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Exploring the Spirit of Chinese Entrepreneurs in the New Era through the Theory of "Cheng" in *The Doctrine of the Mean*

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of China's economy transitioning towards high-quality development and the continuous strengthening of social supervision and management systems, the entrepreneurial spirit that once prioritized rapid economic growth, with survival and profit as its core, is no longer aligned with the demands of the times. The spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs must now shift towards focusing on long-term value creation, achieving technological innovation, upholding integrity and trustworthiness, and actively assuming social responsibilities. This paper will construct an analytical framework based on the concept of "Cheng" (sincerity/authenticity) from *The Doctrine of the Mean*, embed it within existing theories on entrepreneurial spirit, and use this approach to explore and elucidate the connotations of the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era.

Keywords: *The Doctrine of the Mean*; Cheng (Sincerity/Authenticity); New Era; Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit

1. Introduction

The development of China's economy is no longer oriented solely towards "speed" and the unchecked growth of the past. Instead, it must be guided by "quality," with innovation serving as the core driving force for China's economic progress, aiming for sustainable development of high quality. In the past, the core of the Chinese entrepreneurial spirit consisted of a daring and adventurous mindset, a keen awareness of shifts in national policy, and a pragmatic consciousness of hard work for survival. During the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, Chinese entrepreneurs broke through institutional constraints, exploring the market with the courage of "crossing the river by feeling the stones." They adhered to strategies of low cost and rapid capital turnover, swiftly filled shortages of various goods in the market, and accurately captured market demand. Under conditions of limited resources, relying on their own insight and keen perception to quickly understand the dividends of relevant policies, and through the tenacity of hard work and practicality, they completed their primitive accumulation, becoming a core force in activating market vitality and promoting economic transformation. However, due to the limitations of productive forces at that time, the development of Chinese enterprises was highly dependent on policy and factor dividends; innovation was mostly imitative, lacking breakthroughs in core technologies. Some enterprises suffered from irregular governance and a tendency towards short-term profit-seeking, leading to disorderly competition and resource waste. Consequently, the past Chinese entrepreneurial spirit also exhibited weaknesses such as a lack of integrity, a development philosophy emphasizing scale and speed over quality and efficiency, a deficient awareness of social responsibility, and neglect of environmental protection and labor rights. These drawbacks are incompatible with the requirements of China's economic development in the new era. Therefore, this paper employs the

Received: 25 December 2025

Revised: 29 January 2026

Accepted: 10 February 2026

Published: 13 February 2026



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Confucian theory of "Cheng" from *The Doctrine of the Mean* to explore the connotations of the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era, enabling Chinese entrepreneurs to better coordinate the relationship between individual benefit and social development.

2. The Concept of "Cheng" in *The Doctrine of the Mean*

2.1. *The Theoretical Origins of "Cheng" in The Doctrine of the Mean*

After the Zhou people overthrew the Shang dynasty, they linked the Mandate of Heaven (Tianming) to the ruler's "virtue" (de). The essence of "virtue" is the sincere and faithful reverence for the Mandate of Heaven. The ruler needed to match the Mandate with a moral character that was without falsity or pretense in order to receive Heaven's favor. The statement in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, "Cheng (sincerity) is the way of Heaven", interprets this idea, elevating the "Cheng" of the Mandate of Heaven from the political realm to the fundamental source of the universe, asserting that the essential law underlying the operation of heaven and earth and the generation of all things is the true and unwavering Way of Cheng.

Zengzi proposed the method of cultivation: "Daily I examine myself on three points: In planning for others, have I been disloyal? In intercourse with friends, have I been untrustworthy? And have I failed to practice what has been transmitted to me?". Through self-reflection, he ensured the genuineness and absence of deceit in moral practice. Building on this, *The Doctrine of the Mean* constructed the cultivation path of "extensive study, accurate inquiry, careful reflection, clear discrimination, and earnest practice". Its essence is to combine rational cognition with practical reflection to achieve the conscious pursuit of "Cheng," developing Zengzi's method of self-reflection into a systematic theory of moral cultivation.

2.2. *The Specific Theory of "Cheng" in The Doctrine of the Mean*

"Cheng" embodies objective reality; it does not exist in a vague, illusory state, nor can it deceive others or oneself with a false, disguised appearance. The "Way of Heaven" refers to the laws governing the operation of the natural world, the eternal and unchanging truths of the universe. The "Cheng of the Way of Heaven" manifests the necessity of being true, real, and unwavering, constant and unchanging. It is the inherent law underlying the operation of heaven and earth and the myriad things, existing independently of human will. The operation of heaven and earth and nature always follows the principle of "Cheng." The succession of the four seasons has never been disordered; the rhythm of spring growth, summer luxuriance, autumn harvest, and winter storage is constant and unchanging. All things take "Cheng" as their internal driving force, without the slightest falsity or deviation. The "Cheng of the Way of Man" constructs the connecting point between the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man. Since the essence of the Way of Heaven is "Cheng," the core of the Way of Man is the conscious emulation and adherence to "Cheng," followed by the active practice based on the experience summarized during this process of adherence. The fundamental meaning of human existence lies in taking the Cheng of the Way of Heaven as the standard, internalizing the external natural laws into one's heart, making them the criterion for one's own moral conduct, thereby achieving harmony with the Way of Heaven.

"From Cheng to enlightenment is called nature; from enlightenment to Cheng is called instruction". This forms two methods for realizing "Cheng." "From Cheng to enlightenment is called nature" refers to the fact that sages are innately endowed with the nature of "Cheng." The genuineness and absence of deceit in their hearts are inborn; they can naturally manifest noble virtue without deliberate instruction and possess the ability to perceive the essence and laws of all things. This kind of "Cheng" originates from heavenly endowment; it is the direct manifestation of the "Cheng of the Way of Heaven" in humans, reflecting the innateness and transcendence of "Cheng," setting a moral model for ordinary people. "From enlightenment to Cheng is called instruction" is the path for

ordinary people to achieve "Cheng." Ordinary people differ from sages. Although their nature possesses the potential for "Cheng," it is obscured by their own selfish desires and the distracting thoughts brought by the mundane environment, preventing it from naturally manifesting. Therefore, it is necessary to reach the state of "Cheng" through instruction. Instruction is not merely the transmission of knowledge; it involves allowing ordinary people to comprehend moral standards through learning, and then internalizing them through repeated practice, ultimately achieving the goal of "Cheng." This path emphasizes the importance of posterior effort. Only through the cultivation method of "extensive study, accurate inquiry, careful reflection, clear discrimination, and earnest practice" can ordinary people approximate the Cheng of the Way of Heaven.

After comprehending the fundamental laws of the operation of the Way of Heaven, in order to tend towards the Cheng of the Way of Heaven, one must adopt methods of self-reflection and diligent study, ultimately achieving the goal of "Cheng." Subsequently, to actively transform the world, one must utilize more means to assist others in also reaching the state of "Cheng." Those who are absolutely Cheng (Zhicheng) can fully uncover and realize their own nature, discarding the obscuration of selfish desires, and returning to their genuine, non-deceitful original mind. Only by recognizing one's own essence can one extend this to others, thereby "fulfilling the nature of others." Influencing others with one's own sincerity, perceiving the nature and needs of others, guiding them to realize their self-worth, achieving harmonious coexistence among people. Then, proceeding to "fulfilling the nature of things," the absolutely Cheng person respects the laws of all things, does not violate the nature of nature, and achieves harmonious interaction between humans and all things. Ultimately, the absolutely Cheng person reaches the state where they can "assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth." With their own sincerity and virtue, they participate in and assist the process of Heaven and Earth generating all things, no longer passively following the Way of Heaven, but actively becoming participants and promoters in the operation of Heaven and Earth.

3. Entrepreneurial Spirit

3.1. Research on Entrepreneurial Spirit Abroad

In the 19th century, Jean-Baptiste Say, in his *A Treatise on Political Economy*, further expanded the functional scope of entrepreneurs. He proposed that the core competency of entrepreneurs lies in the effective combination of various factors of production during the production process, and that through such diverse combinations, they create new economic value [1], laying an important foundation for the subsequent development of entrepreneurial spirit theory.

Research on entrepreneurial spirit entered a formally established stage in the 20th century, undergoing systematic deepening. Joseph Schumpeter, in his *The Theory of Economic Development*, defined entrepreneurial spirit as the capacity to carry out innovative practices. He argued that entrepreneurs, through a series of innovative acts such as technological innovation, creation of new products, and opening of new markets, break existing market equilibriums and are the core driving force for economic development [2]. Alfred Marshall, in his *Principles of Economics*, emphasized the important role of entrepreneurs as market regulators. He posited that entrepreneurs, through efficient management models and technological innovation, can continuously improve market operational efficiency, achieving optimal regulation of market resources [3].

In summary, foreign research on entrepreneurial spirit primarily starts from the role positioning of entrepreneurs in the economic market. Centered around profit-making, integrating factors of production, and achieving technological innovation, it has further formed a theoretical system oriented towards the market and maximizing efficiency. Foreign scholars regard entrepreneurs as typical representatives of "Homo economicus"

(rational economic man). Therefore, entrepreneurial spirit is defined as the keen capture of profit differentials and precise calculation of costs and benefits. Its core mission is to achieve the dual enhancement of individual returns and market efficiency through optimizing resource allocation [4].

3.2. Research on Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit

Research on Chinese entrepreneurial spirit needs to be contextualized within the social environment of different periods. During the period of reform and opening-up, China implemented policies with the planned economy as the mainstay and market regulation as a supplement. Government control over the economy remained strong, and resource allocation was primarily through planned allocation. However, the reform approach of "crossing the river by feeling the stones" created elasticity in institutional rules, with local governments having certain room for policy adaptation, providing entrepreneurs with opportunities to capture policy dividends. Entrepreneurs of this time broke through institutional constraints, adopting a pragmatic approach for survival. Against the backdrop of an imperfect market mechanism, entrepreneurs imitated many foreign market cases, filling domestic commodity gaps, forming spiritual characteristics of courage to undertake risks and adeptness at seizing policy opportunities.

After China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001, Chinese entrepreneurial spirit exhibited dual characteristics of globalization and innovation. Enterprises introduced advanced foreign technologies, digested and absorbed them, and then innovated upon this basis, gradually climbing from the low end to the high end of the industrial chain. Technological breakthroughs by companies like Huawei became typical representatives of this period. Therefore, within the context of China's full integration with the international community during this era, the Chinese entrepreneurial spirit was mainly characterized by possessing an innovative consciousness, emphasizing the stimulating role of intellectual property protection and policy support for independent innovation.

Post-2013, entrepreneurs began reducing their reliance on special government policies, shifting towards a market-oriented approach, achieving sustainable enterprise development through value creation. Relying on their keen market insight, they quickly grasped new opportunities arising from the relaxation of industry access. Their risk-taking awareness significantly increased, with many increasing R&D investment to explore emerging industries. Although innovative awareness awakened, most enterprises still focused on market-oriented application-type innovation, emphasizing short-term profitable business model innovation, with insufficient long-term investment in basic research and core technologies. Some market sectors fell into low-level homogeneous competition, and the risk of being "choked" in core technologies continued to rise. Furthermore, some entrepreneurs still harbored a "policy arbitrage" mindset, overly focusing on policy dividends, resorting to bribery of government officials for their own interests. This led to tendencies among some entrepreneurs to prioritize public relations over business operations, interfering with fair market competition order. In areas such as environmental governance and employee rights protection, problems persisted, including excessive resource waste, severe ecological damage, and inadequate implementation of labor protection systems. The spiritual connotation of "balancing righteousness and benefit" was not fully realized.

4. Exploring the Connotations of Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit in the New Era

4.1. Specific Research Framework

Despite fundamental differences in social systems and cultures between China and the West, as well as variances in market operational logic and the relationship between government and enterprises, from the perspective of enterprise development, the entrepreneurial spirit of different countries shares commonalities. However, its specific

manifestations and emphases can vary significantly across different contexts and groups [5]. Entrepreneurs always pursue sustainable economic benefits as the fundamental driving force, optimize organizational structures and enhance governance efficiency as important supports, and persistently promote innovation in production technology as the core competitive edge. Entrepreneurial spirit is embedded within the entire lifecycle of an enterprise from its inception to growth, permeating various aspects such as strategic decision-making, resource allocation, technological R&D, and market expansion. It is transformed into actual productive forces through the collective actions of the enterprise organization.

In the practice of enterprise development, the core pathway for both Chinese and Western entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises begins with accurately identifying market demand gaps. This is achieved through systematic analysis of technological iteration trends and industry competition patterns, combined with market consumption trends to determine promising enterprise directions. Next, to achieve the goal of rapidly capturing market share, most enterprises rely on extensive market information for data analysis and plan formulation. They utilize methods such as small-scale pilot projects and refined operations to reduce trial-and-error costs, continuously optimizing business models and product services within the economic market. Finally, after acquiring sufficient capital through financing or profit accumulation, entrepreneurs focus on integrating key resources across the upstream and downstream industrial chain, including technology, talent, channels, and production capacity. They build industrial ecosystems through horizontal expansion and vertical extension, establishing solid competitive barriers through economies of scale and securing leading industry positions.

The concept of "Cheng" from *The Doctrine of the Mean*, as a significant theory in Chinese Confucianism, must transcend the purely ethical and moral level to be transformed into an analytical framework applicable for exploring the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era. It must be deeply embedded within the complete practical process of entrepreneurs driving enterprise development. Only by integrating the connotations of "Cheng" with specific aspects such as enterprise strategy formulation, resource integration, and organizational governance can we better explore the connotations of the Chinese entrepreneurial spirit.

This paper, combining the aforementioned commonalities in Chinese and Western entrepreneurial spirit with the practical pathways of Chinese enterprise development, proposes "Sincerity in Motivation," "Sincerity in Decision-Making," "Sincerity in Relationships," and "Sincerity in Systems." It systematically explores the deep-seated connotations of the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era from dimensions such as the value pursuits of entrepreneurs, endowing it with both the substance of Chinese culture and the characteristics of the times (As shown in Figure 1).

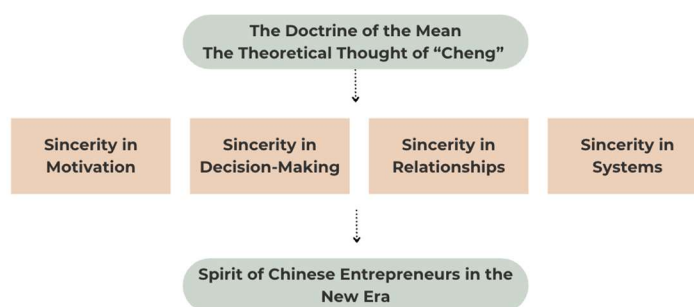


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

4.2. Sincerity in Motivation

Before deciding to undertake any action, individuals actively pose several questions to themselves: Why am I doing this? What benefits can this approach bring me? Motivation is one of the most important factors for human success. The entrepreneur's motivation is to gain profit; the reason for their actions is to quickly earn substantial profits, and the benefit is to enable the rapid development of their enterprise. Therefore, the profit-chasing behavior of entrepreneurs cannot be simplistically condemned as a negative outcome arising from misguided motives. "Sincerity in Motivation" uses the concept of "Cheng" from *The Doctrine of the Mean* to establish strict norms for the subsequent actions generated by entrepreneurs' profit-driven motivation.

The "Cheng of the Way of Heaven" emphasizes that the fundamental law governing the operation of heaven, earth, and all things is true and real, without the slightest falsity. All things have their own inherent laws that cannot be arbitrarily violated; otherwise, they will suffer backlash. For humans to survive perfectly in this world, they must first emulate the "Cheng of the Way of Heaven," deepening their understanding of the fundamental laws through diligent effort, then internalizing it, thereby reaching the "Cheng of the Way of Man."

Chinese entrepreneurs, in their pursuit of profit, must enhance their understanding of the context of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. The basic operational laws of socialism with Chinese characteristics, viewed from a micro perspective, are the embodiment of the "Cheng of the Way of Heaven." This is because these laws are established based on the entire natural world, abstracting the underlying fundamental operational laws from countless individual cases within nature. The world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. The global governance landscape is shifting from its traditional Western-dominated form towards co-governance between East and West. The global technological revolution and industrial transformation compel China to prioritize high-quality development, drive industrial innovation through technological innovation, and place ecological environmental protection in the most important position. If Chinese entrepreneurs fail to deeply understand these demands of the times, persisting in a state of complacency and isolation, they will ultimately be submerged by the tides of the era. This process of learning and adapting to the laws of the times is a critical pathway to shaping correct entrepreneurial motivation and spirit [6].

Trade wars targeting China are frequent among nations worldwide today. Apart from political issues, a primary reason is that Chinese entrepreneurs are accustomed to past imitative mindset, resulting in most Chinese products remaining in low-end, homogeneous competitive sectors without distinctive features. Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurs must comprehend the requirements of high-quality development, explore how to implement it, and must not act contrary to or violate this trend. In terms of value creation, investment in long-term value creation must be increased; focus cannot remain solely on short-term value creation. Regarding technological innovation, "choke point" problems have emerged in many critical fields, becoming a severe challenge for China in the new era. Chinese entrepreneurs must proactively strengthen their own innovative awareness, encourage innovation, and embrace innovation. This awareness of innovation, driven by the identification of technological opportunities, is a key manifestation of how entrepreneurial spirit can propel high-quality development in the new era [7]. In environmental protection, the importance of following natural laws is even more evident. Chinese entrepreneurs cannot arbitrarily interfere with or damage natural laws. Only by understanding, complying with, and utilizing these laws can actions stemming from their profit-seeking motives gain social recognition and adapt to societal development.

4.3. Sincerity in Decision-Making

After generating profit-seeking motivations, entrepreneurs implement specific actions, which are called decisions. "Sincerity in Motivation" allows entrepreneurs to

deeply understand the fundamental laws between heaven and earth. Entrepreneurs also realize that merely emulating and following the "Cheng of the Way of Heaven" is insufficient to reach the state of true, non-deceptive "Cheng" as emphasized. They must achieve the unity of knowledge and action, testing truth in practice. Therefore, entrepreneurs must base their decisions on "Sincerity in Motivation," combining their acquired insights regarding the "Cheng of the Way of Heaven" with real-life, making correct decisions, and actively implementing them.

Chinese entrepreneurs operating in the new era of China, although they possess some understanding of the basic operational laws of the social environment, often fail to make correct decisions based on these objective laws. This is because most entrepreneurs consider themselves on the first path to achieving "Cheng": "From Cheng to enlightenment is called nature," which refers to sages whose perception of the laws of heaven and earth is an innate talent. However, most Chinese entrepreneurs are not sages. Although they may possess talent in the commercial domain, enabling them to establish their enterprises through various means, they are essentially still ordinary people. They blindly believe they possess innate talent, formulating decision plans for their entire enterprise's development directly based on their perceived experience without placing it into practice for verification. Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurs must not be blinded by past experience, answering the demands of the new era with outdated thinking. They should therefore follow the second path to achieving "Cheng", described in *The Doctrine of the Mean* as attaining sincerity through enlightenment via instruction. This path underscores the paramount importance of entrepreneurial practice and guided learning in shaping sound decision-making and intention [8].

Chinese entrepreneurs pursuing the second path to achieving "Cheng," articulated in *The Doctrine of the Mean* as attaining sincerity through enlightenment via instruction, are able to formulate correct decisions based on these laws. Practice serves as the sole criterion for testing truth. After deeply understanding the requirements of high-quality development, entrepreneurs should integrate their enterprise's overall planning into the Chinese-style modernization development pattern of the domestic circulation and the dual domestic and international circulations. The domestic circulation should prioritize expanding domestic demand. Entrepreneurs must rely on the vast domestic market of 1.4 billion people, constantly pay attention to the consumption willingness of the people, stimulate their willingness to consume, enabling them to improve daily living standards by purchasing high-quality goods. They must not be deceived by short-term value commodity market information. Simultaneously, entrepreneurs must determine their enterprise's product direction based on the specific practical environment. They cannot entirely apply past imitative experience of Western free markets to address issues in the Chinese economic market, leading to significant waste of resources. They must improve the adaptability of product supply to meet the development needs of the upstream and downstream industrial chain, forming an effective market. The dual domestic and international circulations are not closed cycles but focus on institutional opening-up. Chinese entrepreneurs attract global resource factors through the domestic circulation, expand markets through the international circulation, enhance the tightness of technological cooperation between both sides, and achieve effective interaction between the two markets. However, the decisions Chinese entrepreneurs make when facing the international market must reflect Chinese wisdom and confidence. They cannot sacrifice the interests of the people or severely damage China's ecological environment to earn high profits. They must attract international market enterprises to serve China's economic development with the charm of their own technological innovation. In the past, China's productivity was low, and economic market development was primarily externally oriented and internally supplementary. With China's continuous theoretical and technological practice in different industry fields, it is long past being the unenlightened novice of yesteryear. Chinese entrepreneurs must transform their enterprise development thinking mode, and the decision-making process must adhere to an approach of internal

orientation as primary and external as supplementary. The essence of passive defense is relinquishing strategic initiative, entrusting one's fate to others. The core of active offense is grasping development initiative, actively laying out plans to ward off risks and open up the future.

Although Chinese entrepreneurs have profound summarized knowledge of different objective laws, they have still not reached the state of "Cheng of the Way of Man." They use false, unrealistic, and high-sounding theories to conceal their actions that violate these laws. This is because most Chinese entrepreneurs lack a awareness of practice), primarily relying on indirect information to directly formulate decisions regarding their enterprise's development direction. Therefore, "Sincerity in Decision-Making" means enabling Chinese entrepreneurs to prioritize practice, achieving the state of true, non-deceptive "Cheng" based on objective laws, thereby setting a model for authentic entrepreneurial behavior in society [9].

4.4. Sincerity in Relationships

"Only those who are absolutely Cheng can give their full development to their nature. Able to give their full development to their own nature, they can do the same to the nature of other men. Able to give their full development to the nature of other men, they can give their full development to the nature of things. Able to give their full development to the nature of things, they can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, they may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion." Only when a person reaches the state of "absolute Cheng" can they fully uncover their innate talents and moral essence. Fulfilling one's own nature is the foundation for fulfilling the nature of others. Confucianism holds that all humans possess the good sprouts of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, and the inner potential to tend towards "absolute Cheng." This is the nature inherent in everyone. Therefore, only with complete grasp of one's own nature can it transform into empathy and understanding for the nature of others, thereby enabling the guidance and assistance of others in fully realizing their own nature. When a person can help others achieve their nature, their own cognitive and practical vision has reached a deep level of understanding. Consequently, they can respect and comply with the nature of all things, achieving the unification of subjective initiative and objective regularity.

Based on the laws of social development, entrepreneurs actively engage in practice, ultimately enabling them to fully recognize the importance of responsibility and the necessity of rational decision-making. Therefore, entrepreneurs must understand the value demands and talent capabilities of their employees, achieving "the right person for the right job." This emphasis on human development and empowerment represents an extension of education's role in fostering entrepreneurial spirit at the micro-organizational level [10]. Thus, under reasonable management systems, enterprise employees gradually develop a spirit of enterprise ownership, actively participating in enterprise development activities and implementing the enterprise's decision plans. The positive interaction between entrepreneurs and employees can forge them into an indestructible collective, jointly expanding the enterprise's scale. This cohesion and the transmission of spirit within an organization or across generations are vital forms through which the entrepreneurial spirit is sustained and evolves [11]. Consequently, the enterprise can create greater value in the economic market, invigorating the entire society.

"Sincerity in Relationships" requires Chinese entrepreneurs to coordinate the contradictions between themselves and the broad masses of workers. They cannot harm the rights of workers for the sake of profit. In the context of China's new era, the relationship between entrepreneurs and workers is a key link in promoting high-quality development and achieving common prosperity. Enterprises should establish sharing mechanisms, such as employee stock ownership and option incentives, to align the interests of workers with those of the enterprise. They should improve the system of

workers' congresses, soliciting workers' opinions in major decisions involving their rights and interests. Technological innovation always stems from the gathering of the wisdom of the majority. Chinese entrepreneurs should encourage enterprise employees to innovate and create, providing them with free skill training courses, enhancing the skill competence of workers, and promoting their all-around development. Such integrative learning and incentive methods are conducive to nurturing the entrepreneurial inspiration and mindset necessary for innovation [12]. Simultaneously, they should encourage enterprise employees to participate in public welfare projects. Public welfare practice can demonstrate the enterprise's social responsibility, serving as an effective pathway for enterprises to transform private benefit into social benefit, enabling enterprises to better serve society.

4.5. Sincerity in Systems

"Cheng is the beginning and end of all things; without Cheng, there are no things." Since the operation of all things cannot be separated from "Cheng", Chinese entrepreneurs likewise cannot detach from the framework of China's socialist system with characteristics. They cannot violate the core socialist values. This is the fundamental bottom line for Chinese entrepreneurs to promote enterprise development within the economic market. "Sincerity in Systems" regards "Cheng" as China's socialist system. Chinese entrepreneurs must take this as their foundation to carry out the overall operation of their enterprises. This concept parallels the role of specific value systems (such as those in multicultural Islamic education) in shaping an entrepreneurial spirit aligned with broader societal objectives [13,14].

China's basic economic system is characterized by public ownership playing the dominant role and diverse forms of ownership developing together. The market plays the decisive role in resource allocation, promoting better integration between an effective market and a government that acts effectively. Distribution must adhere to the principle of distribution according to work being the mainstay, coexisting with multiple forms of distribution. Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurs must first integrate their enterprise development plans with national strategies such as regional coordination and innovation-driven development, identifying new opportunities therein. They should actively understand and effectively utilize policies promoted by the government, offering suggestions for policy optimization through reasonable channels. Moreover, they should proactively uphold market fairness, oppose unfair competition, and win markets relying on product technology and management innovation. Secondly, the state-owned economy concerns national security, playing a leading role in key sectors of the national economy, providing a stable cornerstone for the entire socialist economic development. Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurs must recognize the importance of efficient coordination across the upstream and downstream industrial chain. They cannot engage in actions that separate from the overall national economic development solely for personal gain. They should, within the bounds of reasonable laws and regulations, explore cooperation with different forms of capital to achieve complementary advantages and broaden development space. Finally, the survival and development of enterprises are rooted in the market demand created by the people, the labor force they provide, and the stable social environment they foster. Chinese entrepreneurs are not merely representatives managing capital; they are builders of the socialist cause, creators of social wealth, and servants of the people's needs. They absolutely must not become estranged from the people, committing vicious acts that sacrifice the people's interests.

5. Conclusion

In the tide of high-quality economic development in China's new era, an outstanding entrepreneurial spirit can propel technological innovation, invigorate the economic market, and promote the advancement of social productive forces. The concept of "Cheng"

in *The Doctrine of the Mean* is a crucial core of Confucian theory. "Cheng" permeates the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man, theory and practice, the individual and society, providing a unique research perspective on the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era. Based on the theoretical system of "Cheng" from *The Doctrine of the Mean* and incorporating specific theories from modern entrepreneurial spirit research, this paper systematically explores the rich connotations of the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era from the four dimensions of Sincerity in Motivation, Sincerity in Decision-Making, Sincerity in Relationships, and Sincerity in Systems.

The "Cheng of the Way of Heaven" represents the necessity of objective laws, while the "Cheng of the Way of Man" emphasizes human reverence for and implementation of these laws. Together, they demand that the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era must premise itself on complying with the laws of epochal development. They must grasp the trends of industrial upgrading amidst technological transformation, identify their market positioning within the new development pattern, implement sustainable concepts in green development, and abandon short-term behavior driven by quick success and instant benefit.

"From enlightenment to Cheng" emphasizes reaching the state of "Cheng" through practical exploration. The decision-making of Chinese entrepreneurs absolutely cannot be the product of subjective assumptions; it must be based on practical cognition of market demand and industry regularities. Sincerity in Decision-Making means adhering to seeking truth from facts when laying out enterprise development, not being deceived by false appearances. It entails upholding a rigorous and pragmatic attitude in technological research and development, avoiding formalistic pseudo-innovation. In the process of adjusting enterprise development strategies, it requires respecting practical feedback, not stubbornly clinging to rigid decisions based solely on past summarized experience.

"Fulfilling one's own nature" is the prerequisite for "fulfilling the nature of others." Only by "fulfilling the nature of things" can one "assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth" and achieve "forming a ternion with Heaven and Earth." The spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era must embody a people-oriented concept. Sincerity in Relationships is reflected in the relationship between entrepreneurs and employees. For employees, "Cheng" means respecting individual value, providing fair development opportunities and reasonable protection of rights and interests, and building a corporate culture of mutual trust and collaborative cooperation. For the enterprise, "Cheng" means proactively assuming social responsibility, adhering firmly to the bottom line of product quality, avoiding false advertising, and winning market reputation through integrity, ultimately contributing to the nation's goal of achieving common prosperity. The spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs in the new era has long transcended mere profit-seeking mentality. Instead, it aims to enable Chinese entrepreneurs to harmonize their relationship with enterprise employees through the state of "absolute Cheng," thereby cohering the cohesive force of the entire enterprise, promoting socio-economic development, achieving the unification of enterprise value and social value, and genuinely practicing the responsibility of "assisting the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth."

As the foundation for the existence of all things, "Cheng" is similarly the prerequisite for the survival and development of Chinese enterprises in the new era. The national basic economic system clarifies the fundamental direction of China's economic development and serves as the institutional guarantee for lawful operation and fair competition of enterprises. Sincerity in Systems demands that entrepreneurs consciously abide by market rules and laws and regulations, not touching red lines or overstepping bottom lines, upholding fairness in market competition, and eliminating unfair competitive practices. Only by revering and abiding by the system with an attitude of "Cheng" can enterprises secure long-term development space within a stable social environment. Conversely, any opportunistic behavior that violates the system and its core values will ultimately undermine the independence and sustainability of the enterprise.

On the new journey of comprehensively building a modern socialist country, only by internalizing the traditional wisdom of "Cheng" can Chinese entrepreneurs truly embody the spirit of Chinese entrepreneurs conforming to the requirements of the new era. They must use Sincerity in Motivation to determine the direction of enterprise development, use Sincerity in Decision-Making to solidify the foundation of enterprise development, use Sincerity in Relationships to cohere the unity of the enterprise, and use Sincerity in Systems to safeguard the operational bottom line of the enterprise. Only thus can they add even stronger force to the prosperity of China's economy. This internalization and cultivation process is, in essence, a strategic endeavor to equip key actors with the spirit and competencies essential for socio-economic development [15].

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