ren* #) to those of his own day. His disciples recorded that he self-identified as a transmitter, not an innovator (*Analects* 7.1).

In China, the term *jiao* is used for the "teachings" that have shaped the Chinese civilization and belief system. This term serves to identify Buddhism (*Fojiao*), Daoism (*Daojiao*), and Confucianism (*Rujiao*), and its use often implies to a Western readership that Confucianism is a religion. The Chinese phrase "Three Teachings" (*sanjiao*) is the common way of speaking about the traditions that have shaped the Chinese consciousness: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. The association of *jiao* with Daoism and Buddhism appeared to pull Confucianism into their orbit, at least as seen by the Western missionaries of the 16th century. So, they rendered *jiao* as "religion" and looked for parallels between Confucianism and the Abrahamic religions of the West.

However, the inaccuracies and difficulties of categorizing non-Abrahamic teachings as religions have been carefully explored by Tomoko Masuzawa in his *The Invention of World Religions, or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Additionally, Jonathan Silk wrote *The Victorian Creation of Buddhism*, David Lorenzen penned "Who Invented Hinduism?," and Norman Girardot authored *The Victorian Translation of China*. Each of these scholars makes the argument that the construction of philosophical traditions in East Asia as "isms" (e.g., Confucianism) is a convenience and, perhaps, even a colonial holdover of the West's interaction with Asia. The Chinese, and East Asians in general, would not say that they were "followers of Confucius" in the same sense in which one follows Jesus, Buddha, or Muhammad. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that if we ask of Chinese history to whom the people of the Middle Kingdom made sacrifice and whom they venerated, they would answer not only Confucius but also a host of other Confucian "worthies" through history, such as the Ten Savants.

Considering questions of whether Confucianism is a religion, Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) described it as a "religion of ethics" in which the central issue is not redemption from one's sins, as in Christianity, or extinguishing desires that cause suffering, as in Buddhism, but how to transform one's way of being into a new sort of person (i.e., becoming *nei sheng* or "a sage within"). Mou wrote,

> Being a sage or not being a sage depends upon self-consciously engaging in ethical practice, upon taking one's original heart–mind and human nature as the foundation for thoroughly clarifying one's life. This means that the full ethico-religious deep meaning is completely in this increasing, inexhaustible effort [of transformation], that the full morality of learning to be a sage within stems completely from this unceasing, untiring effort. (Mou 1999, 5–6)

"Becoming a sage within" is a quest for the transformation of one's personhood. It is an elevation or ratcheting up of one's being creatively from its present state to a new type of being. This goal may be expressed as increasing to a superlative level the degree to which one is human, exponentially increasing

in the very best senses what it means to be human. Such transformation is neither wholly an internal, nor an exclusively external behavioral accomplishment, but the creation of a balance or harmony between the inner and the outer. In its social expression, the Confucian Way (*Dao*) of transformation is the realizations of new permutations in the way one interacts with others, bringing out the best in them, benefiting them, learning from them, moving them along in the process of their own self-cultivation. In its individual, inner manifestation, it is wisdom, harmony, and peace. "Becoming a sage within" is, first and foremost, a result of the cultivation of one's knowledge. There can be no advance in behavior and relationships without the extension of knowledge. The classical text embraced by Confucians through history as the plan for such growth is known as *The Great Learning* (*Daxue*). It sets out eight steps of self-cultivation (*ba tiaomu*).

> The ancients who wished to display illustrious virtue (*de*) throughout the world, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their own states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their heart-minds (*xin*, #). Wishing to rectify their heart-minds, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. (Legge 1971, 357)

This project differs from the approach to human transformation and purpose undertaken by the monotheistic Abrahamic religions of the West and in its understanding of the human challenge; this distinguishes Confucianism from religion as defined in the West.

Of course, one may take another path and simply choose a different definition of religion and then proceed to demonstrate that Confucian writings either do or do not show the necessary characteristics of a religious tradition according to that definition. An example of this kind of approach is Rodney Taylor's collection of essays, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*. Taylor, using Frederick Streng's definition of religion, argues that Confucianism can usefully be analyzed as a "means of ultimate transformation," the goal of which is sagehood, defined with reference to a transcendent power known as Heaven. Using such an understanding, Taylor holds that Confucianism is a religion. But it is more defensible, looking at the long span of Confucian intellectual history, to speak of it as a spiritual humanism that does not require or expect the sort of collaboration or cooperation with a deity (i.e., a transcendent force named Heaven) that is exemplified in the Abrahamic religions of the West. To define Confucianism as a humanism is in no way to deny that its path instantiates a profound spirituality; one in which commitment to learning and self-cultivation represent the ways to achieve self-transformation and

self-transcendence. In fact, Confucianism is a relatively coherent set of beliefs and practices that provide answers to the most fundamental of human questions. And yet, in Confucianism, one is learning to enhance that which is human by powers attainable and realizable by humans.

In the history of Confucian writings, traditions, practices, and revered sages, one will find that the patterns of self-transcendence and self-cultivation vary and cannot be reduced to a single method. Confucian sage teachers through time do, however, embrace a recurring set of virtues (*de*), including appropriateness (*yi*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). Taken together, these virtues, and a number of others, create humaneness (*ren* #). The behaviors that both exhibit and constitute self-transcendence are codified over the long history of human invention and realization and grouped under the general concept of the rites of propriety (*li* #). The ultimate goal of the Confucian way of self-cultivation is embodied in the concept of the exemplary person (*junzi*).

Confucianism has been characterized as feudalistic, patriarchal, and sexist even within China and especially during the period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). However, with regard to gender, there is nothing in the central teachings of Confucianism that precludes any person from reaching the kind of self-transcendence central to its teachings. There are no texts that teach that becoming an exemplary person is limited to men alone. All fully functioning human persons have within them the potential to reach the Confucian ideal, each in his or her own way.

It is perhaps this universal message of the Confucian tradition that enabled it to become the philosophical currency not only for China but also for greater East Asia. Beginning from about 300 CE, Korea can be called “the second home for Confucianism,” and the dramatic influence of the tradition is still felt in Korea today. Sa-soon Yun says Confucianism provided the Korean people with a universal cultural consciousness, giving rise to a value system that has led to the prosperity and humanity of the Korean people (1996, 113). In Korea, Confucianism is known as *Yuhak*, which corresponds to the Chinese *rujiao*, or the teachings of the Ru. According to the Korean work *History of the Three Kingdoms* (*Samkuk Saki*), a National Academy was established for the sons of nobility in 372 with the Confucian classics as its principal curriculum. While the ultimate outcome of this education was the production of rulers for the state, the goal was self-cultivation and the realization of an exemplary person in order to create one fit to rule. Committing oneself to Confucian teachings meant to devote oneself to “sage learning” (*songhak*). In 648, Taejong Muyeol (born Gim Chun-chu, 602–661), who became the 29th monarch of the kingdom of Silla, went to Chang’an (Xi’an) in China to inspect the operations, impact, and curriculum of the Tang imperial university before returning to Korea with ideas for a curriculum for elite learners and future officials.

Rulers of the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) established the Korean civil service exam system in 788 modeled on the Chinese process. The use of the examination process eventually replaced the Korean "Bone-rank System," which determined rulership and political offices by heredity and caste. The use of the exams, with their heavy emphasis on Confucian classics, became the gateway into political office by 958. Emperor Munjong (born Wang Hwi, 1019–1083) fostered a system of private Confucian schools, the principal master of which was Choe Chung (984–1068), who became known as the Confucius of the East and the grandfather of the Korean educational system for having organized the country's model academies.

It was the defeat of Korea at the hands of the Mongols in 1267 that prompted another visit by the rulers to China and led to the introduction of Neo-Confucianism of the Cheng-Zhu School into the country. An Hyang (1243–1306) became the principal master of this new tradition and is often called, simply, the father of Korean Neo-Confucianism. Under his influence, Korean Confucian scholars focused especially on a set of key philosophical ideas associated with Neo-Confucianism, including the following: the study of human nature (*songnihak*), the learning of the way (*tohak*), and the knowledge of the way of principles (*daoli*). Because of their appropriation of the Chinese Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi's Four Books, Korean officials authorized their printing at the end of the 13th century. The Four Books that won a preeminent place in the stream of Korean intellectual and social life were *Great Learning* ( *Daxue* ##), *Analects* (*Lunyu* ##), *Zhongyong* ##, and *Mengzi* ##.

By the time of the founding of the Joseon dynasty, Korean Confucians were prepared to make substantial and serious criticisms of the culture's most influential ideology: Buddhism. Jeong Dojeon (1342–1398), who was a close advisor to Yi Songgye or Taejo (1335–1408), the founder of the dynasty, took a very critical stand against Buddhist doctrine. Jeong attacked Buddhism in a number of treatises, turning his criticisms toward its monks and abbots, who he accused of corruption and disregard for the people of Korea. The most famous of his works is known by the polite English title *Array of Critiques against Buddhism* or, more literally, *Buddhist Nonsense* (*Bulssi japbyeon*). The work is arranged in 19 sections, each one devoted to a Buddhist doctrine or practice. According to Confucians like Jeong, Buddhists had cut themselves off from both social and filial obligations and relationships, and thus they presented a threat to Korea's society.

Gradually, Confucianism transformed Korean society. The Koreans made deliberate and widespread use of Zhu Xi's work, *Family Rituals*. These practices structuring family relations flowed through the veins of Korean society and reached into even the smallest villages. The influence on patterns of Korean daily life was dramatic. At the same time, though, Korean Confucian intellectuals engaged in the exploration of deep-seated philosophical issues in Zhu Xi's understanding of self-cultivation and his

Confucian spirituality. The two most prominent and skilled Confucians of the Joseon dynasty were Yi Hwang (1501–1570, aka Toegye) and his younger contemporary Yi I (1536–1584, aka Yulgok). Instead of merely appropriating Zhu Xi's (Cheng-Zhu) thought, these scholars critically examined it. The principal question that occupied them was the determination of the relationship between the four sprouts of innate moral sensibility taught in the *Mengzi* (2A6) and the Seven Emotions (joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, and desire) that are stirred by our contact with the world according to the Confucian text, *Zhongyong*. The philosophical controversy that ensued over these issues became known as the Four-Seven Debate, and it extended in one form or another for more than 200 years in Korea. In brief, the main lines drawn in the beginning of the debate were as follows. Toegye held that the Heaven-given side of human nature manifests itself in the four inborn seeds of morality; humans are, thus, originally good by nature. However, the Earth gives humans the seven emotions through physical being; these emotions add an indeterminacy, meaning humans can be good or evil.

Yulgok took the position that the four seeds do not include any of the seven emotions, but that the emotions do include the seeds of morality. Proper expression of the emotions is the normative realization of the four seeds. Yulgok's view prevailed as Neo-Confucianism developed in Korea (Kalton 1994). Yulgok wrote a work titled *Manuals for School* (*Kakkyo Mobum*) in which he laid out a program for becoming a sage, including discipling one's self by appropriateness (*yi*), reading and reflecting on the Classics, and quiet sitting to purify one's heart-mind.

There were other significant debates within Korean Confucianism, the Horak controversy being arguably the most important. The Horak debate began in the early 18th century through the correspondence of Yi Gan (Oeam, 1677–1727) and Han Wonjin (Namdang, 1682–1751), and continued into the early 20th century. Although the debate touched on a number of different questions, it was centrally concerned with the question of human nature and tested the explanatory value of the Cheng-Zhu form of Neo-Confucianism. The debate addressed three questions: (1) What is the nature of the heart-mind before it becomes engaged with emotion and thought? (2) Do the sages and ordinary persons share the same heart-mind? (3) Are the natures of human beings and nonhuman animals identical? Yi and Han disagreed about how to apply Neo-Confucian philosophy to answer all three of these issues. Richard Kim (2017) has a summary and analysis of the debate in traditional Korean philosophy.

Perhaps as a result of the abstract debates of the Four-Seven controversy and the Horak debate, Korean Confucians moved toward a hyper-orthodoxy in the Cheng-Zhu tradition, and this became so removed from life that a corrective movement called Practical Learning (*Sirhak*) arose in the 17th and 18th centuries. The point of this movement was social action, and its students turned to reform and public welfare and beyond intellectual pursuits alone.

Before the Practical Learning movement could gain much traction, however, the focus of Korean Confucianism shifted dramatically to do battle with a foreign spirituality. Western influences began to stream into the culture, especially Christianity. The Jesuits brought Christianity to Korea in the 1590s, but it grew very slowly. The most important text from this period was Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi* or *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, in which Ricci argued in favor of the identity of the Lord of Heaven (*Tianzhu*) with the Christian God. Several Korean Neo-Confucians wrote against the position taken by Ricci, the best known of whom is Yi lk (1681–1763). Yi lk argued that the world was not created by a God and that no human was the incarnation of a God.

While having had contact with Yi lk and his views of Christianity, Yi Byeok (1754–1785) had a different response to the Christian texts and became a convert to the religion in 1784. He produced the first well-developed outline of Christian teaching for Korean Confucian intellectuals (*The Essence of the Divine Doctrine*, *Songgyo yoji*). But even within those in Yi Byeok's circle, such as Jeong Yakyong (1762–1836, aka Dasan), there was a strong resistance to Christian teachings, and a "return to Confucius" approach emerged, setting aside both Neo-Confucian metaphysical teachings and Christian religion. Gradually by the 19th century, Korean Confucians persecuted rivals so that, between 1866 and 1871, there is evidence of 8,000–10,000 Catholics—men, women, and children—being tortured and executed by Confucian authorities. Koreans were still being executed for the practice of Christianity as a foreign religion until the second half of the 1800s. Protestantism did not enter Korea until the 1880s.

The intellectual and spiritual resistance to Christianity was partially owing to the Confucian trend known as Eastern Learning (*Donghak*), developed in the early 1800s by Choe Je-u's (1824–1864) work *Comprehensive Book of Eastern Learning* (*Dongkyeong daejeon*). With the crumbling of the Joseon dynasty and the ensuing colonization by the Japanese empire, Confucianism came to be seen in a negative light and was roundly criticized as a significant factor in both events. Confucianism was attacked for enabling practices such as early marriages, restraint on women's lives, a hierarchical class system, and a perceived infatuation with China. Confucianism was villainized as a hindrance to modernization (Pettid 2023).

Nevertheless, as marks of the abiding influence of Confucianism even in contemporary Korea, the W1,000 and W5,000 banknotes feature Confucian scholars Yi Hwang (Toegye) and Yi I (Yulgok), respectively, and the back of the W1,000 note depicts the Confucian Academy in Andong. More recently, the W50,000 note featured Shinsaimdang, mother of Yi I and paragon of Confucian feminine virtues (Pettid and Cha 2021).

The historic Japanese consciousness has been shaped dramatically by two foreign philosophical systems: Buddhism and Confucianism. Confucianism principally made its way into Japan through

Korea. In Japanese, Confucianism is typically referred to as *Jugaku* or *Jukyo*, where *ju* is the Chinese *ru* as a reference to a scholar, erudite or literati. While the accuracy of the testimony is still a subject of dispute, early texts in *Records of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*, 712 CE) report that Confucian writings were first introduced into Japan in 285, when copies of the *Analects* and *The Thousand Character Classic* ( *Qianziwen* ###) arrived from Korea.

On more solid historical footing, one may note that the most direct evidence of Confucianism's first appearance in Japan is the influence its value system imprinted on the centralization of the Japanese state. Prince Shotoku's "Seventeen Article Constitution" (604), which is actually a set of maxims by which to structure the government, has several marks of Confucian influence. These include the call for the clans to put aside their grievances and join in harmony, the need for citizens to obey the commands of the emperor as the representative of Heaven, and the responsibility of rulers to take care of the people whom they were appointed to bless. In 702, the Taiho Code established a state structure modeled on that of the Tang dynasty, including the establishment of an Imperial Academy of Learning (*daigakuryo*) and a bureau of *yin* and *yang*. By the beginning of the 9th century, the *Classic of Changes* was in use, and the explanatory theory of the Five Phases (*wuxing*) guided all inquiry.

By the 13th century, Neo-Confucianism was introduced into Japan, including the thought of Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi. And yet, even though Neo-Confucianism was on the rise in China, it did not take a strong hold in Japan. Indeed, instead of in government or education, Neo-Confucianism actually found more of a home in the Zen monasteries that practiced quiet-sitting (*jingzuo*) as an exercise of *zazen* (sitting in meditation). The most noteworthy attempt to establish Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian learning during this period was the revival of the Ashikaga Academy probably sometime in the early 1400s.

Gradually, the interest in China waned in the Kamakura samurai rule period, but *bushido* precept codes for the warrior, such as Shiba Yoshimasa's *Chikubasho* (i.e., *Bamboo Stilt Anthology*, 1383), reflected Confucian ethical ideals. *Bushido for the Novice* (*Bushido shoshinshu*) written by Taira Shigesuke (ca. 1600) reads like a Confucian precept book, based as it is on the values of appropriateness (*yi*), humaneness (*ren*), truthfulness (*xin*), respectful action (*li*), and loyalty (*zhong*).

After Japan's invasion of Korea in the 1590s, a number of Neo-Confucian texts found their way into key Zen monasteries. Two prominent monks of this period, Fujiwara Seika (1561–1619) and his student Hayashi Razan (1583–1657) broke with the monasteries and gave priority to the study and teaching of Neo-Confucianism as a complete philosophy in itself. The traditions about the rise of Tokugawa Ieyasu as the first of Japan's Tokugawa shoguns report that he drew Hayashi Razan into his court. Neo-

Confucianism, first through Hayashi Razan, and later through his descendants, became a significant influence on government policy. Yamazaki Ansai (1619–1682) defended Neo-Confucian philosophy and ethics in the Kimon School, even trying to synthesize it with Shinto.

The Neo-Confucian philosophy of Wang Shouren (Wang Yangming) originating in China enjoyed a measure of popularity during the Tokugawa. Nakae Toju (1608–1648) and Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691) were early advocates of Wang's theory of the unity of knowing and acting (*zhixing heyi*). Toward the end of the 17th century, the *Kogaku* (Ancient Learning movement) private academy movement took hold and emphasized the need for a "return to the Classics" advocating that the learner approach these texts directly and arguing that this approach was preferable to a devotion to the commentaries, including those of Neo-Confucian writers and even Wang Shouren himself.

This new freedom of interpretation led to the creation of works such as those by Yamaga Soko (1622–1685), which turned away from Neo-Confucian writings and made distinctive Japanese appropriations of Confucianism such as his view that *bushido* martial code was a modern expression of virtues and practices traceable back to the Zhou dynasty. Both the notable thinkers Ito Jinsai (1627–1705) and Ogyu Sorai (1666–1728) continued to develop the *Kogaku* style of learning.

In the 18th century, Confucianism had a difficult time competing against the National Learning ( *kokugaku*) movement and the Western Learning (*rangaku*) movement. Still, Confucianism's emphasis on the obedience owed to rulers was a prominent force in the Meiji Restoration (1868). Motoda Nagazane (1818–1891) was even the Confucian tutor to the Meiji emperor.

Inoue Tetsujiro (1856–1944) argued that Japan should use Confucianism to replace the role played by Christian morality in European societies and as the content for a national value system. He created a new place for Confucianism in the official ideology and discourse of the state by means of his role in the creation and official interpretation of the *Imperial Rescript on Education*. In 1900, Inoue began to publish works employing Western categories to analyze Edo Confucian thought. Three works came out in this series. In 1900, he published *The Philosophy of the Japanese Wangming School* (*Nihon yomeigaku-ha no tetsugaku*). In 1902, *The Philosophy of the Japanese Ancient Learning School* (*Nihon kogaku-ha no tetsugaku*) appeared. In 1905, he also wrote *The Philosophy of the Japanese Zhu Xi-Learning School* (*Nihon shushigaku-ha no tetsugaku*). He collected a massive 10-volume set of primary texts on Edo Confucianism titled *A Classified Compilation of Japanese Ethical Thought* (*Nihon rinri ihen* ).

Confucianism was folded into Inoue's ideology in such a way that allowed Japanese militarists to claim that a war against China should be undertaken to enact a renaissance of Oriental culture and avoid subjugation of the Orient to Western civilization. With Japan's surrender in 1945, Confucian notions

were regarded negatively because of the way Inoue's writings were used to support a militant nationalism.

Returning now to some concluding remarks about Confucianism on its home soil in China in the contemporary period, we may observe that the revival and popularization of Confucius and Confucianism in contemporary China has too many sources for us to trace them all. Beginning in 2004, the Office of Chinese Language Council International (*Guojia hanban*) established hundreds of Confucius institutes and Confucius classrooms in more than 100 countries and regions. The goal of this project was to spread Confucius's teachings, knowledge of Chinese culture, and practice of the Chinese language. In addition, public schools in China started to develop a new syllabus that included Confucian texts such as the *Analects*. Although the Confucius Institute program has become controversial in some countries such as the United States, it does continue under new nomenclature and structures globally. Since 2020, the new structure of activity is now under the title Center for Language Education and Cooperation.

There are several thinkers who are seeking to bring Confucianism into modern China and the world. In 2006, Yu Dan (1965– ), who is a professor at China's Beijing Normal University, gave a series of lectures titled "Yu Dan's Insights into the Analects," which was broadcast for seven days on China Central Television (CCTV) as part of its Lecture Room (*baijia zhangtan*) program. Her messages were overwhelmingly popular, and the transcripts of the talks were published as *Yu Dan's Notes on the* Analects and in the West as *Confucius from the Heart: Ancient Wisdom for Today's World*. Called the hottest book in China of 2007, the volume sold 10,000 copies on its first day of release and more than 1.5 million in the first 40 days. By September 2007, the book sold 4.2 million legal copies and an estimated 6 million pirated ones. Yu became a household name in China because of her popularization of Confucius's teachings.

Chinese Central Television contributed further to the awareness of Confucianism, by covering the government's official sponsorship of the veneration of Confucius on his birthday, by broadcasting the events celebrating it nationwide in 2007. Daniel Bell argues that the government of China is using Confucianism to fill in the "ideology vacuum" of the country since Marxism has radically diminished in significance and religious sects and extreme nationalism are too radical for the Beijing government. Promoting Confucianism is being seen as a way to protect "social stability" and create "a harmonious society" (Bell 2006, 2015).

Kang Xiaoguang (1963– ), a professor at the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and at the School of Public Administration of Qinghua University, focuses generally on the area of the relationship between state politics and popular society and, specifically, on the transformation of social

structure and Confucianism's contribution to such change in the future. In his 2006 essay titled "Confucianization: A Future in the Tradition," Kang explains why he believes China should be Confucianized rather than Westernized. He argues that China's current governmental and social environment cannot continue for long because it is characterized by too much corruption and that the second option of liberal democracy with its further Westernization is also undesirable. This is why he turns to Confucianism as the most viable third option (Kang 2006, 7). The details of Kang's plan for training a new generation of Confucian statespersons in China and for redirecting the culture at large toward Confucian values are most clearly set forward in his 2005 work, *Benevolent Government (Ren Zheng ##): The Third Path of China's Political Development*.

Along with these expressions of Confucianism in the contemporary period, there is also the movement known simply as New Confucianism (*xin rujia*). The term New Confucianism refers to a 20th-century movement of scholars who set Confucianism in dialogue with Western philosophical traditions. The movement arose after the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in China and the period in which Confucianism and Confucius experienced an onslaught of criticism and even efforts to extinguish its ideas and cultural remnants. John Makeham (2003a) identifies three generations of New Confucians. Included in the movement of New Confucians are Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai ###, 1886–1969), Tang Junyi ### (1909–1978), Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), and Xu Fuguan ### (1904–1982). Tu Weiming (1940– ) is arguably the living leader of the movement.

New Confucian thinkers and activists have proven themselves to be a major movement having great influence, not just in contemporary China but also in East Asia and in the United States more generally. One thinker contributing to the New Confucianism is Tu Weiming. In his *Reinventing Confucianism: The New Confucian Movement*, Umberto Bresciani names Tu as the leader of the "third generation" of New Confucians (2001, 29). In his Reischauer Lectures, Tu says politics is the rectification of social order undertaken to make possible the self-cultivation of the citizens. In taking this position, Tu is pulling braids from Confucius and stressing that it is the responsibility of politics to be constantly adjusting to the needs and contexts of its citizenry.

Among scholars committed to Confucianism as a viable philosophy for the contemporary age but discontent with New Confucian approaches, we should include Fan Ruiping, author of *Reconstructionist Confucianism: Rethinking Morality after the West* (2010), which offers Confucianism as a third alternative to both communism and liberal democracy. Also to be included is Jiang Qing (1953– ) whose views are discussed in depth in *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China's Ancient Past Can Shape Its Political Future* (Bell and Fan 2013). Jiang's constitutional Confucianism is structured so as to provide a revision of China's current government in favor of a trilateral parliamentary system. The inner

workings of this system are quite different than those in place within Western-style participatory liberal democracies, but they also do not parallel those of the current central government structure of the People's Republic of China.

One major attempt at understanding Confucianism's place in the contemporary period is the work of Canadian thinker Daniel Bell, who is dean of the School of Political Science and Public Administration at Shandong University in Qingdao and Distinguished Chair Professor at Fudan University in Shanghai. His *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy and Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* is an effort to explain and interpret the Confucian tradition of political meritocracy to both a Chinese and global conversation about the ongoing relevance of this resilient tradition.