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# Interpreting and Expanding Confucius' Golden Mean through Neutrosophic Tetrad

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**Abstract.** Neutrosophy is a new branch of philosophy that studies the origin, nature, and scope of neutralities, as well as their interactions with different ideational spectra. There are many similarities between The Golden Mean and Neutrosophy. Chinese and international scholars need to toil towards expanding and developing The Golden Mean, towards its "modernization" and "globalization". Not only Chinese contemporary popular ideas and

methods, but also international contemporary popular ideas and methods, should be applied in this endeavour. There are many different ways for interpreting and expanding The Golden Mean through "Neutrosophic tetrad" (thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis). This paper emphasizes that, in practice, The Golden Mean cannot be applied alone and unaided for long-term; it needs to be combined with other principles.

**Keywords:** Neutrosophy, Golden Mean, Neutrosophic tetrad, thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis.

## 1 Introduction

"The Golden Mean" is a significant achievement of Confucius (Kong Zi). Mao Zedong considered that Kong Zi's notion of Golden Mean is his greatest discovery, and also an important philosophy category, worth discussing over and over.

As well-known, the moderate views originated in ancient times. According to historical records, as the Chinese Duke of Zhou asked Jizi for advice, Jizi presented nine governing strategies, including the viewpoint of "The mean principle". That is the unbiased political philosophy dominated by the upright, and a comprehensive pattern obtained by combining rigidity and moderation. According to the interpretation of many predecessors' viewpoints of "The mean principle", after expanding and developing these viewpoints, Confucius created "The Golden Mean".

After Confucius, many scholars tried to use different ways to interpret and expand "The Golden Mean".

From Tang dynasty, a number of "Neo-Confucianists" emerged, highlighting various characteristics by jointing Confucianism with Buddhism, Daoism, and the like, including Western academic thoughts, and forming numerous new schools.

If regarding "The Golden Mean" presented by Confucius as the first milestone, the thought of "worry before the people and enjoy after the people" produced by Fan Zhongyan, the Chinese Northern Song dynasty's famous thinker, statesman, strategist and writer, can be considered the second milestone of "The Golden Mean". Its meaning is as it follows: neither worry everything, nor enjoy everything; take the middle, namely worry in some cases (before the people), and enjoy in some cases (after the people). This famous saying is perhaps the most meaningful "golden mean". Someone once pointed out that "The Golden

Mean" is very conservative, and very negative. However, carefully reading this sentence of Fan Zhongyan, one may adduce a new assessment for "The Golden Mean".

The thought of "traditional Chinese values aided with modern Western ideology" appeared in late Qing Dynasty, and it is the third milestone of "The Golden Mean". Since the first opium war (June, 1840 - August, 1842), in view of the fact that China repeatedly failed miserably in front of the Western powers, some ideologists argued that China must be reformed. The early reformists proposed "the policy mainly governed by Chinese tradition, supported by Western thoughts" (this is also a "middle way"), with the purpose to encourage people to learn from the West, and to oppose against obstinacy and conservatism. In late 19th century, there was a harsh dispute between old and new, and between Chinese model and Western model. The old-fashioned feudal diehards firmly opposed to Western culture. They regarded anything coming from the Western capitalist countries as dangerous evils for China, while the bourgeois reformers actively advocated for Western learning, arguing that China should not only inure the advanced science and technology, but also follow the Western political system. Among the violent debate, ostensibly neutral thought of "Chinese learning for the essence, western learning for practical use" gradually gained prominence, and had a profound impact. Even today, there still exist scholars appraising this slogan, and attempting to make new interpretations out of it.

But "The Golden Mean" is not uniquely Chinese. One can also find similar formulations in different cultures. For example, in Ancient Greece, Aristotle propounded the idea of "The Mean Principle". According to Aristotle, there are three categories of human acts, namely excessive, less and moderate acts. For instance, all men have desires; while

excessive desires and less desires are all tidal waves of evil, only moderate desires are virtue-based. There is a clear distance between Aristotle's middle path view and Confucius' Golden Mean, since the last one takes "benevolence" as its core.

In 1995, the American-Romanian scholar Florentin Smarandache created Neutrosophy, which has similarities to "The Golden Mean". For more information about Neutrosophy, see references [1-3].

To sum up, the ideas of "The Golden Mean" and of some similar concepts are crystallizations of mankind wisdom. However, in order to keep pace with the times, "The Golden Mean" and the similar concepts must be expanded and developed in the directions of "modernization" and "globalization". In order to achieve this task, Chinese and international scholars should take part in related actions, and not only Chinese contemporary popular ideas and methods, but also international contemporary popular ideas and methods should be applied. In this way, the results can be widely recognized all over the world, and have a positive and far-reaching impact.

The requisite to expand and develop "The Golden Mean" applying international contemporary popular ideas and methods has not yet attracted enough attention. Consequently, we try to interpret and expand "The Golden Mean" through Neutrosophy, hoping that other scholars will pay attention too to the issues we expound.

## 2 The similarities between "The Golden Mean" and "Neutrosophy"

In references [2,3] we have pointed out that the position of "mean" pursued by The Golden Mean is the optimized and critical third position, situated between the excessive and the less.

It needs to stress that, according to the fact that Confucius made a great contribution for the amendment of "The Book of Changes", some people thought that The Analects of Confucius only discussed two kind of situations, i.e. positive and negative situations (masculine and feminine, yin and yang, pro and con), while in fact The Analects evaluated three kind of situations: positive, negative and neutral situations.

For example, in Book 2, Tzu Kung put forward a positive and a negative situation: "What do you pronounce concerning a poor man who doesn't grovel, and a rich man who isn't proud?" Confucius presented the best situation: "They are good, but not as good as a poor man who is satisfied and a rich man who loves the rules of propriety."

Neutrosophy is a new branch of philosophy that studies the origin, nature, and scope of neutralities, as well as their interactions with different ideational spectra.

This theory considers every notion or idea  $\langle A \rangle$  together with its opposite or negation  $\langle \text{Anti-}A \rangle$  and the spectrum of "neutralities"  $\langle \text{Neut-}A \rangle$  (i.e. notions or ideas located between the two extremes, supporting neither  $\langle A \rangle$  nor  $\langle \text{Anti-}A \rangle$ ).

The  $\langle \text{Neut-}A \rangle$  and  $\langle \text{Anti-}A \rangle$  ideas together are referred to as  $\langle \text{Non-}A \rangle$ .

Neutrosophy is the base of neutrosophic logic, neutrosophic set, neutrosophic probability and statistics, used in engineering applications (especially for software and information fusion), medicine, military, cybernetics, and physics.

Neutrosophic Logic (NL) is a general framework for unification of many existing logics, such as fuzzy logic (especially intuitionistic fuzzy logic), paraconsistent logic, intuitionistic logic, etc. The main idea of NL is to characterize each logical statement in a 3D Neutrosophic Space, where each dimension of the space represents respectively the truth (T), the falsehood (F), and the indeterminacy (I) of the statement under consideration, where T, I, F are standard or non-standard real subsets of  $] -0, 1+[$  without necessarily connection between them.

It is obvious that, in discussing the "mean", the "middle", or the "neutralities", there are many similarities between The Golden Mean and Neutrosophy.

It should be mentioned that the biggest difference between Neutrosophy and The Golden Mean is that the first includes a wide variety of practical mathematical methods. Because of some reasons, the mathematical knowledge of many Confucian scholars is not too elevated. Therefore, in general, the Confucian scholars cannot propose quantitative standards to evaluate The Golden Mean, and they only rely on their perception. Nevertheless, Karl Marx believed that a science can only achieve a perfect situation when it is successfully applied to mathematics.

Now we present a simple example of mathematical method application. Let us consider the middle situation composed by "positive" and "negative". The proportion of positive and negative, besides the standard 5:5, also can be 6:4 or 4:6, 7:3 or 3:7, 8:2 or 2:8, 9:1 or 1:9, and so on. For more complex cases, it is necessary to apply the mathematical methods of Neutrosophy.

Therefore, if we need to take into account quantitative relationships, then the mathematical methods of Neutrosophy are helpful. This is one important part of interpreting and expanding "The Golden Mean". Of course, this kind of work need to be undertaken by scholars who are familiar with both "The Golden Mean" and "Neutrosophy".

## 3 Interpreting and expanding The Golden Mean with "Neutrosophic tetrad" (thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis)

In reference [4], Prof. Smarandache called attention for the fact that the classical reasoning development about evidences, popularly known as thesis-antithesis-synthesis from dialectics, was attributed to the renowned philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and it was used later on by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Immanuel Kant have also written about thesis and antithesis. As a difference, the opposites yin [feminine, the moon] and yang [masculine,

the sun] were considered complementary in Ancient Chinese philosophy.

Neutrosophy is a generalization of dialectics. Therefore, Hegel's dialectical triad thesis-antithesis-synthesis is extended to the neutrosophic tetrad thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis. A neutrosophic synthesis (neutrosynthesis) is more refined than the dialectical synthesis. It carries on the unification and synthesis regarding the opposites, and their neutrals too.

There are many different ways for interpreting and expanding The Golden Mean through "Neutrosophic tetrad" (thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis), and different conclusions are reached. This paper emphasizes the conclusion that, in practice, The Golden Mean cannot be applied lonely and unaided for long-term; in many cases, it needs to be combined with other principles.

Example 1: If asking a man who likes to do everything according to The Golden Mean: will you wear black or white clothes to attend the meeting?, the answer should be an unbiased one: I will wear grey clothes. According to "Neutrosophic tetrad" (thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis), there are many different possible answers: (1) I will wear deep grey clothes; (2) I will wear shallow grey clothes; (3) I will wear a white coat, but black trousers; (4) trousers white underwear, but a black coat; (5) I will wear black clothes at the beginning of the meeting, but white clothes at the end of the meeting; (6) I will switch between black, grey, and white clothes during the meeting; (7) I will wear black clothes at this conference, but white clothes at the next one; (8) I will respectively wear black, white, grey (or different combination of the three colours) clothes at different conferences. And so forth.

In this example, The Golden Mean cannot be applied lonely and unaided for long-term; in fact, no one can always wear grey clothes to participate in any meeting and gathering, at least the bride cannot wear grey clothes at the wedding.

Example 2: In Chinese ancient story of the three kingdoms, as Zhuge Liang command the war, he generally applies The Golden Mean "combining punishment with leniency". The most obvious example is that, in the battle of Red Cliff, he firstly associates with Zhou Yu to beat the army of Cao Cao, and obtains a brilliant victory; but he deliberately sends Guan Yu to ambush at Huarong Road, due to gratitude for the old kindness, Guan Yu and his army loose the powerful enemy of Cao Cao. However, in some cases, Zhuge Liang cannot carry on The Golden Mean. For example, as Ma Su is defeated and losing a place of strategic importance, Zhuge Liang puts him to death without mercy. In addition, Zhuge Liang captures Meng Huo seventh times, and releases him seventh times; it is so tolerant, as rarely seen in history.

Example 3: Some scholars believe that the theoretical foundation of universe is the unity of heaven and man. An instance is as it follows: a boat is travelling from the mid-stream to the downstream of a river. In Song dynasty, the

famous poet Su Dongpo was rafting with guests beneath Red Cliff, and did write the eternal masterpiece "Chibi Fu". For this reason, the men who clings to "The Golden Mean" intends to follow Su Dongpo and write a masterpiece again. Although thousands of writers visit Red Cliff, no one can write a decent poem.

However, according to the viewpoint of "Neutrosophic tetrad" (thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis), one can also boat against the current, sail in the sea, sing in the loess plateau, and the like, in order to write a decent poem.

In short, at the right time and the right place, and having a good authoring environment (similar to what happened when Su Dongpo wrote "Chibi Fu"), the writers can apply different ways to write excellent poetry or other literary works. For example, the "Four Classics" ("A Dream of Red Mansions", "Journey to the West", "The Three Kingdoms", and "Water Margin") were not written by sticking to the stereotypes of Su Dongpo.

Due to space limitations, we no longer discuss other examples and results of the interpretation and expansion of "The Golden Mean".

## Conclusion

The "mean", the "middle", or the "neutralities" are neither fixed points; nor rigid rules. The "mean" is not always located at equidistant midpoint between the two opposing sides, and is not always fixed at some point or within a certain range, but it changes with peculiarities like a specific time, a specific location, or a specific condition.

The essences of Chinese traditional culture, including here "The Golden Mean", should adapt with the times, expanding and developing towards "modernization" and "globalization" through international contemporary popular ideas and methods. Applying "Neutrosophic tetrad" (thesis-antithesis-neurothesis-neutrosynthesis) to re-interpret The Golden Mean is an initial attempt, and we hope to play a significant role, and give a new philosophical direction.

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