

From Confucius to Mr. Kong

Xiong Peiyun

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Abstract: After opening up and undergoing numerous reforms, China now boasts an unprecedented vitality, and all this thanks to a new figurehead. Unlike Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science who attracted the masses through loud proclamations in pre-1949 China, this character, Mr. Kong (the Chinese name for Confucius), has withstood obstacles and gradually transformed the country. Of course, this Mr. Kong is not the same Confucius whom we speak of in this paper but he does represent collectively accepted principles of openness in an open society. Like democracy and science, he contributes to society's progress.

In traditional Chinese culture, Confucianism was by no means the only school of thought. Confucius was neither the first to create Chinese values nor was he the only thinker. For this reason, in today's open society in China, we must first consider the current situation before replying to the multiple choice type question: "Which type of Confucius does China need?" and not the true or false type question "Was Confucius a great man?" In other words, we must learn how to ask complex questions of historical figures, and not straightforward ones, questions that provide information useful to our generation, and we should not accept or reject them outright by using overused analogies.

China has already begun its transformation into an open society, but adapting to the modern age is a long process that has not been completed. In order to succeed, the importance of an open society must be recognized and efforts must be made to construct it. This openness does not only mean that China must open its borders, but that there must be many communication channels between citizens to enable them to fulfil their potential. Furthermore, it is those very people who achieve fulfilment through their own value judgements who will play a key role in changing ideas that are now obsolete.

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