

The origin of the confucianism

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An interesting concept I've always wanted to learn about was Confucianism and how it came about in different ways. Xinzhong Yao talked about the concept and explained everything in his book called, "An Introduction to Confucianism". He is a very talented professor of religion/ethics at the school of Humanities stating in his book, "he taught at the University of Wales for many years. His publications include Confucianism and Christianity (1996), Encyclopedia of Confucianism (2003), Wisdom in Early Confucian and Israelite Traditions (2006), Religious Experience in Contemporary China (2007). He is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society" (Yao 61). Confucianism started by Confucius around 479 BC and was a religious tradition early on. Aside from what we've all heard the practices also include many other aspects which include adaptations to new ways of thinking. They started a trend and becoming one of the first to start thinking freely in modern times. In this paper I'll discuss the Confucian paradox along with a few concepts Yao mentions in his book.

First, the Confucian paradox was a retrospective system which made innovation practical. In his book Yao states, "It pays attention to Confucianism in both the West and the East, focusing not only on the tradition's doctrines, schools, rituals, sacred places, and terminology, but also stressing the adaptations, transformations and new thinking taking place in modern times. While previous introductions have offered a linear account of Confucian intellectual history, Xinzhong Yao presents Confucianism as a tradition with many dimensions and as an ancient tradition with contemporary appeal. This gives the reader a richer and clearer view of how Confucianism functioned in the past and of what it

means in the present” (54). All this represents how important the adaptations and new ways of thinking are, especially in modern times.

Another aspect from the book states, “ In the light of this expansion of the understanding of religion, more and more western scholars tend to think of Confucianism in terms of a religion. In Mainland China, where the Confucian tradition is in general defined as a feudal ethical system, the perception of Confucianism has also started to change, as indicated by a group of recently published articles in which a number of prominent intellectuals confirm the close link between Confucianism and religion in one way or another

It is agreed that the difficulty in defining Confucianism as a religion does not lie much in its practices, and the practices Confucianism cherishes such as ancestral worship, patronage of Confucian sages and sacrifices offered to Heaven do not differ greatly from the religious practices of many other traditions in the world.” (Yao 1054). This shows how Confucianism is more similar to other cultures we have in society, but we still view it as being completely different. Lately these views have started to change for the better as people are much more appreciative and understanding to the meaning behind the practices. It isn't being viewed as something that requires much more thinking or is way beyond what they can imagine. More people are starting to recognize the meaning and concepts behind it which we'll look at throughout this paper.

A concept Yao mentioned in his book includes the classical form of Confucianism and the how it started taking form in the Spring/Autumn time which was around 770-476 BCE. The people that followed his practice started making new changes to his philosophy basing it off his previous ways. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-origin-of-the-confucianism/>

main concepts that weren't going to change and stayed the same throughout included peace/harmony. In the book Yao states. " Much modification of, elaboration and clarification on classical Confucianism were added by brilliant scholars in the Warring States period (475-221 BCE), among whom Mengzi and Xunzi became preeminent in the later Confucian tradition, and due to their efforts Confucianism became one of the major schools with many different presentations... process of adaptation, classical Confucianism was transformed, elaborated and extended. A theological and metaphysical doctrine of interaction between Heaven and humans was established and consequently became the cornerstone of the revived Confucianism. There were two prominent schools of the time: the New Text and the Old Text Schools. Debates between them resulted in new interpretations of Confucius and the Confucian classics. This led to what is known as ' Classical Learning', or more accurately, ' scholastic studies of the classics' (jing xue). Attention focused on close interpretation of words and sentences in the classics" (375). These new ways cultured a different understanding and started building off the previous ways. This led to followers having much more believe while also incorporating their own believes or ways which got passed on.

Another concept mentioned in the book mentioned was the mutual responsiveness between the heavens and people on earth. This all began when the emperor Wu was trying to fix the ills of his nation. Yao states in his book, " He recommended the establishment of a Grand Academy (taixue) to train scholars for official administrative positions and he urged that these officials be selected on the basis of their talents and virtues. Dong

encouraged the Emperor himself to practise the ideas contained in the Confucian classics as he claimed that the classics demonstrated the constant principles of Heaven and Earth, and manifested the guidelines both for the ancient times and for the present (Hanshu, 1997: 2523). These recommendations deeply impressed the young Emperor and proved instrumental in the establishment of Confucianism as the state orthodoxy” (1843). This was huge in the development of Confucianism and the people that ended up preaching the message were at the top. They were put into place by Emperor Wu and this spread through to their population with different messages. Some of the messages spread were those of the hierarchy ruling them and it was mixed into Confucianism.

Yao also stated in his book, “ In accordance with the principles of Confucius, Dong offered his advice to the ruler on how to reform the old mechanism of government and how to restore the ways of the ancient kings who sincerely practised the five virtues of humaneness, righteousness, ritual/propriety, wisdom and faithfulness. However, his advice constitutes not only moral admonitions, for it contains theological understanding, educational strategy and legal policies. Dong says that a good ruler must first carry out the will of Heaven and follow Heaven’s decree, which includes issuing a new calendar and changing the colour of clothes and banners in accordance with the order of the Five Elements” (1879). This was a way they could revert to the old ways that ended up working so well while also incorporating understanding of the five virtues which are crucial. This was one of the most important phases to take place as they started incorporating these ancient practices much more since their leader was doing it as well.

These are the different concepts that are included in Confucianism and they all have a true meaning behind everything. I've learned so much about the beliefs and general history that have been examined throughout time. Along with this I've become much more appreciative and want to see what else I can learn from this amazing practice while also incorporating other ideas that may seem fit. The word "harmony" has been used a lot with this practice and ends up showing how peacefulness incorporated. Yao states in his book, "These scholars have striven to establish a strong link between the past and the present, a healthy interaction between the Chinese tradition and other great traditions in the world" (292). This represents how modern society will always have an influence in their tradition which creates a sense of present day understanding. This is beneficial because those that practice it will know they can relate with the messages being sent to them rather than believing they're practicing what the ancient people practiced. It is always changing, and they adapted while incorporating personal values that seem fit. I believe that in the future this practice will continue to become more prominent/popular if it already hasn't done so because more people will start to appreciate the true understanding behind the messages.