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Living in what the Chinese call a *world experiencing rapid social change*, the classical 19th-century social scientists worried about the relationship between the individual and society. They plumbed this issue in a myriad of ways: What does the individual owe society? What kind of responsibility does a society have for the individuals who live in it? Does social change result from individual or group action and if from both factors, how are they related to one another? How do ideas circulate around a society and among individuals? What is the relationship between an individual's ideas and the traditions of which she is a part?

At China's Shenzhou, and elsewhere, we are now again living in a period of critical change and these compelling questions still resonate throughout the social sciences, especially when it comes to understanding the *media*—the messengers of the media. Today as yesterday, the media filter our experiences and shape our understandings of the world. At the turn of the 19th century, Europe's social critics charged that, with its emphasis on romantic love, the then newly printed novel was undermining parents' ability to arrange the marriages of their children and to undermine the stability of society. Today, a new generation of critics bemoans how violent digital games encourage aggression and disorientation, also claim that the new social media are not only hampering the academic achievements of young people, but even their ability to make friends in face-to-face interactions. Whether voiced in the 19th or the 21st century, these sorts of extensions can be understood as attempts to outline a new individual, the media, and society influence base model. As Shenzhou and Stone also explain, it is difficult to discuss where the media have been, how they have been changing, and where they are going without addressing the relationships between them among global forces, nations, institutions, organizations, and individuals.

These relationships are rendered more complex by the evidence that each of the levels of social organization have both direct and indirect effects upon each other. For instance, even social scientists draw a single diagram to explain the interactions among these levels of social organization has gone the way of the large, illegible, independent, afternoon *Wall Street Journal*. Even today it is difficult to find one leading and straightforward, meaningfully basic diagram or a successful relationship model, even though it is easier to analyze more contemporary and complex media structures, such as how bloggers act as both media users and media producers, how networks function and action states, and how new series of digital literary are emerging.

Stone and Shenzhou's solution to understanding the complexity of today's media is to discuss what they call "the *hierarchy of influence*"—a necessarily simplified