

## 张力与社会的健康发展

Tension and a Sound Development of Society

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### [英文提要]

Great social changes are often accompanied by moral crises. This paper calls attention to the sociological concept of "tension." It argues that the healthy development of society needs moral tensions over material changes, and the more rapid the social changes, the more tension the society needs. The paper first traces the development of the concept of "tension" in sociology, then examines manifestations of tension in Western society: tension and the differentiation of moral authority and civic authority, tension and the parallel revolution of material advancements and spiritual renewals, tension and social change. It also points out some misunderstandings about certain aspects of Western culture.

Max Weber first introduced the concept of "tension" in analyzing various religions. In some religions, "asceticism" makes its believers reject or oppose worldly things. This opposition causes tension with the world. Weber distinguished between "other-worldly" asceticism, which completely rejects the world, and "inner-worldly" asceticism, which opposes the world but stays within the world. Weber argued that a person who subscribes to inner-worldly asceticism would become a rational reformer because the constant

tension with the world would be a driving force for the person to strive to reshape society. Weber believed that Puritanism is the best example of the inner-world asceticism which became a catalyst for the emergence of the modern economic system of capitalism. Confucianism however lacked this tension and hence failed to lead to modern rational capitalism.

Contemporary scholars have developed tension into a sociological variable in their analysis of social institutions and movements. Tension is a variable of continuum. It is not only a concept of ethic or individual psychology, but also an attribute of institutions. With this understanding, it may be more accurate to say that traditional Confucianism in general had generated a low degree of tension with its social-cultural environment.

In the West, the modernization process started with institutional differentiation of moral authority and civic authority, resulting in the formal separation of church and state. The tension between the moral and civic authorities served the healthy development of society. Along with the technological and material revolution, there has also been a religious and spiritual revolution. Economic development or material revolution by itself cannot create a society with liberty, equality and justice. Corrupt influences and elements in the secular world have to be challenged, condemned, and corrected with the power and authority coming from its spiritual resources. Some religions thus become a leverage for social change because of the moral and institutional tension they generate.