



中国传媒大学
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Institute for a Community
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Concept of Humanism in China



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Introduction to Chinese Humanism

Chinese Humanism, also known as "Ruxue" or "Confucian Humanism," is a rich philosophical and ethical system. It centers on the teachings of Confucius (551-479 BCE) and his followers, who aimed to build a harmonious society.

This was achieved by cultivating virtues like ren (benevolence), yi (righteousness), and li (etiquette).

At its heart, Chinese Humanism values



each individual's inherent worth and dignity. It also emphasizes moral responsibility, encouraging people to act for the greater good. Self-cultivation is another key aspect, recognizing that personal growth is vital for creating a harmonious society. Chinese Humanism highlights the importance of social relationships, such as family and community, in shaping individual and collective well-being.

This philosophical tradition takes a holistic approach, acknowledging the interconnectedness of individuals, society, and nature. It's also contextual, considering human behavior within specific social and cultural contexts. Ultimately, Chinese Humanism is a practical philosophy, focusing on real-world applications and solutions.

Key Principles of Chinese Humanism

1. Ren (Benevolence)

Ren refers to kindness, empathy, and compassion towards others.

Ren is considered the foundation of Chinese Humanism, emphasizing the importance of treating others with kindness and respect.



2. **Yi (Righteousness)**

Yi refers to moral righteousness, justice, and ethics.

Yi essential for maintaining social order and promoting moral behavior.

3. **Li (Etiquette)**

Li refers to social norms, rituals, and propriety.

Li helps maintain social harmony by establishing standards for behavior and interaction.

These three principles are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, providing a framework for individuals to cultivate virtues and achieve a harmonious society.

Confucianism and Chinese Humanist Thought: Influence of Confucianism on Chinese Humanism

Confucianism has profoundly shaped Chinese humanism, imparting its core values and principles. Confucianism's emphasis on human nature's inherent goodness, moral values, and self-cultivation has resonated deeply with Chinese humanism. This convergence is evident in Chinese humanism's focus on interpersonal relationships, morality, and personal growth.

The teachings of Confucius, as recorded in texts like the Analects, Mencius, and Xunzi, have been instrumental in molding Chinese humanism. These texts explore fundamental questions about humanity, morality, and governance, offering insights that continue to inspire Chinese humanism.

As a result, Confucianism's legacy endures in Chinese humanism, influencing its values and principles. Chinese humanism has evolved, adapting Confucianism's teachings to address contemporary challenges. This blending of traditions has facilitated cross-cultural exchange, highlighting the significance of Confucianism in Chinese humanism.

Confucianism's influence on Chinese humanism is also reflected in its emphasis on respect for tradition and authority, the importance of education and self-improvement, and the value of hard work and perseverance. Confucianism stresses the importance of social harmony and cooperation, as well as personal and social responsibility. Overall, Confucianism's impact on Chinese humanism has been profound and lasting, shaping the values and principles that underlie this rich and complex philosophical tradition.

Chinese Humanist Thinkers

Chinese Humanist Thinkers have played a significant role in shaping the country's rich philosophical heritage. **Confucius** (551-479 BCE) was a philosopher, politician, and educator who founded Confucianism. His teachings emphasized moral values, personal and governmental ethics, and correctness of social relationships. Confucius believed in the importance of education, self-cultivation, and personal responsibility.



Mencius (372-289 BCE) was a student of Confucius' grandson and further developed Confucianism. He emphasized the importance of human nature, morality, and the role of education in shaping individuals. Mencius believed that humans are born with a natural inclination towards goodness. **Xunzi** (313-238 BCE) was another influential Confucian thinker who focused on the importance of social norms, morality, and self-cultivation.

Xunzi believed that human nature is inherently flawed but can be improved through education and self-effort. His teachings emphasized the need for individuals to cultivate virtues and adhere to social norms. Other notable Chinese Humanist Thinkers include Laozi, founder of Daoism, who emphasized living in harmony with nature and the importance of non-action. Zhu Xi, a Confucian scholar, synthesized Confucian teachings and developed a comprehensive philosophical system.

Wang Yangming, a Confucian thinker, emphasized the importance of intuition and individual moral judgment. These thinkers have contributed significantly to Chinese humanism, shaping its values, principles, and practices. Their ideas continue to influence East Asian thought and culture, offering valuable insights into the human condition and the importance of moral values.

Modern Interpretations of Chinese Humanism

Modern Chinese humanism is a dynamic and evolving field that seeks to reinterpret traditional values in the context of contemporary society. New Confucianism, a key movement within this field, emphasizes the importance of human dignity, moral values, and social responsibility.



As the world grapples with pressing issues such as sustainability, social justice, and human rights, Chinese humanism is being recognized as a valuable resource for addressing these



challenges. Chinese humanist thinkers are engaging in cross-cultural dialogue, exploring how traditional values can be applied to promote a more harmonious and sustainable world. In recent years, scholars have been re-examining Chinese humanist values in light of contemporary issues such as economic development, environmental degradation, and social inequality. Notable thinkers such as Tu Weiming and Liu Xiaofeng have made significant contributions to this field, exploring the intersection of Chinese humanism and Western philosophy.

Modern Chinese humanism offers a fresh perspective on the relevance of traditional values in the contemporary world. By engaging with global issues and challenges, Chinese humanist thinkers are helping to promote a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

Conclusion

Chinese humanism is a profound and enduring philosophical tradition that has shaped the country's thought and culture for centuries. From ancient thinkers like Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi to modern scholars, Chinese humanism has evolved, adapting to the changing needs of society. Its core values of morality, self-cultivation, and social responsibility offer timeless wisdom, inspiring individuals and communities to strive for a more harmonious and just world. As we navigate the complexities of the modern era, Chinese humanism's insights and principles remain a valuable resource for promoting global understanding, cooperation, and peace.