



《国际儒学研究》第12辑论文 Regenerating Confucianism in the Chinese Disapora
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作者：(澳大利亚)Martin Lu吕武吉

It might have been somewhat naive for many of us to believe that if Confucian ethics is explained clearly enough and often enough to the public more Chinese Singaporeans would be attracted to this value system. It turns out that the believers do not need our persuasion and non-believers are still non-believers despite all our efforts. Moral education and justification are far more complicated than we thought. It involves multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary efforts and cooperation for better understanding and implementation.

This is why after so many years I thought that it might be worth our while to approach the subject differently. The traditional method of instilling moral values may not be adequate. Moral values should be supported by the authority of cogent reasons acceptable to modern men. The spheres of the true, the good, and the beautiful should be distinguished clearly. Instrumental rationality that could often be appropriately applied to the sphere of the true should not be allowed to invade the realms of the good and the beautiful. Fortunately, in recent years the cultural scenes of Singapore have been diversified, creative and vibrant enough along with her economic development. So it is still promising for the three spheres to be developed in a balanced manner.

In a recent international conference, Economic Globalization and Pluralistic Development of National Cultures, held in Kunming, China, August 15-19, 2001 (which I attended), Robert A. Scalapino (Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley) says that our present era is the most revolutionary since the industrial revolution in the mid-eighteenth century, and the vortex of the revolution is in the scientific and economic arena. He further argues that as a result of economic globalization and the IT revolution every nation-state is obliged to balance three often conflicting forces: internationalism, nationalism, and communalism. In his view, cultures everywhere have been affected by globalization; the homogeneity of most societies has been reduced; and their differences have increased significantly.

In his presentation, he summarizes our present situation thus:

Gone or going is the all-pervasive ideology that served to weld the society together. Gone or going also is the common culture to which an overwhelming majority of the citizenry ascribed, albeit, with variations and different degrees of commitment. Hence, ours is an age of recurrent crises, of which the most persistent are and will continue to be within the state.

He also considers the views of Francis Fukuyama (The End of History) and Samuel Huntington (The Clash of Civilizations) oversimplified. Huntington has oversimplified the concepts of "culture" and "civilization". He strongly disagrees with the "clash" thesis because there have been and will be more conflicts within the civilization than among the diverse civilizations. Regarding Fukuyama, he does not think that humankind will arrive at liberal democracy and market economy of The End of History: we will continue to have political, economic, and cultural diversities in the future. So much for economic globalization and its impact on culture. Let me now turn to the question: How could traditional cultures such as Confucian humanism meet the challenges of Western cultures in the process of globalization and modernization? If we intend Confucian humanism to be globalized and

accepted by a modern and fairly Western society such as Singapore, it should be subject to rational criticisms just like any other ideologies or value systems.

[\[第 1 页\]](#)

[\[第 2 页\]](#)

[\[第 3 页\]](#)

[\[第 4 页\]](#)

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