

# **The Development and Inheritance of Confucianism**

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# **1. The development of Confucianism at different times**

## **1.1 The Spring and Autumn Period**

In the late Spring and Autumn period, Confucius created Confucianism. The core of Confucius' thought was "benevolence". He advocated that people should love and care for each other and get along well with each other. He stressed that rulers should rule the people with virtue and opposed tyranny and arbitrary punishment. He wanted to restore the ritual and music system of the Western Zhou Dynasty and make everyone's behavior meet the requirements of rites.

## **1.2 The Warring States period**

During the Warring States period, Confucianism was further developed by Mencius and Xunzi. Mencius advocated "benevolent government" and further put forward the people-oriented idea that "the people are the most important thing, the community is second to the ruler, and the ruler is the least important thing". In his ethical view, he advocated that "nature is good" and that benevolent governance should be implemented to restore and expand the goodness of human beings. Xunzi proposed that "nature is inherently evil" and emphasized the use of rituals and music to regulate human behaviour and make people turn towards goodness. After the transformation and development of Mencius and Xunzi, the Confucian system became more complete and Confucianism was better adapted to the needs of society.

## **1.3 The Western Han period**

During the Western Han period, Dong Zhongshu incorporated some of the ideas of the Taoists, the Legalists and the Five Elements of Yin and Yang from the Hundred Schools of Thought into Confucianism and transformed them to form a new system of Confucianism. In response to Emperor Wu's need to strengthen centralised power, Dong Zhongshu put forward the idea of "dismissing the hundred schools and revering only Confucianism", which Emperor Wu accepted and put into practice. From then on, Confucianism became the orthodox ideology revered by rulers of all generations.

## **1.4 The Sui and Tang dynasties**

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, Confucianists proposed the "unification of the three religions", which advocated that Confucianism should be the main idea and

the theories of Buddhism and Taoism should be reconciled and absorbed. This led to a new development of Confucianism, incorporating the spirit of Buddhism and Taoism.

## **1.5 The Song and Ming periods**

Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi in the Northern Song Dynasty and Zhu Xi in the Southern Song Dynasty developed Confucianism into "Neo Confucianism", believing that the heavenly principle is the origin of all things in the universe. In contrast, Lu Jiuyuan of the Southern Song Dynasty and Wang Yangming of the Ming Dynasty developed Confucianism into "theology of the heart", which held that everything in heaven and earth was in the heart. These ideas had a profound impact on Chinese society and politics, culture and education, as well as on ethics and morality.

## **1.6 The Qing Dynasty**

During the Qing dynasty, Huang Zongxi's attack on the monarchy, Gu Yanwu's advocacy of the application of the world to the world, and Wang Fuzhi's materialistic thinking were all critical inheritances of traditional Confucianism, which led to the revitalisation of traditional Chinese culture and had a great impact on future generations.

## **2. Confucianism in modern society**

### **2.1 Confucianism in modern society**

Although we do not study Confucianism in a targeted way today, it has long been deeply integrated into our daily lives. For example, the Chinese people are very concerned with repaying kindness, as the proverb says, "The grace of dripping water should be reciprocated by a gushing spring", which comes from Confucianism. For another example, the Chinese people have a broad mind, just like the Confucian culture, they can tolerate and absorb other cultures.

### **2.2 The inheritance and spread of Confucian culture in modern society**

In order to inherit Confucianism, we must first understand it. As contemporary university students, we can make full use of the resources of the library and read more Confucian classics to gain a comprehensive and correct understanding of Confucianism. On the basis of this understanding, we need to pick out the parts of

Confucianism that are applicable to our time and actively practise them, starting with small things, so that we can better pass them on.

On the basis of inheritance, we also need to spread the Confucian culture. The most direct way is to choose to be a teacher and spread Confucian culture in the classroom. In addition, we can also integrate the Confucian culture into the video games and spread it through the Internet in combination with the hot spots of the current era. Last but not least, we can go abroad and volunteer in Confucius Institutes abroad to spread Confucian culture to all over the world.

I firmly believe that Confucianism will unleash new life and vitality in this new era.

## **References**

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