

Confucius Interpreted by a Confucian:
Feng Youlan's Interpretations of the *Analects*

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In this paper, I discuss Feng Youlan's critical commentary on Confucius and the *Analects*. My focus is on some of his important exegeses of the passages of the *Analects* and his inference to Confucius' underlying ideas. Then, I attempt to unravel the import of his exegeses in a broader theoretical context. I will expound the theoretical underpinnings of Feng's commentary that are grounded on the New Metaphysics (*xinlixue*) he developed in the 1930's as the attempt to modernize the Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. Feng considers his New Metaphysics as a crucial step forward from (*jiezhelijiang*) what is left over by the Neo-Confucianism, that is, the construction of a new system that can capture with logical precision the true spirit of the Chinese philosophy as exemplified in *ZhongYong*: the principle of *ji gaoming er dao zhongyong*. Feng holds that Confucius' ideas, as expressed in the *Analects*, only touch on without firmly grasping this important principle. Confucius "has yet to reach the highest standard of the principle, especially concerning *ji gaoming*," as Feng argues. This critical interpretation is in effect a result of Feng's attempt to confront the original Confucianism with his own brand of Contemporary Modern Confucianism. His exegeses of the key ideas of the *Analects* exactly presuppose this theoretical context, which I will articulate in detail in this paper so as to shed light on Feng's philosophical commentary on the *Analects*.