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The significance of Confucianism in the twenty-first century is no longer disputed. What is less certain is the nature and scope of the effect of this ancient tradition's impressions on present-day China and the modern world-at-large. *New Confucianism in Twenty-First Century China: the Construction of a Discourse* is a welcome addition to a growing albeit small corpus of literature examining the unfolding relationship between China's ancient Confucian tradition and modern China. This book provides a historical perspective as well as a contemporary analysis of the dynamic changes a rejuvenated Confucian moral enterprise could unleash upon China and beyond.

The potential for modern Confucianism to influence China's global trajectory is captured in the book's title, as the term "New Confucianism" connotes a modern-day or contemporary Confucian humanism, constituting the tradition's "third epoch."<sup>1</sup> Confucianism's classical ethical-sociopolitical teachings, founded during the Spring and Autumn States period—considered Confucianism's first epoch—remained relatively un-changed until the Sung and Ming dynasties, whence, upon engagement and subsequent synthesis with Buddhism, the then-native Chinese tradition became transmuted into Neo-Confucianism. Today, yet another metamorphosis is underway, as China's confrontation with the West continues to affect the Sinic civilization. In what some refer to as the new "Axial Age," the "middle kingdom"—a moniker China has used for itself since ancient times—is finally meeting the rest of the world, and in this globalized encounter, we are witnessing a "third-epoch-making" transformation of Confucianism that is radically reconfiguring the traditional Confucian as well as the broader Chinese worldview. This third, post-Mao era epoch of modern Confucian tradition may be referred to as New Confucianism.<sup>2</sup>

One method Sole-Farras employed to chronicle the paradigmatic realignment of China's worldviews is through a review of "three generations" of Chinese public intellectuals. The review starts with a survey of the works of Liang Shuing, Feng Youlan, and Ma Yifu, who, among others, stood up against the prevailing early twentieth century proclivity to discard the old East in favor of the new West. These pioneering New Confucianists chose instead to steer and revamp premodern Confucian mores into closer alignment with modernity. Distinguished by their status as philosophers-in-exile, the next generation of New Confucianists is represented by the likes of Mou Zhong San, Tang Junyi, and Xu Fuguan. Operating outside the mainland, these thinkers demonstrated a discernible downplaying of cultural superiority as they embraced the pluralistic realities of their adopted domiciles. The final group of New Confucianists, of the post-1978 reform

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<sup>1</sup> The history of Confucianism is roughly divided into three epochs, the first of which, from approximately 770 to 470 BCE, generally corresponds to the first half of the Eastern Zhou dynasty and is referred to as the "Spring and Autumn period," a reference to the Spring and Autumn Annals, a history of the state of Lu that is associated with Confucius. The second epoch corresponds to a revival of Confucianism during the Sung and Ming dynasties, roughly 960 BCE through 1644, during which Confucianism, competing with Buddhism, developed its own explanations for the natural and human worlds. Post-Mao era Confucianism constitutes the transition's "third epoch."

<sup>2</sup> "New Confucianism" is in fact an umbrella term that encompasses diverse constituents, including Post-New Confucianism, and Boston Confucianism, which is observed by those who hold that Confucianism could be adapted to a Western perspective.

era, consists of Yu Yingshi, Cheng Zonging, Liu Shuxian, and Du Weiming. These individuals represent the internationalized generation of the movement. All four scholars became established within Western academia, from within which they served as conduits for the active cross-fertilization of Eastern and Western thought. Sole-Farras shows how the likes of this intellectual fraternity, with members spanning over a century, and from various geographical, political and social locations, collectively and incrementally helped the Confucian tradition to evolve from a parochial into a universal movement.

The author's second means of recounting the New Confucianists' imprints is the examination of the impact of New Confucianism on various spheres of life (Chapter 2). Beginning with the theological domain, this section reviews the longstanding debate over Confucianism's status as a "religion," or as a philosophy of thought. The New Confucianists' interpretations of Confucian motifs such as the transcendent, God, and harmonious society serve to merge Confucianism's dual identity. Moving onto the political realm, Sole-Farras discusses the nexus between Confucianism and Marxism, and how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has coopted the former with the aim of developing a "socialism with Chinese characteristics." Following this is an analysis of the correlation between Confucianism and economic growth. The study touches on subjects ranging from Weber's Protestant Ethics, Confucian ethics, Asian values, and their implications with respect to China's economic "miracle" and global capitalism. The chapter ends with a discourse on Chinese nationalism. It explains how as an anchor of the Sinic civilization, Confucianism serves ultimately as the core of the cultural identity of the modern Chinese nation-state.

As a means of investigating the development of New Confucianism, Sole-Farras analyzes in detail the content of a fundamental text for the New Confucianists movement, namely, "A Manifesto for Chinese Cultures." Published in 1958, the main coauthors of this essay are Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and Xu Fuguan. Written in defense of Chinese culture, the text has been received as a definitive statement on the philosophical and ideological principles that form the basic structure of New Confucianism. Sole-Farras' remaining two chapters are the introduction and conclusion. The text also contains a laying out of the general intellectual framework of post-Maoist China and a description of the social and political context in which the Confucianist discourse was reborn, followed by a discussion on the complex makeup of contemporary Confucianism. Finally, the author provides a synopsis of the core principles of New Confucianism and forwards propositions for future multipurpose cooperation.

The strength of this research publication varies across the chapters. The materials presented in Chapters two and three are the best argued and organized. Together they offer readers a clear taxonomy and genealogy of New Confucianism. In contrast, the concluding remarks and proposals presented in Chapter five lack clarity and coherence. Another quibble is that while wide-ranging in scope, the analysis of the Confucianists' practical imprints has some important omissions. Of particular concern to this reviewer is the omission pertaining to religious pluralism, specifically the New Confucianists treatment of other philosophical and religious traditions in and outside of China.

These criticisms notwithstanding, this book has, on the whole, achieved its stated objectives: to facilitate a better understanding of contemporary Confucianism and, more broadly, modern China. In it, we find a clear rendition of how the ancient Chinese tradition, in response to the challenges of a globalized reality, is reinventing itself into a universal,

pluralistic movement. On this account, the *New Confucianism in Twenty-First Century China: the Construction of a Discourse* is an important contribution to Sinology generally and Confucian studies specially, and a good resource for graduate students and researchers alike.

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