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## To Inherit the Ancient Teachings of Confucius and Mencius and Establish Modern Confucianism

by  
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To Inherit the Ancient Teachings of Confucius and Mencius  
and Establish Modern Confucianism

by ZHOU Youguang

Translated by Rebecca Shuang Fu  
and with a Foreword by Victor H. Mair

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## Foreword

By Victor H. Mair

University of Pennsylvania

I first met Zhou Youguang in 1981. I had gone to Beijing for two purposes: to meet with members of the Script Reform Committee (*Wenzi Gaige Weiyuanhui*) and to read Dunhuang manuscripts at the National Library and in the library of Peking University. In those days, China was a very different place from what it is now. There were countless bicycles and no private cars. The pace of life was much, much slower; there was a two-currency system (RMB and FEC [Foreign Exchange Certificates]); and fraternizing with Americans was sharply discouraged.

I was a young assistant professor then, while Zhou Youguang was already an old and very distinguished scholar. I still remember very clearly being called to a meeting with Professor Zhou and about twenty other members of the Script Reform Committee, including Ni Haishu, Yin Binyong, and many other luminaries whom I had long admired from afar. These were the men who had transformed the Chinese writing system, and I was in awe of them. The meeting was held in a dark, quiet room, with light filtering in through a few windows that were placed high up on the back wall, particles of dust glinting in the rays of sunlight streaming in through the partially opened curtains.

They sat me at the front of the room and asked me to make a presentation about my interest in Chinese language reform. After I did so, a discussion ensued in which the assembled group encouraged me to carry out my own efforts on behalf of Chinese language reform from abroad and explained their plans for the future in China. When the meeting was over, I remember Professor Zhou getting in an old car (my recollection is that it was gray in color) that belonged to the Script Reform Committee and being taken home.

Thus began my long association with this grand old man who later became one of my closest friends. I see him at least once a year when I go to China, and he has stayed in my home in America. We have had many long conversations about all manner of things, so I can say that I probably know him as well as anyone except his own family members.

Up until about ten years ago, we seldom discussed anything except language issues. But then he started to take an increasingly intense interest in world affairs, and he was always grateful when I would bring him an almanac or other materials for studying global issues. I was especially intrigued by how he focused on quantitative, statistical aspects of social and political questions, and I could see the economist of yore coming back into play. I noticed an ever greater willingness on Professor Zhou's part to be critical of things with which he disagreed.

Zhou Youguang was never a revolutionary in the mold of the great writer Lu Xun, who was reported to have said on his deathbed, "Hàn zì bù miè, Zhōngguó bì wáng (漢字不滅，中國必亡 / "If Chinese characters are not eradicated, China will perish"). Professor Zhou's interest in language reform was more practical and less transformative, and he was always cautious when making predictions about what will or should happen to the Chinese writing system. In general, he impressed me as being rather reflective and reserved, though, as I mentioned above, in recent years he has become more willing to speak out against matters in his country with which he disagrees. So I knew that something was afoot in his thinking, that he was becoming increasingly concerned about the future of China. Yet, on my last visit to his home, when he gave me the Chinese draft of the present article, I must confess that I was stunned.

I thought that I knew Zhou Youguang very well, but I never expected him to espouse such an ardent Confucian position. This article constitutes a strong advocacy of Confucianism as a guiding ideology for the future of China. That a man like Professor Zhou, who has spent the last sixty-plus years in a communist country, who knew Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai personally, who was a proponent (indeed architect) of character simplification and romanization, and who is lionized in the People's Republic of China, was espousing the positions put forward in this paper came as a complete surprise to me. I never imagined that he would adopt such a *radical* stance. Although others may view Professor Zhou's essay as profoundly conservative in nature, I consider it to be radical — in the context of his entire life and with regard to his position in China as it has existed since 1949 and as it exists at the current moment.

Of course, Professor Zhou's argument for Confucianism is not one that naively urges traditional Confucian views, nor even neo-Confucian tenets. Rather, he propounds what may be viewed as a type of New Confucianism. To help readers understand what is meant by that, we

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have included in this issue a bibliography of works relevant to the reemergence of Confucian doctrine in contemporary China.

Finally, when Professor Zhou gave me the Chinese draft of this article (which he considers the most important thing he has written in the last decade), he emphasized that he wanted it to come out first in English. He has also given us permission to publish the Chinese version, which we shall do in a separate issue.

To Inherit the Ancient Teachings of Confucius and Mencius  
and Establish Modern Confucianism<sup>1</sup>

By ZHOU Youguang

Beijing, China

Translated by Rebecca Shuang Fu, University of Pennsylvania

The Chinese cultural tradition accumulated and preserved the six classics during the dynastic periods of Xia (though unattested), Shang (1600–1046 BC), and Zhou (1046–256 BC): *The Book of Odes*, *The Book of Documents*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Music*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. These were compiled and named the “Six Classics” at a later time. But the *Book of Music*, if it ever existed as a separate classic, vanished, while the other five classics were preserved. Without exception, pre-Qin philosophers assimilated the essence of the Six Classics. Confucius deleted what he thought to be inappropriate from *The Book of Odes* and *The Book of Documents*, established the tradition of *The Book of Rites* and *The Book of Music*, and composed *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. He was well versed in ancient precepts and founded a new school, named *ru* 儒. *Ru* originally referred to shamanist methods of dealing with mortuary affairs and holding rites, but later the term came to mean a career devoted to propagating such teachings and bringing civilization to the people. It must be pointed out that the concept of *ru* existed even before Confucius’s time, but the philosophical system of the Confucian school was not established until then. Confucianism was initiated by Confucius, developed by Mencius, and inherited by later generations. It has undergone constant transformation and reconstruction since its establishment, but the principles developed by Confucius and Mencius, such as *ren* 仁 (benevolence) and *yi* 義 (justice), came down to us without change. Confucianism is accordingly also called *Kong Meng zhi xue* 孔孟之學 (Teachings of Confucius and Mencius).

Confucianism centers on *ren*, and it focuses on *xiu ji* 修己 (refining oneself) and *an ren*

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<sup>1</sup> *Sino-Platonic Papers* will publish a Mandarin edition of this paper at a later date.



安人 (bringing peace and security to other people). *Ren* derives semantically from *ren* 人 (person) and from *er* 二 (two), which implies that a behavioral choice should be made when two people coexist. The principle of coexistence suggested by Confucius is *ai* 愛 ([universal] love). *Ren* is equal to *ai ren* 愛人 (loving other people), as Confucius says: "[A benevolent man] helps others to establish themselves just as he has established himself, and he assists others in making achievements just as he himself has made achievements." *Xiu ji* means refining one's personality and morality, while *an ren* refers to serving society and helping people live contented and prosperous lives. Confucius illustrates this ideal in the saying "One cultivates himself and thereby brings peace and security to his fellow men."

In the late Spring and Autumn period (771–476 BC), vassals competed against each other for land, and the people were afflicted with constant wars, struggling to survive in the turmoil. In order to amend this miserable situation, Confucius wished to restore the hierarchical and social order of the Western Zhou (1046–771 BC). After failing to fulfill his ambition, he committed himself to education. Prior to Confucius's time, the form of educational organization was *guanxue* 官學 (official schools), which only *guozi* 國子 (men of the aristocratic class) were privileged to attend. Sensing the limitations of this educational system, Confucius initiated private schools. He taught students entirely in accordance with their aptitude, rather than dividing them into different social classes. Confucius also promoted civilian-run educational organizations and advocated academic freedom. All through his life, Confucius "learned without fatigue, and taught without wearying." It is said that he had three thousand disciples who came from more than ten states, and seventy-two of them accomplished their studies and became notables of the time. During the Spring and Autumn period, Confucius's private school was undoubtedly an educational organization of unprecedented size.

Confucius placed emphasis only on the individual's current life and did not concern himself with the next lifetime. He says: "If one does not even understand life, how can he understand death?" and "If one is not even able to serve men, how can he serve the spirits?" Confucius's teaching lays particular stress on social practice, and it never indulges in lofty and abstract empty language. In other words, precisely speaking, Confucianism should be classified as an approach in the field of humanities or social sciences rather than as a philosophy.

One or two centuries after Confucius's death, Mencius inherited and developed Confucius's teaching. Mencius believed that the pursuit of good deeds and the capability to do good are the criteria that differentiate humans from animals. A person is born with the senses of "compassion, shame, modesty, and right and wrong," and can therefore make a behavioral choice spontaneously. As for *xiūjǐ* 修己, he brings forward the idea that one should "preserve his heart, cultivate his nature, limit his desires, and nurture his *qi*." With regard to *an ren*, Mencius, from *rénzhèng* 仁政 (benevolent government), leads up to the theory "The people are important and the rulers are slight," which takes the well-being of the people as the root of a sovereign state. He says: "The people are the most important [for a state], the spirits of the land and the grain are the next, and the rulers are the slightest."

The Legalist school promotes "farming and battling," and maintains that the warring states should be unified with violence. Taking the contrary view, Mencius advocates benevolent government and the kingly way, and he claims that only he who wins popularity among the people can rule the nation. He suggests that a cruel and heartless monarch is nothing but an isolated autocrat (*dúfū* 獨夫), and people should overthrow his rule. Confucius says that one should "die to achieve virtue," and Mencius suggests that one can "lay down his life for justice." They both think that truth outweighs the value of one's life.

Qin Shi Huangdi (r. 246–221 BC) employed bureaucrats as teachers (that is, cadres transmitting imperial edicts), as well as "burning books and burying Confucian scholars alive." Many Confucian scholars were killed in the cultural persecution due to their loyalty to the Confucian school, and consequently private organizations of education were abolished.

After that period the Confucian school was constantly affected and overshadowed by several non-Confucian schools of thought:

### **The Introduction of Yin–Yang Five-Phase Theory**

The early Han rulers accepted and carried out the Huang-Lao (Yellow Emperor and Laozi) tradition. They advocated "governing the state by non-action" for the purpose of giving people a respite to recover from the war. This tradition was challenged when the vigorous and ambitious Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141–87 BC), the key figure in the strengthening of the Han governmental

apparatus, took over the reins of government. Upon adopting Dong Zhongshu's (d. 104 BC) suggestion, Emperor Wu proscribed the hundreds of philosophical schools and venerated only the Confucians. During the pre-imperial period, states competed against each other, and hundreds of philosophical schools also contended. However, since "all-under-heaven" had already been united under the reign of Han, it was also the time to unify the official school. The ideas of the Legalists were harsh and cruel, Daoism highlighted emptiness and detachment, the Moist school tended to go to extremes, and only Confucians advocated the "doctrine of the mean." Therefore Confucianism became the choice of the rulers during the period of peace. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily indicate a divorce from the legal system in the Confucian political framework. Confucianism and Legalism are not different from each other with regard to whether a legal system is necessary. The main divergence between them is that the Confucian school considered the legal system to be an auxiliary tool of a benevolent government, whereas the Legalist school preached the law as a means of tyrannical government.

Dong Zhongshu introduced the term "three principals" (a ruler is the principal of his subjects; a father is the principal of his children; a husband is the principal of his wife) and "five constants" (benevolence, righteousness, rites, wisdom, and fidelity), which systematized and formularized the Confucian doctrines. However, he also believed "Heaven and people are homogeneous and therefore mutually correspond to each other." Consequently, he put forward the dictum of "the correspondence between Heaven and people," and personalized Heaven. In addition, Dong introduced the Yin-yang Five Phases Theory, suggesting that all things on earth could be divided into *yin* and *yang* but also integrated under Five Phases (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth). This theory led to the mystification of Confucianism.

### **The Corrosive Influence of Daoism and "Occult Learning"**

The centuries that separated the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 and the reunification of China by the Sui dynasty in 589 were marked by invasions of non-Chinese tribes and the political division between the North and the South. Confidence in the Confucian idea of social harmony and political order declined. Instead, not only Daoism but also the recently introduced Buddhism, as well as "occult learning," were prevalent and vastly expanded the intellectual and religious

imagination of Chinese. Consequently, Confucianism temporarily diminished in relative importance, as Daoism, Buddhism, and "occult learning" emerged to play a salient role in social and political life. Certain Confucian and Daoist canons were reinterpreted; for example, *Discourse on the Way and Virtue* was composed by He Yan 何晏 (d. 249), and *Laozi* and the *Book of Changes* were commented upon by Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249). Their work was based on Daoism interwoven with Confucian ideas and called "Occult Learning." This school valued philosophical "non-being," stressed political "non-action," and advocated an educational policy of "keeping the people in ignorance," all of which were in absolute opposition to Confucianism. The result of interpreting Confucianism with Daoism in this fashion was that the intrinsic quality of Confucianism was greatly corroded.

### **The Interference of Buddhism**

During the Sui dynasty (581–618) and the Tang dynasty (618–907), the concepts and terms of Confucianism were adopted to interpret the newly imported Buddhism, and consequently Chinese Buddhism began to take shape. China was, for most of the Tang era, the dominant power in East Asia and arguably had the strongest economy and highest prosperity of any region on the globe. As the saying goes, "the river does not reject the tributary of even a trickle if it can contribute to its affluence"; the Tang's glory was partly attributed to its open policy and the assimilation of international cultural elements. "Traveling to India in quest of the Buddhist scriptures" was a striking example of international cultural communication during that period. The stories from *Journey to the West* are still being widely circulated. Also, Japanese monastic students regularly came to China as envoys, mainly for the purpose of learning Chinese Buddhism. Confucianism was just one element among many in this multicultural atmosphere, and it seemed to be a declining trend.

Han Yu (768–824) decided to rejuvenate the tradition of Confucianism and labeled Buddhism a heresy. He brought forward the theory of Confucian orthodoxy (referring to Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, King Wen of Zhou, King Wu of Zhou, Duke Zhou, Confucius, and Mencius) in order to draw the line between Confucianism and Buddhism and to strengthen the power of the Confucian camp. In the fourteenth year of the Yuanhe era (820), Han Yu presented a memorial to

the throne opposing the veneration of Buddha's bones, which infuriated the Emperor Xianzong (r. 805–820). As a result, Han Yu was demoted to serving in Chaoyang (in modern Guangdong province). This experience was illustrated in one of Han's poems, which says: "In the morning I submitted a memorial to the highest heaven, and I was degraded to distant Chaoyang in the evening!" The failure of the anti-Buddhism movement had a great impact on China. From then on, Confucianism could no longer compete with Buddhism. The preponderance of Confucian scholars indulged in the study of Buddhism; they were depicted as "wearing a Confucian hat but with a Buddhist heart."

The period from the establishment of Song (in 960) to the fall of Qing (in 1911) was marked by politically coercive policies and by racial discrimination against the Han people. The Han were classified as third-ranked slaves under the rule of Mongolians and as second-ranked servants in the Manchurian Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Although the Ming dynasty was established and ruled by the Han people, Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–1398) was as harsh as and showed no more mercy than Qin Shi Huangdi. The Manchurian emperors constantly inflicted literary inquisitions upon Confucian scholars, forcing them to hide in heaps of ancient books. The sinicization of non-Chinese, who later became "benevolent and merciful" rulers, took at least three generations, during which Chinese civilization was in long-term stagnation.

The "study of principle" (also "study of the Way"), prevalent in both Song and Ming, is a variant of Confucianism under the influence of Buddhism. The Han Confucian scholars were fond of the classification of objects (or things) and the explanation of words from ancient books, while the Song scholars focused on principles of justice, as well as nature and endowment. This is why the mainstream study of Confucianism was called the "study of principle." Cheng Hao (1032–1085), Cheng Yi (1033–1107), and Zhu Xi (1130–1200) applied ideas of objective idealism to their study of principle, and claim that the "principles," as an incorporeal entity, existed prior to the universe and generated all things in the world. Lu Jiuyuan (1139–1193) and Wang Shouren (1472–1529), however, suggested that there are "no objects and no principles outside of the heart," and believed that the subjective "heart" was the origin of and generated all the objects in the universe. Zhang Zai (1020–1078) brought forward a monism based on *qi*, and thought that *qi*, which exists in myriads of changes in accordance with certain rules, is the

fundamental element of the universe and all objects. All the philosophers above abandoned the positive significance of the theories by Confucius and Mencius, and indulged in making intellectual enquiries on subtleness, as well as in studying the vague and unsubstantial. In a word, during Song and Ming, Confucianism was greatly influenced by Buddhism and was even "wrapped in a Buddhist coat."

### **Smearing Confucianism in the Class War**

*Lúnyǔ Pīzhù* (Annotations and Comments on the Analects; Beijing: Zhōnghuá Shūjú, 1974) compiled by the Department of Philosophy, Peking University, criticizes Confucianism by saying: "The Confucian school, which was established by Kong Qiu, was not only a reactionary school of thought, but also a reactionary bloc." Also, it claims: "By establishing his own sect and recruiting disciples everywhere, Kong Qiu gave enormous publicity to his reactionary teaching, and mustered his anti-revolutionary bloc." More ridiculously, it even interpreted "Is it not pleasant to learn with constant perseverance and practice," the famous beginning sentence of the *Analects*, as "this taught the disciples to train themselves into accomplices in restoring slavery."

The first volume of *Zhōngguó Shǐ Gǎo* (Draft of Chinese History; Beijing: Rénmín Chūbǎnshè, 1976), edited by Guo Moruo (1892–1978), asserts that the Legalist school was revolutionary but that the Confucian school was anti-revolutionary. It also reaches such judgments as "Kong Qiu was a reactionary educator," and "The *Analects* illustrates and highlights the obstinate and retrograde viewpoint of Kong Qiu. It is utilized by all reactionary classes as an ideological tool to oppress and deceive the people."

### **An Educational Movement That Spawned "Modern Confucianism"**

Influenced by the Western educational theory, the Japanese government, in 1868, successfully initiated the Meiji Restoration, which transformed Japan from a feudal state into a semi-feudal and semi-capitalistic country. By following the example of Japan, Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927), as the advisor of the Guangxu Emperor (r. 1875–1908), led a reformation to establish a constitutional monarchy in 1898, which, however, lasted only one hundred days before its total failure. Kang claims that the "sublime words with profound meaning" in *The Spring and Autumn*

*Annals* illustrate Confucius's behavior in "reforming the state system by employing the methods of antiquity." This facilitated finding evidence in Confucianism for the reformation promoted by the Manchurian government. Here Confucianism was adopted to serve the reformation and modernization movements. Kang was against the "nature of justice and principle" advocated by Song Neo-Confucian scholars, criticized the idea that people must "Maintain Heaven's truth and annihilate human's desire," and especially lashed out at the "three principles." In his interpretation, *ren* embraces the ideas "universal love, equality, and freedom."

Hu Shi (1891–1962) published *The Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* (vol. 1), in which he interpreted traditional Chinese academic learning from the perspective and in the method of Western sciences. Hu advocated "putting the Chinese cultural heritage in order," rather than "preserving the quintessence of Chinese culture," so as to reform the old culture and establish new ideas. He also criticized feudal autocracy and "the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues." In addition, Hu Shi was against excessively adhering to what Confucius and Mencius said. He called on scholars to overturn the orthodoxy of Confucianism and reevaluate Confucius, Mencius, and Confucianism from the perspective of scientism and equality.

### **Three Battlefields**

The Confucian school has been fighting on three battlefields since its origination.

#### *1. Battling the Ideology of Violence*

From the Spring-Autumn period to the Warring States period, over time military conflicts to annex territory became more frequent and more deadly. This social reality was illustrated in the *Mencius*, which contributes even more anti-violence discourses than the *Analects* does. For example, in the chapter "King Hui of Liang," it says:

Mencius went to see King Xiang of Liang. On coming out from the audience, he said to someone, "When I looked at him from a distance, he did not appear like a sovereign; when I drew near to him, I saw nothing venerable about him. Abruptly he asked: 'How can the kingdom be settled?'"

"I replied: 'It will be settled by being united under one sway.'

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“Who can unite it?”

“I replied: ‘He who has no pleasure in killing men can unite it.’”

“Who can give it to him?”

“I replied: ‘All the people of the nation will unanimously give it to him.’”

This razor-sharp response of Mencius brilliantly expounds his anti-violence idea.

Qin Shi Huangdi unified “all-under-heaven” by military power, but unwisely also attempted to govern it by military power. This is why the Qin dynasty was passed down to only a single successor before its fall. Emperor Gaozu of Han also obtained his rulership by military force, but governed the state by cultural achievements. This is why the Han dynasty lasted for four centuries. Consequently, people reached the conclusion that, although military power can be employed to seize power, it cannot be employed to administer a country. The anti-violence stance of the Confucian school had been verified as highly effective in statecraft. However, it was still a question whether sovereignty could be attained without violence. World War II filled the vacancy of historical experience and helped provide an answer. The Nazi military violence adopted by Hitler failed to unify Western Europe. On the contrary, it was the political achievements of democratic negotiation and agreement that facilitated the establishment of the European Union. This contrast serves as striking evidence proving that those who do not indulge in killing can succeed in unifying “all-under-Heaven.” History is putting an end to the karmic cycle of violence and moving to the way of realizing the Confucian doctrine of non-violence.

Amazingly, a two-thousand-year-old philosophy of benevolence and righteousness has managed to correct a twentieth-century ideology of violence.

## *2. The Battle with Anti-civilization*

The Confucian school valued knowledge, was dedicated to education, and laid the foundation of Chinese civilization. The Daoists and Legalists, on the contrary, advocated that the masses should be kept in ignorance, education should be limited to a privileged class, and bureaucrats should be established as the behavioral model; they also denied the significance of knowledge. Below is a list of selected non-Confucian philosophies:

Laozi says: “The ruler leads by emptying people's minds and filling up their bellies, by



weakening their ambition and toughening their resolve. He helps people lose everything they know, everything they desire, and creates confusion in those who think that they know. Practice not-doing, and everything will fall into place"; "if the people are of abundant wisdom and intelligence, evil affairs will originate therefrom"; "people are difficult to govern because they know too much"; "those who were good at dealing with the Way in antiquity did not try to bring the people to understanding, but kept them in ignorance." Han Feizi says: "To pursue the worthy and the intelligent when selecting ministerial clerks, and to go with the people's wishes when dealing with political affairs, are both hotbeds of chaos"; "a wise ruler uses [people's] strength but does not adopt their suggestions"; "the ignorant are afraid of causing wrongdoing and therefore dare not speak, and the intelligent have nothing to argue"; "in a wise ruler's state, there are no writings in either books or bamboo strips, for the law is used for teaching; there are also no words from the former kings, for the bureaucratic clerks are taken as teachers." As we see, this was the ancient counterpart of the famous quotation, "The more knowledge one has, the more reactionary he will be."

### *3. The Battle with Mysticism*

Confucianism speaks of neither heaven nor the "other shore," and on this subject it is actually close to atheism. Confucius says: "The master does not speak of prodigies, forces, disorder and gods." From the Shang period (sixteenth–eleventh century BC), at which time it was believed that divination must be practiced when important events happened, to Confucius's time, when he advocated not speaking of prodigies, forces, disorder and gods, the anti-mysticism battle of the Confucian school won a remarkable degree of success. There is no doubt that Confucianism is not a religion. However, influenced by Buddhism, people have actually gone so far as to equate Confucius with the patriarchs of Buddhism and Daoism, and have paid homage to them together. But Confucianism holds that learning should not be mystified, and truth itself cannot be tenable without allowing people to doubt or even challenge the proposed "truth."

The three battles of the Confucian school are in reality still significant today.

In a time of globalization, it is a common phenomenon to see the coexistence of both traditional culture and modern culture in a country. Modern culture mainly refers to universally-circulated natural sciences and social sciences. By comparison, traditional culture consists of

national literatures, histories, philosophies and religions. The latter are, consciously or unconsciously, in the midst of being modernized.

The mission of Confucianism in history was to defend the legitimacy of monarchs and maintain the social and political order of a feudal state. More than two millennia ago, when most parts of the world were under the system of slavery, Confucianism initiated and facilitated the establishment of feudal states governed by ritual and justice in East Asia. This superbly advanced achievement contributed to China's being the most advanced nation in the world through almost the entire feudal period. Confucianism was never designed to serve post-feudal society, and it is a retrospective projection to criticize Confucianism for not being qualified to facilitate the development of sciences and democracy. It is the contemporary generation, rather than Confucius himself, who tried to apply Confucianism to the post-feudal period. In other words, it is the historical mission of the contemporary Chinese intellectual elite to adapt Confucianism to the times and to realize its modernization.

The principles of modernizing Confucianism include: 1. Removing feudal elements and employing modern features. For example, "A ruler is the principal of his subjects" should be changed into "Bureaucrats are the people's servants." 2. Eliminating conservative elements and encourage creative ideas. For instance, "elaborating [what was bequeathed by one's predecessors] without creating [original works]" should be changed into "elaborating as well as creating." 3. Getting rid of the elements of mysticism and propagating practical doctrines. For example, it is very difficult for contemporary youth to comprehend certain theories, like "heaven and humans as a unity; with the sage inside and the ruler outside"; they do not understand either the form or the content of such statements. The ancient Chinese paired heaven and human because they did not at all understand what heaven is. However, since modern people have already gained a basic scientific comprehension of "the heavens," there is no longer a possibility of associating humans and heaven. The standard ideology that heaven appoints the monarch has been soundly thrashed; who would dare proclaim himself emperor on that basis? Even if one were only to call himself a sage, he would be ridiculed.

It is necessary to scrutinize Confucian ideas case by case. The teachings of the Confucian school can be divided into three categories, as listed below: (1) Teachings that are conducive to

the conduct of modern society, such as, "To say you know when you know, and to say you do not when you do not, that is wisdom," should be inherited and followed; (2) those that are reasonable in theory but that do not make sense in practice, should be corrected before adopting them. For example, "There are no parents in the world who have ever done anything wrong" should be revised to say "All parents in the world have sometimes been at fault" (i.e., it is advisable to point out the wrongdoing of parents only with tactful words; (3) as for statements that deviate from and even violate modern criteria, one should definitely abandon them without hesitation. One of the most striking examples in this category is the statement, "It is the women and the small men that are difficult to deal with," the infamous saying that fostered sexual discrimination.

Most Confucian scholars since the Han dynasty (206 BC – AD 200) have been ardently dedicated to the study of syntactic analysis and the explanations of words in the ancient canons, as well as composing commentaries and annotations on the Five Classics and the works of Confucius and Mencius. This long period witnessed few remarkable breakthroughs or innovations, but preserved numerous famous sayings with their true essence, thought-provoking and lasting. Confucius has been acclaimed as the one among the ancient sages who was able to adapt himself to the times. This is what one should learn from Confucius, apart from his intellectual legacy. Now is the time to remold, develop, and adapt Confucianism, which once served feudal sovereignty, into "Modern Confucianism," which can shed fresh light for the post-feudal era.

More than 2,500 years ago, Confucius advanced the theory of "Great Unity" to illustrate his ideal of the perfect society. "All-under-heaven as one community; the whole world as one great unity" has, generation by generation, been the utmost social ideal of the Chinese people. Inspired by the dream of "Great Unity," Kang Youwei became a dedicated pioneer of democratic reformation and composed his *Book on the Great Unity*. Later, Sun Zhongshan (1866–1925) proposed the "Three Principles of the People," which placed an emphasis on the idea of "All-under-heaven as one community." In modern times, aiming to achieve a "basically well-off" society, Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) launched China on the road to "Reformation and Openness." In addition, certain social slogans, like "keep pace with the times" and "society of harmony," both have a Confucian *locus classicus*. The overseas programs called "Confucius Institutions"

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were named directly after Confucius, the teacher of antiquity. The slogan "Mr. Science" parallels the Confucian idea that there is "no distinction between men of different classes in education," and "Mr. Democracy" echoes the view that government must have "people as the superior class and rulers as the inferior class." Here we see the seeds of Modern Confucianism.

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- [With contributions by Stephen Angle, John Berthrong, Weiming Tu, John Makeham, Roger Ames, Paul Goldin, and Daniel Bell.]

## Biographical Notes

### **ZHOU Youguang (1906–)**

ZHOU Youguang was born in Changzhou, Jiangsu Province, China. He was enrolled at St. John's University and Guanghua University in Shanghai during 1923–1927. Between 1928 and 1949 he taught at Guanghua University, Jiangsu Institute of Education, and Zhejiang Institute of Education. He also worked at Sin Hua Bank as a representative in London and New York. He then became a professor at Fudan University and Shanghai College of Finance and Economics.

In 1955, Professor Zhou attended the National Conference for the Reform of the Chinese Script. After the conference he worked on the State Language Commission as a research fellow, as well as serving as head of the Pinyin research office. He participated in the formulation of Hanyu Pinyin, the Basic Rules of Hanyu Pinyin Orthography, and the Chinese Sign Language Alphabet. He introduced Hanyu Pinyin at a conference of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO); the ISO later voted to make Hanyu Pinyin the international standard for spelling Mandarin Chinese (ISO 7089). Subsequently he published *Hànzì gǎigé gàilùn*, (An Introduction to the Reform of Chinese Writing), which was translated into Japanese by Hirokuni Kitta, and *Zhōngguó yǔwén de shídài yǎnjìn*, which was translated into English by Li-Ching Chang as *The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Scripts*.

Professor Zhou was an academic advisor to the *Hànyǔ Dàcídiǎn* (Comprehensive Chinese Word Dictionary), a member of the editorial committee of the *Zhōngguó dàbǎikē quǎnshū* (Encyclopedia Sinica), one of the three Chinese members of the Sino-American joint committee for the Chinese version of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and an international academic advisor for the Japanese version of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He has held professorial positions at Peking University, Renmin University, Tsinghua University, and the Graduate School of the Chinese Institute of Social Sciences. He was also a committee member of the fourth, fifth, and sixth meetings of the People's Political Consultative Conference.

Professor Zhou advocates research into modern studies of the Chinese characters and comparative studies of writing systems. He published *Shìjiè wénzì fāzhǎn shǐ* (A History of the



Development of World Writing Systems), *Bǐjiào wénzìxué chūtàn* (An Early Exploration of the Comparative Studies of Writing Systems), *Zhōu Yǒuguāng yǔwén lùn jí* (Anthology on Language and Writing), and more than thirty other monographs, as well as more than three hundred research articles. After his retirement in 1989, he published *Wénhuàxué cóngtán* (A Series of Dialogues on Cultural Studies) and essays on human culture such as *Bǎisui xīn gǎo* (New Essays at the Centenary), *Zhāo wén dào jí* (Essays on “Knowing the Way in the Morning”), and *Shí bèi jí* (Essays on Collecting Shells).

*Zhōu Yǒuguāng yǔwén lùn jí* won the highest award of the 2007 Wu Yuzhang Prize for Humanities and Social Sciences. (Wu Yuzhang was a key figure in the script-reform efforts of the 1950s and, after Zhou Enlai, was the person most responsible for convincing Professor Zhou to change from working as an economist to concentrating on language issues. Professor Zhou had had a strong interest in applied linguistics for many years; and this — aside from his desire to serve his country — made him quite willing to change careers.) *Shí bèi jí* won the Chinese National Library’s 2012 Wenjin Prize.

Professor Zhou served as a consultant to the Sharp Company of Japan in devising what was probably the first electric typewriter for Chinese. Decades later, he still types all of his books and articles on his beloved little Sharp typewriter.

— Based on a translation from Chinese by Gianni Wan

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## Photos



Zhou Youguang at his Sharp typewriter. Photo courtesy of Zhou Xiaoping.

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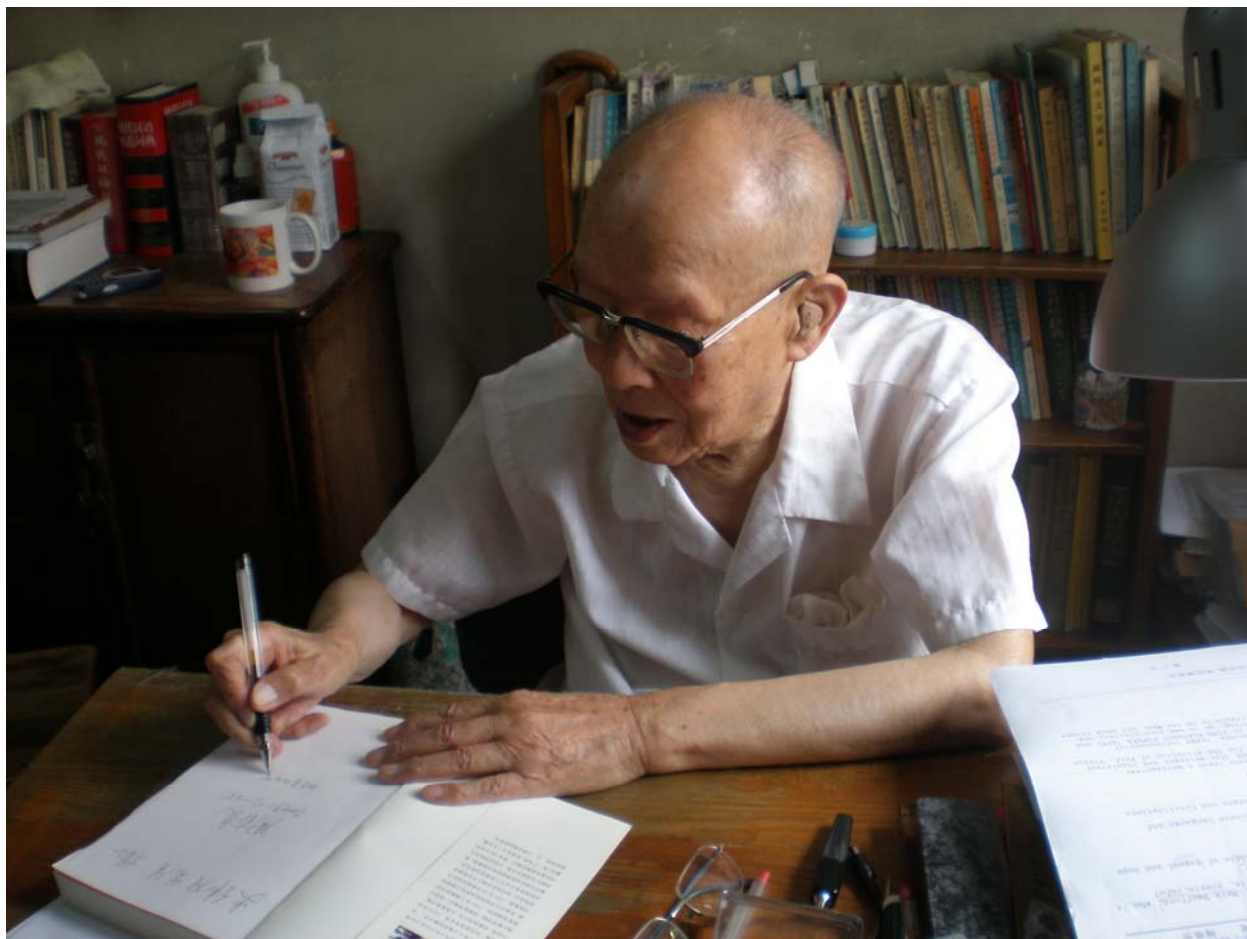


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