

# THE CHINESE CLASSIC OF FAMILY REVERENCE

A PHILOSOPHICAL  
TRANSLATION OF  
THE XIAOJING

HENRY ROSEMONT, JR.  
and ROGER T. AMES



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Dedicated to a friend,  
Bob Solomon, who loved us all as family

*If you say . . . that we cannot be in love with everyone at once,  
I merely point out to you that, as a matter of fact, certain  
persons do exist with all enormous capacity for friendship and  
for taking delight in other people's lives; and that such persons  
know more of truth than if their hearts were not so big.*

—William James



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## Translators' Preface

From its origins in the prehistoric past, an ever-evolving Chinese culture has been unique among the world's civilizations, both in terms of its unbroken continuity and in the rich and varied institutional, material, and conceptual artifacts its peoples have produced. At the same time, this richness and variety guarantees that many of these artifacts will have at least partial counterparts in other civilizations, thus making it difficult to isolate, in brief compass, what it is about Chinese culture that does indeed make it unique.

Nevertheless, upon entering into China's past, certain major themes will emerge as they are repeatedly expressed in different facets of Chinese life. One of these themes is the centrality of the family, which has thoroughly permeated the sociopolitical, economic, metaphysical, moral, and religious dimensions of Chinese history since at least the early Neolithic period. A fair argument can be made that *all* relationships within a Chinese world—social, political, and indeed cosmic relations—are conceived of in familial terms. In the classroom the teacher is “teacher-father or teacher-mother” (*shifu* 師父 or *shimu* 師母) and students are “older-sister student and younger-brother student” (*xuejie* 學姐 and *xuedi* 學弟); from earliest times the Emperor was known as the “Son of ‘Heaven’” (*tianzi* 天子) and as “Father and Mother of the Heavens and the Earth” (*futianmudi* 父天母地); later his country-level civil servants who represented the dragon throne were colloquially designated as the “Father-Mother Officials” (*fumuguan* 父母官); in the cosmos, even the heavens and the earth (*tiandi* 天地 or *qiankun* 乾坤) stand in familial relationships to one another.

To be sure, family structures and associated values are found in virtually every culture past and present; kinship relations have been a central focus of anthropological field studies since the discipline began, and family values have been prominent in the development of Western civilization since the days of the Hebrew Scriptures. Eight of the Ten Commandments are negatively phrased; the obligation to honor our parents is one of the two that are not.

But in China, family values were discernible, and discernible as fundamental, throughout the culture. Physical evidence of ancestral sacrifices has been found in archaeological remains from as early as the fifth millennium BCE. It should therefore come as no surprise that family reverence was one of the most basic and defining values of the Chinese people, especially the early Confucians. Indeed, one may even go so far as to say that, for them, filial reverence was a *necessary* condition for developing any of the other human qualities of excellence. In the Confucian tradition, human morality and the personal realization it inspires is grounded in the cultivation of family feeling. In the *Analects of Confucius*, we read:

It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of family reverence and fraternal responsibility (*xiaoti* 孝弟) to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion. Exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子) concentrate their efforts on the root, for the root having taken hold, the proper way (*dao* 道) will grow therefrom. As for family reverence and fraternal responsibility, it is, I suspect, the root of consummate conduct (*ren* 仁). (1.2)

Given this centrality of family feeling in the evolution of a Confucian moral sensibility, we have tried, on the basis of the *Xiaojing* 孝經—the *Classic of Family Reverence*—and the supplemental passages found within the other early philosophical writings, to articulate what we take to be a specifically Confucian conception of “role ethics.” This role ethics takes as its starting point and as its inspiration the perceived necessity of family feeling as ground in the development of the moral life.

A large body of writing—much of it didactic and exhortative—has been devoted to the subject of family feeling, not least of all the text translated here, the canonical *Xiaojing*, or *Classic of Family Reverence*. Anyone at all skeptical of the importance of family values in classical and imperial China will quickly be disabused of their uncertainties by reading this short work.

But if read hurriedly, without sufficient background and reflection, the *Classic of Family Reverence* will almost surely be dismissed as elitist, paternalistic, sexist, and at once oppressive and repressive in its prescriptions, and consequently worthless for helping citizens of the twenty-first century to rethink the idea of family values in a shrinking yet ever more populous world. Such a negative reading of the text would not be altogether strenuous; countless Chinese men over the centuries have invoked the

text as warrant for oppressive behavior toward family members, and not a few emperors have ruled as cruel despots. The text may be dismissed not only by those of a liberal bent today, suspicious of what the call to “family values” has come to mean for right-wing zealots and religious fundamentalists; many conservatives, too, may recoil at what appear to be strictures against libertarian values of independence and individual freedom that run through the *Classic of Family Reverence*. Moreover, imperial Chinese history had its surfeit of despotic emperors who would brook no challenge to their edicts, and no small number of scholar-officials in the civil service had to ignore the Confucian injunction to remonstrate, prudently citing selectively those portions of the *Xiaojing* and other canonical texts that emphasized unswerving loyalty to both father and ruler.

We, the present translators, have no truck with authoritarianism in any of its ideological disguises—sexist, patriarchal, racist, homophobic, or otherwise; to provide even implicit support for any of these “isms” is not what has motivated us to proffer the *Classic of Family Reverence* to a contemporary audience. Nor do we present the work merely for its antiquarian interest; nor, emphatically, to reanimate an all too familiar stereotype of “Oriental despotism.”

On the contrary, we offer our translation of the *Classic of Family Reverence* in the firm belief that it has much to say to everyone—liberals and conservatives alike—who would seek a more peaceful and just tomorrow than far too many of our fellow human beings enjoy today, and who would seek as well spiritual insight in an ever-increasingly secular world. Our focus herein is on the Confucian persuasion, but our overall aim is more general: to increase an understanding and appreciation of other ways of thinking and living in order to better understand and evaluate our own, and thereby to promote an inclusive cultural conversation rather than an exclusive debate.

To elaborate upon this general aim, consider the ease with which the Bible has been selectively read to provide warrant for slavery, the Crusades, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War, and the cross burnings, lynching, and other racist evils perpetrated by the Klu Klux Klan. Given this sorry record, it might well be asked why any decent and intelligent person would want to become, or remain, a Christian.

We insist that this question *must* be asked, because Christianity is not going to go away—although some might wish it so—nor are its Abrahamic brethren, Judaism and Islam. We insist equally that there are a great many highly intelligent and thoroughly decent Christians, Jews, and Mus-

lims, and consequently we believe it necessary to understand, appreciate, and accommodate—not merely tolerate—their beliefs as they differ from our own in order for genuine dialogue among cultures to go forward.

This point can be seen in another way. If Christians cannot but acknowledge historically the many Klan thugs among their number, they can much more affirmatively acknowledge the civil-rights activists over the past half-century who have been largely responsible for the demise of the Klan—activists who themselves have emerged overwhelmingly from the congregations of African-American, and many White, Christian churches.

Thus, if the Bible can be interpreted broadly and charitably—and, in our view, more profoundly—as liberating rather than exclusive and confining, so, too, we believe, can the texts of classical Confucianism in general, and the *Classic of Family Reverence* in particular, be read in the same way, especially regarding filial respect and family values. For just as the world's religious traditions are not going to disappear, neither are families and their attendant values, and we believe that reconstructing social, political, and moral philosophy in a more multiethnic and interreligious global context in the twenty-first century must take this fact into account. Moreover, we do not lament this need. If families and family values have oppressed a great many people—especially women and children—in the past and present, they have also been significantly responsible for much of the happiness enjoyed by human beings past and present, and have served to mitigate much human sorrow and grief. Families have been a source of economic strength and security in virtually every human culture and arguably will remain such. It is doubtful that any national or transnational government will ever be able to provide adequate social welfare services for a population fast approaching seven billion in a resource-shrinking and ecologically fragile world that would diminish our reliance upon the institution of family.

It is therefore an important philosophical task, as we see it, to inquire more deeply into the concept of the family and to ask which aspects of it should be rejected, which elements might be modified, and which should be strengthened. While this inquiry may be undertaken from a variety of perspectives, in the present work we advance the Confucian perspective; few if any philosophical schools have championed family values as persistently as the early Confucians, and much can be learned by attending to what they had to say on the subject.

To aid this investigation, we have provided a lengthy introduction to the historical, philosophical, and religious dimensions of the *Classic of*

*Family Reverence*, as well as a lexicon of key terms, and notes to both the introduction and our translation. The resultant work is ten times longer than the translation itself, but was written in the hope that these materials will help to contextualize the *Classic of Family Reverence* for readers and to provide some guidelines for interpreting it, both historically in China, and for its contemporary significance for all societies.

The results of such readings may well be surprising. Family values can be seen as necessary for living full social, moral, and religious human lives. The importance of intergenerationality in human relations and interactions can be appreciated anew; a different way of defining oneself can be envisaged; a more robust concept of social justice might replace the narrow definition currently in vogue; even death and dying may be approached differently.

Our interpretations, however, are to be considered as suggestive, not definitive. For the *Classic of Family Reverence* to come alive for the reader, the reader must actively engage with the text. We are confident that the effort will be worthwhile. At the minimum it should provide at least a partial answer to the question of what makes Chinese culture Chinese; more expansively perhaps, it may also provide insight into the question of what makes human beings human.



# Introduction

## I. WHY STUDY THIS TEXT?

The Chinese character *xiao* 孝 (pronounced “sheew” in a falling, affirmative tone) was originally a highly stylized picture of a gray-haired old person 老 and a young child 子, reflecting as it does generational deference and the reverence it engenders. Ideally, each generation instructs and inculcates in the succeeding generation a reverence for the family by modeling the appropriate conduct toward the generation that preceded them, thus suffusing the family with unconditional love and a sense of belonging. *Xiao* has conventionally been translated as “filial piety,” and to the extent that the pious are deferential, the term is not altogether misleading, for deference is certainly called for in the *Classic of Family Reverence* (*Xiaojing* 孝經). But it is to *people* living and dead in *this* world that Confucians defer, not to religious figures, usually associated with the Abrahamic traditions, who inhabit another, transcendent world. Moreover, “piety” often carries a sense of the “sanctimonious” that is absent from the Chinese *xiao*. Hence, we believe *xiao* is better rendered as “family responsibility,” “family deference,” “family feeling,” or “family reverence,” the term we have chosen for our translation of this work.

*Xiao* is the foundation of all Confucian teachings, for without feeling reverence for and within one’s family, the moral and spiritual cultivation necessary for becoming “a consummate human being” (*ren* 仁) and a socially and politically engaged “exemplary person” (*junzi* 君子) would not be possible. Significantly, this Confucian “role ethics”—how to live optimally within the roles and relations that constitute one—originates in and radiates from the concrete family feelings that constitute the relations between children and their elders and the interdependent roles they live. Such family feeling is ordinary and everyday yet at the same time is arguably the most extraordinary aspect of the human experience.

In attempting to cultivate the proper attitude of and toward family reverence, and to express it appropriately, it is necessary to have a family. This family may be large or small, and may, at least from today’s perspective, include surrogate others who are not related by blood or marriage. But a family there must be in order for *xiao* to be practiced; to attempt to

do so with total strangers, or alone, would be like trying to learn how to swim without water.

Families have been around for some time and are found in virtually every culture past and present. Patterns of familial interactions can and have varied widely across time and cultures, as have the definitions of what constitutes a family. While the family as an institution is by no means going to disappear in the immediate future, there are a number of social, economic, and technological factors undermining the family as we have known it, and it is becoming uncertain whether, or in what ways, families will continue to occupy the central role in our lives that they have done in the past. And if not, why study family reverence?

Worse, not a few people have thought that the family, at least in anything like its present form, *ought* to disappear, being only a continuation of chattel slavery in modern form. Some feminists and social reformers have been severely critical of the family on a variety of grounds. Summarizing this critique, one scholar notes:

The nuclear family was one of the institutions which came under heavy attack from what was then called “the counter culture.” Some of the criticisms to which it was subjected were specifically feminist; some were not. The nuclear family was said to fulfill certain economic functions which made it a cornerstone of the capitalist economic system. In addition, the nuclear family was said to transmit capitalist ideology, instilling the values of competition, discipline, and possessiveness. Feminists argued that it was oppressive to women; gay liberationists argued that it discriminated against homosexuals; many people complained that it was emotionally and sexually repressive to the marriage partners and some saw it as oppressive to children.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this kind of general critique, some people have insisted that the *worst* kind of family was that put forward by the Confucians. Walter S. Slote argues that “Confucianism was based on authoritarianism, and filial piety was the principal instrument through which it was established and maintained.”<sup>2</sup> An equally strong statement comes, this time from a Chinese scholar, Jiwei Ci, whose perceptions are informed by the fact that he was raised within this cultural tradition:

These two aspects of Confucian relationships, kinship on the one hand and hierarchy-reciprocity on the other, are seamlessly joined

and mutually defining. As a result, those who have absorbed the Confucian concept of human relations would be *socially and ethically at sea* if they were to enter into relations with strangers, where the conjunction of hierarchical-reciprocal relations and kinship ties simply does not exist. [Italics added]<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, at the turn of the twentieth century the traditional Chinese family and the conservative values that it represents was one of the main targets of passionate reformers who sought to drag a humiliated and convulsing China into the modern world. The hierarchical Confucian family and its structural inequalities came to be seen as emblematic of everything that was holding China back from scientific development and democratization.<sup>4</sup>

More specifically, in recent scholarship on the *Xiaojing* itself, Hu Pingsheng disputes the putatively romantic claims made by more traditionally minded scholars that family reverence is the perennial flower of Chinese culture, and that the *Xiaojing* is the classic that has developed and perpetuated this cultural theme. He would allow that, while historically the *Xiaojing* has certainly been one of the more important of the classics and that, in a traditionally socialistic society, its advocacy of modes of respect for seniors still persists, a thorough study of it is warranted most importantly by the need to understand the ancient Chinese feudal society, its clan structure, and a way of thinking that took loyalty and family reverence as its key ideas. In fact, while he allows that the *Xiaojing* does expound on family reverence to some significant degree, Hu insists that its purpose, far from advocating a doctrine of family reverence as an end in itself, has been to recommend *xiao* as an expedient device to be used by the political elite to promote loyalty to themselves and to the state.<sup>5</sup>

We do not, of course, agree with these philosophical and political reservations about family and family reverence in general, nor with the outright condemnation of the Confucian family and its understandings of family reverence in particular. We do, however, feel it necessary to point out to the reader that a number of distinguished scholars in a variety of disciplines, as well as important voices from within Chinese culture itself, do not believe there is much of contemporary value in the family institution that defines classical Confucianism—apart, perhaps, from its historical interest—and to emphasize as well that our efforts herein are designed to counter these negative perspectives.

To begin answering the question of why the Classic of Family Reverence should hold our attention, consider first the all-too-frequent cold and impersonal nature of much of public life.<sup>6</sup> Schools and some work-

places may attend to us as the persons we are, and at times being in the marketplace can be pleasant and stimulating. But nurturing takes place largely in the home, within a family whose members know each other's hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, who celebrate their accomplishments together and console one another when misfortune strikes.<sup>7</sup> We use the term "nurturing" broadly and concretely to include not only what parents do for their children but also little things like the hugs a young child gives his parents when they return home from work, or the help an older sister gives her siblings with their homework; these, too, are nurturing. The family is where much of our personality develops and continues to develop even after we mature and become parents ourselves. Grandparents can be a major boon to their children and grandchildren, and the converse is equally true. Reading the *Classic of Family Reverence* can thus serve as a mirror of our own family past, helping us to reflect on how and why we have become who we are, on whom we are becoming, and on how we might become better.

Another reason for reflecting on family life more generally was mentioned briefly in our Translators' Preface: Very probably all nation-states, no matter how well-meaning and competent, will be incapable of providing the full measure of social services their citizens need in a world whose population is growing at the same time that its resources are shrinking. Other institutions will have to provide many of those services, and properly modified to accord with our best contemporary sensibilities, the family should be high on the list of candidate institutions.<sup>8</sup> The *Classic of Family Reverence* can aid our inquiry into the needed modifications: What needs to be eliminated from the present patterns of family living? What needs to be changed? What should be treasured and enhanced?

A third reason for taking the text seriously today lies in sharply distinguishing idealities from realities; that is, distinguishing Confucianism *as a philosophical and religious belief system* that serves the culture as a source of inspiration from invoked Confucianism *as it was practiced in many Chinese homes and by the government*.<sup>9</sup> For example, Chinese history has had its share of abusive parents (especially toward daughters and daughters-in-law), dull pedants, corrupt officials, cruel and totalitarian emperors, and more. But none of these kinds of attitudes and behaviors are ever championed in the Confucian texts; on the contrary, they were all uniformly condemned in unequivocal terms, as we shall attempt to show.

While the appropriate "reality check" is certainly necessary to rein in romantic excesses in our interpretive endeavors, it is also important to

recognize the crucial and still vital role played by ideals in engendering and sustaining cultural change. The development of cultures is complex and reiterative. Quite often this process involves and requires envisioning ways of life distinctively other than those that are near and familiar, revealing with greater or lesser clarity what present cultural realities are not and do not promise. Cultural change *does* occur in response to differing circumstantial realities, to other cultures, and to political, economic, or environmental exigencies. But it also takes place as a function of pursuing new or not-yet-actualized ideals. Stated differently, ideals as “ends-in-view” are also realities that live in history and that have the force of, at least in degree, initiating and directing the dynamics of culture. Although our academic disciplines tend to favor one side or the other of the divide between the real and the ideal—for example, history the side of the real, and philosophy, the ideal—there is a vital connection between the two in the historical emergence of cultural identity, and of the Chinese cultural identity in particular.

It is a legitimate intellectual endeavor to ask how these texts and their ideals could be cited to justify such horrific authoritarian attitudes and behaviors, in the same way that one might read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to explain why no small number of devout Christian fathers thought it incumbent upon them to quite literally beat the devil out of their children for minor transgressions. But in our opinion, to accept such negatively and narrowly focused readings of sacred texts—East or West—as a fair account, to quote William James on the matter, will eventuate in “something like offering a printed bill of fare as the equivalent of a solid meal”<sup>10</sup>—that is, the former is not nearly as nourishing as the latter. Hence we wish to make clear at the outset that our focus herein is on the philosophical and religious contributions of early Confucianism, especially in the sociopolitical, ethical, and religious realms, from which we believe there is much that can be learned that is of contemporary value. The balance of this introduction should thus be read as providing additional responses to the question of why we should study the *Classic of Family Reverence*, despite the fact that it is half a world and over two millennia distant from us and that historically it has not always lived up to its own premises and its own promise.

Finally, we are concerned that there is a pervasive and seemingly invincible misreading of the Confucian ideal of family that equates hierarchical structure with coercion and the absence of simple equality with oppression. In what follows we shall argue for a greater degree of complexity in our understanding of this persistent Confucian ideal

of human organization. This complexity allows that some models of hierarchy—healthy relations among grandparents and grandchildren, for example—might not only be benign, but might indeed serve the human community as an incomparable source of love and solidarity.

Certainly, while there are a large number of occasions on which we must treat others equally, we would want to challenge an uncritical assumption that equality is always an unalloyed good. Our relations with our mothers and our classmates are properly different, and children who today defer to their grandparents will, in the fullness of time, be grandparents to their own grandchildren. Indeed, unwarranted assumptions about equality can rob relationships of their complexity and can lead us to overlook an emerging parity between senior and junior that is established over time when we factor into the equation the phasal nature of the human narrative. Although elitism always implies hierarchy, the converse does not hold true; that is, hierarchical relations need not be coercive or oppressive. A healthy child, far from resenting the social expectation that she should be concerned about her mother, can find in such concern an unrivaled source of personal pleasure.<sup>11</sup> And the interdependence that can come with always shifting inequalities—I am benefactor of my friend when she needs my help, beneficiary when I need hers—can be a source of growth, security, and sustenance for all parties involved.

## II. HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Synopsis of the Book

The *Classic of Family Reverence* is the most succinct of the thirteen imperial Confucian classics. It is merely 1,800 plus characters in length, employing only 388 different lexical items. Unlike other early Chinese works, it contains (with one exception) no references to specific historical personages, places, or events, and its syntax and semantics are both relatively simple and straightforward. The *Classic of Family Reverence* is thus fairly easy to read; it served as an early McGuffey Reader in Chinese education, and was studied—and often memorized—by almost every literate Chinese for more than two millennia.

The text, divided into eighteen chapters, is a record of brief conversations (that may or may not have actually occurred) between Master Kong (that is, Confucius) and one of his disciples, Zeng Shen, who in the fullness of time was himself remembered as Master Zeng. The opening section that sets the theme for the document concisely extols the virtue of family reverence in both its personal and sociopolitical dimensions; *xiao* is

both whereby one lives a moral and productive life and equally the basis of governmental legitimacy and hence authority.

The five chapters that follow take up in somewhat fuller detail the proper filial activities of, respectively, the Emperor, the hereditary nobility, the ministers and high officials, the younger scholar-officials, and the common people. Chapters 9, 10, 14, 15, and 18 then elaborate upon the more personal dimensions of family reverence, while Chapters 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17 describe how the practice of *xiao* by governing officials—from the Emperor on down—obviates the need for real or threatened coercion in securing and maintaining a harmonious and well-ordered society; personal example, not physical force, is the hallmark of effective Confucian governing. The remaining Chapter 7 is more cosmological in nature, describing in brief compass how family reverence links together the tripartite dimensions of the Confucian way (*dao* 道)—that is, the intersection of the way of *tian* (conventionally rendered as “Heaven,” or sometimes “nature”; see the Chinese Lexicon), the way of the earth, and the way of humankind.

These are all weighty subjects, yet are discussed by Confucius and Master Zeng quite straightforwardly and in summary form. Indeed, when compared to Western philosophical writings on these themes, the *Classic of Family Reverence* will very probably appear, at first reading, to be not merely simple and laconic but simplistic (or even simpleminded), and some of its pronouncements will seem mystical—often a synonym for “unintelligible”—hopelessly utopian, or worse, authoritarian, bearing little or no relation to the real world of either personal life or politics anywhere on the globe today.

In the end, such a judgment may be a proper one. But before arriving at it, we encourage readers to examine the text a few times over, as the great majority of Chinese readers have done since it was composed several centuries before the beginning of the Common Era. The text became and has remained canonical, generating a long commentarial tradition with a multiplicity of contested interpretations as to how it is to be read and understood in providing guidance for leading a meaningful life. Both the quality and the quantity of scholarship expended upon the *Classic of Family Reverence*, conducted by scholar-philosophers centrally concerned with the question of how best to live our all-too-human lives, should give pause to any initial impulse to dismiss the text as philosophically unsophisticated, or to toss it into history’s already heaping bibliographic dustbin. After all, the question of how to make this life significant is no less, and perhaps even more, urgent today than it ever was in the past.

## 2. Confucius (551–479 BCE)

Confucius is arguably the most influential philosopher in human history. We say “is” because, taking Chinese philosophy on its own terms, he is still very much alive in the modern world. Celebrated as China’s first teacher both chronologically and in importance, his ideas have been the rich soil in which the Chinese cultural tradition has grown and flourished. In fact, whatever we might mean by “Chineseness” today, some two and a half millennia after his death, is inseparable from the example of personal excellence that Confucius provided for posterity.

Although Confucius enjoyed great popularity as a teacher and many of his students found their way into political office, his enduring frustration was that he personally achieved only marginal influence in the practical politics of the day. In this respect, he was a *philosophe* rather than a systematic or theoretical philosopher; he wanted desperately to hold sway over intellectual and social trends, and to improve the quality of life that was dependent upon them. Although there were many occasions on which important political figures sought his advice and services, during his mature years in the state of Lu he held only minor offices at court.

Early on, however, and certainly by the time of his death, Confucius had risen in reputation to become a model of erudition, attracting attention from all segments of society. As centuries passed and the stock in Confucius rose, the historical records began to “recall” details about his official career that supposedly had been lost. Over time, his later admirers altered the wording of his biographical record in his favor, effectively promoting him from minor official to several of the highest positions in the land. Surely, they reasoned, the people of his time would have recognized that someone special had walked among them and would have sought out and deferred to his leadership.

Nor does the story end there. By the time of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–CE 220), Confucius was celebrated as the “uncrowned king” of the state of Lu, and by the fourth century CE, any prefecture wanting to define itself as a political entity was required by imperial decree to erect a temple to celebrate Confucius. Gods in China are local cultural heroes who are remembered by history as having contributed meaning and value to the tradition, and of these revered ancestors, the “god” called Master Kong has been remembered best.

Confucius was certainly a flesh-and-blood historical figure, as real as Jesus or George Washington. But the received Confucius was and still is a “living corporate person” in the sense that generation after generation

of descendants have written commentaries on the legacy of Confucius in an effort to make his teachings meaningful for their own times and places. “Confucianism” is a lineage of scholars and cultural exemplars who have continued to elaborate upon the canonical texts passed on after the life of Confucius came to an end, extending the way of thinking and living that he had begun.

By developing his insights around the most basic and enduring aspects of the human experience—family reverence, friendship, education, community—Confucius guaranteed their continuing relevance. One characteristic of Confucianism that began with Confucius himself, and that made it so resilient in the Chinese tradition, is its porousness and adaptability. Indeed, Confucius with great modesty said of himself that he only transmitted traditional culture, he did not create it; his contribution was simply to take ownership of the tradition and to adapt the wisdom of the past to his own present historical moment.<sup>12</sup>

There are many sources for the teachings of Confucius that have been passed down to us today. The most authoritative among them is the *Lunyu*, usually translated as the *Analects*. (*Lunyu* literally means “Discourses,” but a better translation is “Analects,” taken from the Greek *analekta*, which has the root meaning of “leftovers after a feast.”) Tradition has it that the first fifteen books of these literary “leftovers” were assembled and edited by a congress of Confucius’ disciples shortly after his death.<sup>13</sup> It would seem the students concluded that Confucius was a model human being of the highest order, and that his way—what he said and did—should be preserved for future generations. Much of this portion of the text is devoted to remembering Confucius; it is a personal narrative of what he had to say, to whom he said it, and how it was said.

This same tradition holds that the last five books of the *Analects* appear to have been compiled some time later, after the more prominent disciples of Confucius had launched their own teaching careers and had taken it upon themselves to elaborate on the philosophy of their late Master. This, then, would be the beginning of a process of appropriation and extension of Confucius’ ideas that has continued down to the present day. Confucius is less prominent in these later chapters, yet he is referred to in more honorific terms, while the now mature disciples are themselves often quoted.

The *Analects* is relevant to family reverence in several ways. Of course, Confucius has much to say on the topic of *xiao* himself, and we reference these passages throughout our introduction as a way of both clarifying and amplifying what is said in the *Classic of Family Reverence*.

But in the *Analects* we also catch a glimpse of Confucius himself as a “family man.” First, there are several allusions to his own family experience. His concern to educate his own son, Boyu, is mentioned (16.13, 17.10), as is his willingness to give his own daughter in marriage to an ex-convict, in spite of the social stigma of doing so, because Confucius deems the young man to be an innocent who was wrongly convicted (5.1). Perhaps most revealing of Confucius personally was his relationship with his favorite protégé and indeed surrogate son, Yan Hui:

When Yan Hui died and his fellow students wanted to have a lavish burial for him, the Master said it would not be proper, and yet they did so anyway. The Master responded, “Yan Hui! You looked on me as a father, and yet I have not been able to treat you as a son. This was none of my doing—it was your fellow students.” (11.11)<sup>14</sup>

Confucius himself had grown quite literally “together” with Yan Hui. The magnitude of the bond that Confucius had forged in this relationship was such that he felt enormous loss when the bond was severed by the student’s untimely death. Indeed, this death was nothing short of surgical in the diminishing of Confucius’ own person, and he expressed unconstrained anguish openly, to the alarm of his students:

When Yan Hui died, the Master grieved for him with sheer abandon. His followers cautioned, “Sir, you grieve with such abandon.” The Master replied, “I grieve with abandon? If I don’t grieve with abandon for him, then for whom?” (11.10)

Yan Hui was certainly special, but then Confucius’ relationship with most of his students was fatherly, as when he was similarly grief-stricken at the imminent death of another disciple (6.10). He was, in the best sense, their “teacher-father” (*shifu* 師父), treating each one of them responsively in a way appropriate to their particular needs.

There is an intimacy to this entire text as it portrays Confucius in relation to the people who were most important to him. The middle three books in particular are like snapshots of Confucius’s life habits at home: Confucius never sat down without first placing his mat in a position appropriate to the company; he never slept in the posture of a corpse; he never sang on a day he attended a funeral; he ate circumspectly and with manners and decorum; he drank freely, but never to the point of becoming confused.

One thing is clear about the *Analects* and the supplementary texts such as the *Classic of Family Reverence*: They do not purport to lay out a generic formula according to which everyone should live their lives. Rather, they provide an account of one person—how he in his relations with others cultivated his humanity, and how he lived a satisfying life, much to the admiration of those around him. The way (*dao*) of Confucius is nothing more or less than the way in which he as a particular person chose to live his life. The power and lasting value of his ideas lie in the fact that, as we will endeavor to show, they are intuitively persuasive and readily adaptable.

Confucius begins from the insight that the life of almost every human being is played out within the context of his or her particular family, for better or for worse. For Confucius and for generations of Chinese to come, the basic unit of humanity is this person in this family, rather than the solitary individual or the equally abstract notion of family. In fact, for Confucius, there is no individual—no “self” or “soul”—that remains once the layers of social relations are peeled away. Each of us is the sum of the roles we live—not “play”—in our relationships and transactions with others. The goal of living, then, is to achieve harmony and enjoyment for oneself and for others through acting most appropriately in those roles and relationships that make us uniquely who we are.<sup>15</sup>

In the tradition that Confucius so thoroughly influenced, all Chinese people are the children of the Yellow Emperor. As such, China as a country is a “country-family” (*guojia* 國家), and all human beings are a “human family” (*renjia* 人家).<sup>16</sup> Confucius was extraordinarily fond of good music, because making music is conducive to harmony, bringing different voices into productive relationships. Indeed, making music can be a most apposite analogy for effective family living. It is tolerant in allowing each voice and instrument to have its own place—its own integrity—while at the same time requiring that each element find a complementary role through which it can add the most to the ensemble. Music, like family, is “familiar,” yet always unique in that each performance has a life of its own.

### 3. Master Zeng

Zeng Shen 曾參, style name Ziyu 子輿, was born in 505 BCE and survived his teacher Confucius by more than four decades, dying in 436 BCE. In the “Biography of the Disciples of Confucius” in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*), it states that “Confucius regarded Zeng Shen as a person able to truly penetrate the way of family reverence, and accordingly

passed on his teachings to him. Zeng Shen compiled the *Classic of Family Reverence*, and later died in the state of Lu.”<sup>17</sup>

He is most commonly known to us honorifically as Zeng Zi, or Master Zeng, indicating that he was a much revered teacher in his own right. He is one of only two disciples regularly accorded the “Master” title in the *Analects*, wherein he appears in fifteen sections, occasionally quoting Confucius but more usually making a philosophical remark of his own.<sup>18</sup> These remarks are, for the most part, highly incisive. Following are a few of his views as expressed in the *Analects*, beginning autobiographically:

Daily I examine my person on three counts. In my undertakings on behalf of other people, have I failed to do my utmost? In my interactions with colleagues and friends, have I failed to make good on my word? In what has been passed on to me, have I failed to carry it into practice? (1.4)

Master Zeng clearly associates familial and political virtuosity:

A person to whom you can entrust an orphaned youth or commission the command of a sovereign state, who in approaching great matters of life and death remains unperturbed—is this an exemplary person (*junzi*)? Such is an exemplary person indeed! (8.6)

And of those seeking to become exemplary persons he says:

[They] cannot but be strong and resolved, for they bear a heavy charge and their way (*dao*) is long. Where they take consummate conduct (*ren*) as their charge, is it not a heavy one? And where their way ends only in death, is it not indeed long? (8.7)

On the same topic he also says:

The exemplary person (*junzi*) attracts friends through refinement (*wen*), and thereby promotes consummate conduct. (12.24)

There are passages wherein Master Zeng is associated with the basic precepts found in the *Classic of Family Reverence*. For example, having inherited one’s physical body from one’s ancestors, one is obliged to return it intact. In this tradition, amputatory punishments and facial branding were commonly used on criminals, not only to alert the community of a ne’er-

do-well in their midst, but also to shame such miscreants before their ancestors in the invisible world.<sup>19</sup> Thus it is only on his deathbed that Master Zeng can at last relax his vigilance:

Master Zeng was ill, and summoned his students to him, saying,  
 “Look at my feet! Look at my hands! The *Book of Songs* says:

Fearful, fearful! Trembling, trembling!  
 As if peering over a deep abyss,  
 As if walking across thin ice.

It is only from this moment hence that I can be sure I have avoided  
 desecration of my body, my young friends.” (8.3)

Family reverence obviously requires one to be highly sensitive to, and caring for, the needs and welfare of family members and, by extension, is a highly valued quality for people assuming positions of authority. Master Zeng counsels the new magistrate with a classic application of the Confucian strategy of determining what is morally appropriate by putting oneself in the other's place (*shu* 恕): “When the head of the Meng clan appointed Yang Fu as a magistrate, he sought advice from Master Zeng, who said: ‘With their superiors having lost the way (*dao*), the common people have long since scattered. In uncovering what really happened in criminal cases, you should take pity on them and show them sympathy rather than being pleased with yourself.’” (19.19)

These and related statements attributed to Master Zeng in the *Analects* suggest a sensitive and reflective thinker with wide-ranging concerns.<sup>20</sup> In several sections of the *Liji* 禮記—the *Record of Rituals*—he is remembered as interrogating Confucius on how to resolve apparent conflicts in the demands of ritual propriety (*li*), or indeed as resolving these conflicts himself. For example, Master Zeng provides a terminus ad quem for demonstrative mourning in observing that “When the grass is old on the grave of a friend we no longer wail for him.”<sup>21</sup>

It is, however, with the cultivation of *xiao* that Master Zeng's name is most closely associated in early Chinese thought. There are a number of stories, some of them very probably apocryphal, narrating an extreme concern and reverence for his parents. Indeed, the fact that he also receives mention for such sentiments in the canonical texts of non-Confucian schools of thought such as Daoism (in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子) and Legalism (in the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子) as well is sure testimony to his commitment to family reverence.

This persistent association of the name of Master Zeng with family reverence has undoubtedly been reinforced by his appearance in the *Classic of Family Reverence*, even if it is unlikely that he authored this text (for details of authorship, see below, p. 19). Many of the other disciples of Confucius either had political careers or at least aspired to such; Master Zeng is one of the few who does not seem to have had such goals himself, focusing instead on personal cultivation.

Two other dimensions of Master Zeng's life are worthy of note to aid readers in imagining the dynamic between him and Confucius in the conversations that make up the *Classic of Family Reverence*. First, while Master Zeng was one of the Master's later disciples, his father Zengxi 曾皙, also called Zeng Dian 點, was an early student. Zengxi appears in only a single passage of the *Analects*—one of the longest passages in the entire work—and it is most revealing of Master Zeng's father as a person, describing as well some of the other disciples of Confucius, and telling us a great deal about Confucius too. Hence this chapter deserves to be quoted in full:

Zilu, Zengxi, Ranyou, and Zihua were all sitting in attendance on Confucius. The Master said, "Just because I am a bit older than you do not hesitate on my account. You keep saying, 'No one recognizes my worth!' but if someone were to recognize your worth, how would you be of use to them?"

"As for me," Zilu hastily replied, "give me a state of a thousand chariots to govern, set me in among powerful neighbors, harass me with foreign armies, and add to that widespread famine, and at the end of three years, I will have imbued the people with courage, and moreover, provided them with a sure direction."

The Master smiled at him, and said, "Ranyou, what would you do?"

"Give me a small territory of sixty or seventy—or even fifty or sixty—*li* square, and at the end of three years, I will have made sure the people have what they need. As for observing ritual propriety (*li*) and the playing of music (*yue*), these must wait upon an exemplary person (*junzi*)."

And what would you do, Zihua?" asked the Master.

"Not to say that I have the ability to do so, but I am willing to learn: In the events of the Ancestral Temple and in the forging of diplomatic alliances, donning the appropriate ceremonial robes and cap, I would like to serve as a minor protocol officer."

"And what about you, Zengxi?" asked the Master. Zengxi plucked a final note on his zither to bring the piece to an end, and setting the instrument aside, he rose to his feet.

"I would choose to do something somewhat different from the others," he said.

"No harm in that," said the Master. "Each of you may speak your mind."

"At the end of spring, with the spring clothes having already been finished, I would like, in the company of five or six young men and six or seven children, to cleanse ourselves in the Yi River, to revel in the cool breezes at the Altar for Rain, and then return home singing."

The Master heaved a deep sigh, and said, "I'm with Zengxi!"

Zilu, Ranyou, and Zihua all left, but Zengxi waited behind and asked the Master, "What do you think of what my three fellow students have said?"

"Each of you has simply spoken his mind, that's all," replied the Master.

"Why did you, sir, smile at Zilu?" said Zengxi.

"I smiled at him because in governing a state you need to observe ritual propriety, and yet in what he said there was no deference at all," said the Master.

"Was it only Ranyou who did not speak of governing a state?" he asked.

"How can one speak of a territory of sixty or seventy—or even fifty or sixty—*li* square, and not be referring to a state?" replied the Master.

"Was it only Zihua, then, who did not speak of governing a state?" he asked.

"If the events of the Ancestral Temple and diplomatic alliances do not involve the various lords, then what are they? If he is only going to serve as a minor protocol officer, then who is able to take a major role?" (11.26)

With this depiction of Zengxi, we first gain a clearer insight into what is meant by ritual propriety (*li*). It is of course significant that, given the inseparability of ritual propriety and music, Zengxi brings a piece of music that he is playing to a conclusion before he answers Confucius. For Confucius, *li* is a living, vibrant, and profoundly earthy tradition in which a religious reverence is to be found in song and dance, and the

ordinary pleasures of family and friends. The heart of ritual propriety is hearth and happiness, with less concern for sometimes rarified, anemic, formalities. And about Zengxi himself we learn that, in demonstrating his worth, he chooses as his first priority the observance of just such ritual propriety. His answer and Confucius' response to it suggest that he, unlike the other three students, understands that any kind of political success is going to depend upon setting a model of excellence for the people and leading them with ritual propriety (2.3). Appropriate ritualized living, like the proper use of language, is a social discourse that is fundamental to effective governing (13.3). At the same time, Confucius is making it clear that the path to governing effectively must also at times include simple pleasures and lightheartedness; though governing is serious, if it becomes too much so, a zealotry to rule "properly" can lead to exactly the opposite result.

In addition to Master Zeng's reputation for family reverence, another noteworthy aspect of his life is that he was the teacher of the grandson of Confucius, Zisi 子思, a role that later led to Master Zeng being given the title Zong Sheng 宗聖, "Ancestral Sage." Indeed, Zisi shared with Confucius and with his teacher, Master Zeng, a reputation for being expert in the details of ritual propriety. However, while Master Zeng was not particularly interested in achieving a position of political influence, Confucius and Zisi both expressed considerable frustration at being sought out for counsel by persons of high political station but then being ignored when it came time for political appointments.<sup>22</sup>

Zisi became a teacher in the Confucian mold himself, with one of his own students in turn very likely being the teacher of Mencius (375?–289 BCE). The book that bears the latter's name later achieved canonical status as one of the "Four Books" of Confucianism, and Mencius himself was accorded the title of the "Second Sage." Moreover, two of the remaining three texts included in the "Four Books"—the *Analects of Confucius* being the fourth—are chapters from the *Record of Rituals*: that is, the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Focusing the Familiar) and the *Da Xue* 大學 (Great Learning), the authorship of which is traditionally ascribed to Zisi and Master Zeng respectively.<sup>23</sup>

In sum, Master Zeng can be seen as the initiator of that school of Confucian thought that came to dominate the later philosophic commentarial tradition; and thus, given that the concept of family reverence plays such a defining role in Confucian thought, it should not be surprising that he comes to occupy such a prominent place in the Confucian pantheon.

#### 4. The Text and Its Historical Context

A central current running through Chinese intellectual history ever since at least the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) has been a tradition of sophisticated textual scholarship. The skills necessary to closely and carefully analyze the philological, syntactic, phonetic, and semantic properties of a text; to compare and contrast these texts with others of similar vintage; to do so with attentiveness to historical circumstances and philosophic ideas—these have been the defining qualities of the scholar in China. And such scholarship has been in large part a prerequisite for passing the imperial examinations, a credential necessary for admission to China's distinctive civil service as a gateway that opens out onto the pathway of rapid social advancement for oneself and for one's family.

In order to understand this scholarly preoccupation with texts and, more specifically, to place the *Classic of Family Reverence* properly in its original context, we must briefly sketch the specific historical circumstances under which it was composed. One reason generally given to justify concerns about the textual authenticity of particular works is that, while many writings were produced in China from at least the eleventh through the third centuries BCE, a bibliographic holocaust occurred in 213 BCE, shortly after the several states of ancient China were consolidated under the rule of the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (of terra-cotta tomb-soldier fame). Many texts were irretrievably lost during this infamous "Burning of the Books." But the Qin dynasty survived for only sixteen years (221–206 BCE), and the Han dynasty was established four years later, at which time the intelligentsia made an immediate attempt to recover and reconstruct the lost manuscripts.

While this standard account of a conflagration has the cachet of being a specific event that is integral to the Chinese intellectual tradition, more recent scholarship suggests that another compelling reason for the drive to authenticate texts and their authors was that, with the unification of the central states as empire and the systematization of knowledge it entailed, a process of unification also had to take place at different levels within the culture. Thus, in addition to the standardization of the written language, weights and measures, coinage, axle widths, and other conventions established by the short-lived Qin dynasty, comprehensive histories were written, compendia of knowledge were compiled, ritual practices were codified, a mosaic of competing mythologies and cultural heroes was synchronized and integrated, and a body of texts inherited from earlier generations was canonized.

In this process of recovering lost texts and consolidating a cultural

canon, a tradition of textual scholarship was inaugurated that would last for two millennia. It was at this time that the *Classic of Family Reverence* became a popular text.<sup>24</sup> Like many older works, although it had *jing* 經 (classic) in its title, it was not officially accorded that honor until the Tang dynasty, in 838 CE.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the commentaries point out that although *jing* was already part of its title in the earliest reference to it, this term would not as yet have been used formally to designate a text as a “classic.” Indeed, in this context, *Xiaojing*, far from describing a classic would have probably meant something like “constant tenets.” Hence, *Xiaojing* would translate as something like “On the Basic Precepts of Family Reverence” or “Constant Guidelines for Family Reverence.”<sup>26</sup> What is also clear, however, is that whatever *jing* meant in this first reference, the text soon after emerged and then continued to function across the centuries as a “classic” in the fullest sense of the English term, and it is on this historical warrant that we translate it herein as the *Classic of Family Reverence*.<sup>27</sup>

The protracted labor leading up to the birth and unification of the Qin empire is known as “The Period of the Warring States,” and is aptly named. The then-extant Zhou dynasty (1050–256 BCE) had long since ceased to exercise control over its domains in north China, and independent political entities had developed south of the Yangtze River as well. A semifederal hereditary order was breaking down everywhere. Sometimes claiming genealogical right or the moral high ground, or simply employing military might, the leaders of these states engaged in increasingly ferocious warfare, made all the more violent because it was conducted in a zero-sum milieu in which if you did not win decisively, you lost utterly.<sup>28</sup>

This same period is also known as the Golden Age of Chinese Thought with the flourishing of the “Hundred Schools of Philosophy”—remembering as it does yet another dimension of a much contested world. At roughly the same time as the Buddha was preaching in the southwest and the Greek philosophical tradition was developing in the far west, Chinese thinkers were engaging each other philosophically about what constitutes the good life for persons and for society.

It was in the midst of this social tumult, political adventurism, savage warfare, and philosophical disputation that the *Classic of Family Reverence* was born. (We lack, however, a birth certificate for it.) Because Master Zeng appears prominently in the text, we know that it could not in any case have been written much before he died in 436 BCE. As mentioned above, the *Classic of Family Reverence* is first cited, however, in another text (the *Lushichunqiu* 吕氏春秋) that is known on independent grounds to have been composed no later than 239 BCE; thus we can feel confident,

at the least, that the *Xiaojing* was composed sometime during the height of the convulsions of the Warring States period that anticipated the birth of imperial China.<sup>29</sup>

The lack of a specific date for the composition of the text carries over to the question of authorship. We do not know who wrote or edited the document. One tradition attributes the work to Confucius himself; another allows that the words were his but Master Zeng wrote them down. Still a third tradition, developed later, attributes the composition of the work to some of the disciples of the disciples of Master Zeng—to students, that is, at two removes from Master Zeng and three from the Master himself. The fact that Master Zeng is referred to honorifically as “Master” in itself recommends the third tradition as the most probable.<sup>30</sup>

In any event, little that is said in the *Classic of Family Reverence* is out of keeping with what we know of both Confucius and Master Zeng from the *Analects* and is consistent with their conversations as they appear in the *Record of Rituals* (*Liji*). We thus surmise that the book in its present form very probably dates from the early Han period if not earlier, and thus has been read and studied by some eighty generations of Chinese students and scholars.

One indication of the importance of this text is both the stature of the participants in the debates that surrounded it during this transmission and the ferocity with which they advanced their arguments. Just to take three examples, in 719 the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 commanded that his Confucian officials provide him with a definitive text of the *Xiaojing*. In response, one of his ministers, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾, wrote a document entitled *Twelve Items of Evidence* that advocated a return to the ancient script version of the text associated with the Han dynasty commentator, Kong Anguo 孔安國. This same document rejected the modern script version associated with the Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 commentarial tradition that had been edited by Liu Xiang 劉向 and had served as the basis for the popularly received version, claiming that it was a later forgery. Another minister, Sima Zhen 司馬貞, challenged Liu Zhiji's assertions, providing his own evidence that in fact it was the ancient script version Liu endorsed that was itself a spurious text concocted by later Confucians, and that the Kong and the Zheng commentarial traditions both had to be consulted. Emperor Xuanzong, in an attempt to restore order, ultimately insisted that indeed both versions had to be preserved, revising his own 712 commentary in 743. He also had the text and the imperial commentary carved in stone and placed before the entrance to the Chang'an academy as his endorsement of its canonical stature and in order to perpetuate its influence in the

empire.<sup>31</sup> From then on, his imperial commentary superseded the Kong and Zheng commentaries as the standard text.

Again in the Northern Song, the great statesman Wang Anshi 王安石 wrote his “Explanations of the *Xiaojing*” based on the modern script text, only to inspire the equally prominent Sima Guang 司馬光 to find a copy of the ancient script version in the national archives and to compile his counterpoint, “An Exposition of the Ancient Script *Xiaojing*.”

Thereafter the Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹 wrote his famous *Amended Text of the Xiaojing* 孝經刊誤, arguing that only a third of what was purported to be the *Xiaojing* was in fact the original text. He took the ancient script version as the basis of his commentary, dividing the twenty-two-chapter edition into fifteen chapters of text and consigning the opening seven chapters (six in the modern text version) to the status of later appended commentary. He further argued that the citations from the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of Documents* that punctuated each chapter were later editorial additions to the original document. From then on, the imperial commentary of Tang Xuanzong and the amended text of Zhu Xi competed with each other for authority within the academy, eclipsing any influence of the original Kong and Zheng commentaries. And so the story continued.<sup>32</sup>

That China was indeed in transition at the beginning of this long and eventful history when the *Classic of Family Reverence* was first compiled and circulated, with violence being commonplace, can be discerned by the careful reader, for Confucius is clearly concerned to effect the necessary political and social reforms in a more peaceful and humane way. He holds no “might makes right” doctrines; military prowess is not the mark of a good ruler for the Master, who instead insists on a compassionate concern for the common people. As the *Analects* narrates:

The Master said: “Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishment but be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves.” (2.3)

And again, the same text records that once, when asked about military matters by a territorial lord, the indignant Confucius said, “I have heard something about the use of ritual vessels, but I have never been a student of military matters.” And this same passage concludes with Confucius

punctuating his visceral displeasure at the suggestion of using military force by a prompt and conspicuous departure: “On the next day Confucius left the lord’s territory” (15.1).<sup>33</sup>

Relatedly, while nowhere does the *Classic of Family Reverence* advocate the abolition of the aristocracy, it does make clear that true aristocrats are such because of the nobility of their exemplary qualities, not their bloodlines. (It is noteworthy, perhaps, that whereas fourteen of the eighteen chapters of the text attribute all that is said therein to either Confucius or Master Zeng, the four chapters—3, 4, 5, and 6—that deal with the family reverence appropriate to very distinct social classes have no identifiable voice or spokesperson.)

This shift from blood lineage to merit as the prime determinant of a person’s worth was carried further by the later Confucian philosopher Xunzi (320?–238 BCE), who, in an essay on how a true king should govern, writes:

Although they be among the progeny of kings, dukes, officials, and ministers, if they are not able to comport themselves appropriately and with ritual propriety, they are in fact nothing but commoners. Although they be among the progeny of commoners, if they lay up learning and culture, attend to their personal conduct, and are able to comport themselves appropriately and with ritual propriety, they belong among the ranks of high ministers and court officials.<sup>34</sup>

Ten of the eighteen chapters of the *Xiaojing*, in a pattern typical of early Confucian texts, conclude with a quotation from the *Shijing* 詩經, variously translated as the *Book of Poetry*, *Book of Odes*, or *Book of Songs*. Although regularly cited in support of some weighty aesthetic, ethical, political, or religious points that Confucius and other early philosophers wished to make, the original 305 poems that comprise the *Songs* are just that: songs to be intoned and chanted aloud. While some of them do indeed have an ethical import that can be read in them, the majority are simply reflective of life in early historical China. There are love songs and songs lamenting a son or husband going off to war; songs dealing with nature, with hunting and fishing, with friendship, with planting and harvest festivals; there are court ballads and dirges; and there are songs dealing with legends, ancient rituals, and ancestor reverence. Collectively the poems of the *Songs* paint what must be the most accurate picture we have of the everyday life of the Chinese—aristocrats and commoners alike—living in approximately the ninth century BCE.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to appealing to an extensive store of shared images and metaphors among a competent audience, the *Book of Songs* has been employed with punctuating effect in the Confucian texts. Indeed, it is because the *Book of Songs* is an anonymous reflection on life in early China, capturing the honest feelings of the people broadly, that it has had enormous affective force in closing an argument or endorsing some interpretive observation. The veracity of the *Book of Songs* is quite simply beyond dispute, making it a favorite device among philosophers for terminating discussion by clinching their point.

In sum, then, the reader of the *Classic of Family Reverence* needs to keep in mind both the routine life of the people and the rapid pace of change and violence endemic to the period in which this document was compiled, and to appreciate how it lived on in the tradition to shape the values and the character of the Chinese culture. The text's call to preserve the past and respect tradition may be construed not merely as the lament of reactionary and authoritarian intellectuals, but also as containing the keen insight that much of who and what we are is always linked to the past. Indeed, obliterating our past leaves us with a diminished sense of who we are, an immediate consequence of which is the loss of guidelines for who and what we might become—in a more peaceful world. The Russian composer Igor Stravinsky made this point succinctly: "Tradition is entirely different from habit. . . . A real tradition is not the relic of a past that is irretrievably gone; it is a living force that animates and informs the present."<sup>36</sup>

### III. PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

#### 1. *Xiao* in Classical Confucianism

In the opening chapter of the *Classic of Family Reverence*, Confucius proclaims that family reverence is the "root of excellence" (*de* 德). This may strike the reader as odd (if not hyperbolic): Of course we should love, respect, and honor our parents (and our ancestors as well) but how are such activities tied to developing such qualities as temperance, courage, and wisdom (to name only the three cardinal virtues first analyzed and discussed at length by Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, and then later by Aristotle)?<sup>37</sup>

In the *Classic of Family Reverence*, the familiar Confucian vocabulary—"consummate person or conduct" (*ren* 仁), "appropriateness" (*yi* 義), "ritual propriety" (*li* 禮), and "wisdom" (*zhi* 智)—is muted by a sustained focus upon family reverence (*xiao* 孝) as the root from which the entire tradition grows. Simply put, when family reverence is function-

ing effectively within the home, all is well within the community, the polity, and indeed, the cosmos. Family reverence is the root, and as *Analects* 1.2 states explicitly, “the root having taken hold, the proper way (*dao* 道) will grow therefrom.” These other terms that define the Confucian tradition have relevance only within the context of the flourishing family. It is not certain that the *Classic of Family Reverence* records the actual words of Confucius, but based upon the received corpus, the centrality of the notion of family reverence in classical Confucianism cannot be disputed. It is intimately and organically linked to these other concepts so central to that philosophical and religious tradition.

The most frequently referenced of Confucian virtues—or excellences—for example, is *ren* 仁, “consummate or authoritative conduct,” also rendered by other translators as “benevolence,” “humaneness,” and “goodness.” In the first book of the *Analects*, the disciple Master Yu (the only other protégé in addition to Master Zeng to be accorded the honorific “Master”), who is known for reflecting accurately the views of Confucius himself, says: “As for family reverence and fraternal responsibility, it is, I suspect, the root of consummate conduct (*ren*)” (1.2). There is nothing more defining of humanity for Confucius than the genuine concern of one human being for another. But significantly, *ren* does not precede practical employment; it is not a principle or standard that has some existence beyond the day-to-day, family-grounded lives of the people who realize it in their relationships. *Ren* is fostered in the deepening of relationships that emerge as one takes on the responsibility and obligations of family and, by extension, of communal living, therein coming fully to life. *Ren* is a reflexive term, meaning that personal consummation and the thriving of family are conterminous and mutually entailing. The family is an ecology in which the interdependence of the constituent members means that prosperity in one sector redounds to the health and well-being of the whole. *Ren* is thus a shared human flourishing. It is the achievement of the quality of relationships that, like the lines in fine calligraphy or sublime landscape painting, collaborate to create maximum aesthetic effect.

Another seminal idea in the organically related vocabulary of classical Confucianism is *li* 禮, or “ritual propriety”—the appropriate observance of ritualized roles and relations. *Li* is a communal grammar ultimately derived from family relations and begins from making robust the roles that locate us in family. Put simply (if, again, oddly from a Western moral perspective), one does not simply do one’s communal duty, but must do it in a certain way, not only with elegance and dignity, but moreover with aesthetic and religious meaning dictated by custom and

tradition. The assumption that *li* must be personalized and made one's own is a counterweight to the inertia of ossified custom. The continuing reauthorization of our communal roles and institutions brings with it the opportunity for reconstruction and consummation. Such ritualized conduct is obligatory for minor no less than major interactions between people. Indeed, we find that, for the early Confucians, there was no sharp distinction between manners and morals.

A small Western example: While "Bless you!" or "Gesundheit!"—even among non-Christians—are *appropriate* verbal responses to another's sneezing in our presence, "What the hell?" or a whack on the back or a steely, cold silence would not be. Such responses would be, at the very least, indicative of a lack of sensitivity, and moreover a clear sign of ignorance as to what is customarily expected. Indeed, they would be *inappropriate* (*buyi* 不義) responses. Whereas robust relationships are the source of appropriate conduct and felt worth, the kind of disintegrative actions that we associate with bad manners quite simply diminish the meaning invested in relations, and in so doing, loosen and ultimately threaten the moral fabric of community.

The link between family reverence and ritual propriety (*li*) is made explicit in the *Analects*: "While the parents are living, serve them according to the observances of ritual propriety; when they are dead, bury them and sacrifice to them according to the observances of ritual propriety" (2.5). And as we saw earlier in this introduction, Confucius studied the accoutrements of ritual, not military affairs, because he believed that rituals—our persistent life-forms as articulated in customs, traditions, roles, and relationships—are more fundamental than law for regulating society properly. Indeed, for Confucius, the need to invoke penal law (albeit sometimes a necessary thing to do) is an overt admission of communal failure.

A central aim of Confucius in the *Analects*, perhaps *the* central aim, is to guide his students toward achieving the goal of becoming exemplary persons (*junzi*), requiring that they embody consummatory conduct (*ren*) in all they do and behave with propriety (that is, are *li*-like) in all of their actions. Family reverence (*xiao*) permeates this instruction: "Revere the family at home and be deferential (*di*) in the community" is one admonition (1.6); "Do not act contrary to your parents' expectations" is another (2.5, 4.18); "Give your father and mother nothing to worry about except your physical well-being" is still another (2.6); "When your father and mother are alive, do not journey far, and when you do travel, be sure to have a specific destination" (4.19), is yet another.

These instructions and others like them in the *Analects*—and in the *Classic of Family Reverence* and other early Confucian texts—might suggest that obedience and loyalty, exemplified in rigidly prescribed ritual actions, are necessary ingredients for family reverence. And in one sense, such actions truly are at the heart of *xiao*. The importance of ritualized conduct for the Master and his followers cannot be minimized, and many among countless generations of Chinese have lived lives far more stifling and oppressive than they might have, ostensibly in the name of following the Confucian teachings. But as we noted at the outset, we must distinguish between idealities and realities while understanding the appropriate function of both. That is, we must distinguish the manifold untoward sociopolitical *practices* of a great many Chinese families over the course of many centuries from the aspirational *philosophical* and *religious* Confucian ideals, just as we must distinguish the horrors that countless thousands of Christians have visited on their fellow human beings during the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War (and in the continuing atrocities even today) from what Jesus is actually quoted as having said in the four Gospels.

In our interpretation, although loyalty and obedience are necessary ingredients of family reverence, they are only part of it.<sup>38</sup> We shall consider these two qualities again, but for now we just note that they do not at all comprise the whole of family reverence. For just as disease may undermine the body, so can inappropriate and immoral ideas and activities compromise the healthy family, causing it to become disquieted and even dysfunctional. Hence the infection must be treated: "In serving your father and mother, remonstrate with them gently when they go astray. On seeing that they do not heed your instructions, remain respectful and do not act contrary. Although concerned, voice no resentment" (4.18).

This theme, enunciated even more forcefully in Chapter 15 of the *Classic of Family Reverence*, indicates clearly that loyalty and obedience are subordinate to one's obligation to do what is appropriate in the larger familial, moral, and indeed spiritual context of assumed personal responsibilities.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, we might read the observation in Chapter 1, "Vigilance in not allowing anything to do injury to your person is where family reverence begins," as an exhortation that empowers one within the context of abusive family relations to take measures to safeguard one's own person if remonstrances are not heeded by one's parents.

But what is the spiritual context? We can see and appreciate, perhaps, how both obedience and loyalty on the one hand and remonstrance on the other are in the personal realm to be valued as dimensions of family

reverence, contributing as they clearly do to becoming *ren* persons on the basis of *li* behavior. And we can equally see how both obedience to authority and the political importance of challenging it when necessary might conduce to good governance. But wherein lies religiosity, or the spiritual? Again, Confucius provides instructions, albeit elliptically at times: “Children must know the age of their father and mother. On one hand, it is a source of joy; on the other, of trepidation” (4.21). Given that the *li*, ritual proprieties, do not prescribe specifically how you are to respond to your parents when they are fifty-two, sixty-six, or seventy-three, it is not clear *why* and *how* knowledge of the age of our parents contributes to any sense of how we should appropriately interact with them, or how such knowledge might make us better persons, filial Confucians or otherwise. To answer these questions we may interrogate the *Analects* further:

The Master said, “Those who are filial are considered so because they are able to provide for their parents. But even dogs and horses are given that much care. If you do not respect (*jing* 敬) your parents, what is the difference?” (2.7)

From these passages it is clear that, for Confucius, merely “going through the motions” of meeting filial responsibilities, while perhaps necessary for social harmony, will nevertheless not conduce to one’s development as an exemplary person. Something more is needed, and what that something more seems to be is a *desire* to do what it is right to do; we must not only perform our duties, we must *want* to perform them. This desire to serve one’s parents, then, is the substance of the following passage:

Zixia asked about family reverence (*xiao*). The Master replied: “It all lies in showing the proper countenance. As for the young contributing their energies when there is work to be done, and deferring to their elders when there is wine and food to be had—how can merely doing this be considered being filial?” (2.8)

This notion of motivation is an important theme in classical Confucianism. It is treated at some length by Mencius in the book that bears his name. In a detailed comparative analysis of the *Mencius*, David Nivison notes how relatively minor a role motivation plays for evaluating moral behavior in either the deontological ethics of Immanuel Kant or the utilitarian ethics of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, in contrast to the central role it plays in the *Mencius*. On behalf of Mencius, Nivison argues

that “What he [Mencius] is trying to get the king to do is not just to issue some orders that will result in lightening the hardships of the people, but to do this with a particular motivation, namely, a lively and animated concern for their sufferings. And this kind of motive just isn’t the same as a ‘pro-attitude’ constituting a judgment of obligation.”<sup>40</sup> So long as your action is dictated by the categorical imperative (Kant), or the principle of general utility (Bentham and Mill), you are a moral agent. Wanting to help others, and gaining personal satisfaction and indeed pleasure therefrom, are at best desirable side effects; they are probably important for considering you a nice person in these theories, but are peripheral for weighing your *moral* worth. For Mencius, and as we have seen from earlier quotes from the *Analects*, for Confucius as well, we cannot become consummatory persons (*ren*) unless we *desire* to bring happiness to the others with whom we interact, and unless we *find pleasure* in doing so.

Both Kantian ethics and utilitarianism are highly sophisticated moral theories and have exerted great influence, not only in Western philosophy, but in politics, economics, law, and our everyday lives as well. We shall have more to say about the ethical theories of these philosophers, but for now we wish to focus on the contrasting views of Confucianism on the issue of ethical conduct in order to begin orienting readers toward a very different conception of what it means to become a good person.

In the first place, one’s highest moral duty in deontic and utilitarian ethics has usually been thought to be demonstrated by subscribing to the abstract principles of Kant, or Bentham and Mill, the scope of which are altogether general. One’s Confucian duties, on the other hand, are always immediate and specific to one or several concrete individuals at a particular time and under specific circumstances. The correlative ethics of early Confucianism is highly particularistic and situational.

This particularism goes a long way toward explaining the importance of being motivated to meet your responsibilities with the proper attitude and helps as well to understand why the classical Confucians drew no sharp distinctions between mannerly, ethical, customary, and other interpersonal behaviors; at all times you are to do what it is appropriate for you to do (*yi*, see the Lexicon) in the roles and activities that locate you in family and community, and that indeed come to constitute you as a person.

We will spell out these issues philosophically, but consider for now a very simple nonphilosophical illustration of these points: think of drawing a picture for your grandmother when you were a young child. Drawing was fun. It pleased you to think you might please your grandmother; you

could anticipate the joyous hug you would receive when offering up your composition to her; and almost surely you would be able to intuit that she truly enjoyed the picture. This is *xiao* in action. Some time later, her arthritis has been aggravated by the weather, and she asks you for a shoulder rub. Now, however, your playmates are asking you to join them outside for a game. What do you do?

For the Confucians this is not a real question, for of course you are obliged to give the massage. If, however, you are annoyed or resentful at so doing, you are not being truly filial. (Look again at the *Analects* passages 2.7 and 2.8.) Rather, must you *want* to ease your grandmother's pains, be *happy* to do so, and come to *prefer* doing it to joining your playmates. This is what it means to be consummatory in one's conduct (*ren*) and to advance on the path to becoming an exemplary person (*junzi*). Such cultivation begins when we are young, inspired by the models of proper conduct available to us in our families and communities; it requires hard work at first, deliberate reflection on our earlier filial deeds, and an unrelenting commitment to "following the proper way" in all that we do. Only later will it become not only a constitutive disposition but, indeed, a most pleasurable behavior.

Homely though this example may be, it touches the spirit of Confucianism, in our opinion, because for the Confucian, the task of developing as a flourishing human being most assuredly "begins at home,"<sup>41</sup> grounded as this project is in cultivating family reverence. *Xiao* is thus a comprehensive concept with manifold sociopolitical, ethical, and religious implications.

We turn now to these sociopolitical dimensions of family reverence, followed by a more detailed contextualization of the concept of *xiao* within the framework of ethics and morality, followed in turn by the manifold spiritual dimensions of *xiao* as cultivated and expressed within a fully secular setting.

## 2. The Sociopolitical Dimensions of *xiao*

The (extended) family system that was operative in China at the time of the compilation of the *Analects* and the *Classic of Family Reverence* was very different from the (nuclear) familial patterns of the contemporary West, especially as these patterns exist in the United States. Although trade and commerce had developed significantly, and China had entered the Iron Age in manufacture by the time of Confucius, it was basically an agrarian society, the family, as almost everywhere else, being the basic economic unit of production, distribution, and consumption. Local communities

were made up of one or more extended families or clans and were largely self-sufficient. Larger and more centralized regulatory organizations, consisting of a monarch and retinue with significant ritual obligations combined with a bureaucracy based more on moral worth than on wealth or lineage, was always a dream when not a reality. But for the early Confucians, the functions of these groups (uniformly called “the government” by sinologists, which, while not incorrect, is nevertheless somewhat misleading) were circumscribed.<sup>42</sup> They were obliged to assist local communities of families and clans in achieving goals—significantly economic—that they could not achieve on their own: building and maintaining roads, dikes, and major irrigation systems; maintaining border defenses; developing postal and monetary systems; seeing that supplies of grain and seed were moved when necessary from bumper harvest to famine areas; and to do all of this in ways that preserved and enhanced China’s rich cultural heritage (that would also include establishing such institutions as local schools and academies).

Moreover, while the development of a detailed penal code was well under way by the Han period, and bureaucratic institutions were established to enforce it, it would be a mistake to see the civilization as moving from rule by persons (and importantly, ritual propriety, *li*) to rule by law. The power of the family metaphor in shaping perceptions of all social and political relations cannot be overstated. To employ a distinction used in a not dissimilar context by David Wong, the ideal official, especially at the county level, would often be considered more as an *arbiter* of disputes than as a *judge* of them, in the sense that his task in these situations was to eliminate, or at least to reduce, conflict between two or more quarrelling families rather than to make an elaborate effort to establish who was right and who was wrong in the dispute at hand.<sup>43</sup> A contemporary example of this method of deliberation would be Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. If the primary goal is truth, *adjudication* is undertaken and *retributive justice* sought; if, on the other hand, the emphasis is on reconciliation, while a concern for retribution will remain, the focus will be on *arbitration* in order to achieve *restorative justice* in order to reconcile the aggrieved parties, enabling them to live in each other’s midst without conflict in the future.<sup>44</sup>

Much beyond these efforts the early Chinese state was not envisioned to go. While it did have manifold obligations, as just sketched, it was basically the family’s task to sustain itself, with the able-bodied providing for the disabled, the elders educating the young, the healthy caring for the sick, the young providing security for the old, and the upright as

models inspiring reform among those who would stray from the straight and narrow.

This division of labor between families and the central governing organizations in early China should not, however, be seen as a divide between public and private spheres of life, for no such distinctions can be clearly drawn in Confucianism. The family encompassed virtually all of one's life. A person lacking kin altogether would be hard put to eke out even a bare subsistence, and it would, in Confucian terms, be next to impossible for such a person to flourish as a full human being.<sup>45</sup> The later Confucian scholar-official Xunzi made this point clearly when, more than two centuries before the birth of Christ, he insisted that it was a primary obligation of a ruler to provide the equivalent of Social Security, Medicare, workmen's compensation, WPA, and welfare work to the needy:

With respect to persons with special needs, those who are governing should bring them together and take care of them, and give them work according to their abilities. Employ them, provide them with food and clothing, and make sure that all of them are included without remainder. . . . Gather in the orphans and the widows, give assistance to the poor—if you do this, the common people will find security in those who govern.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the state was envisioned not as something altogether separate from society—not, like Aristotle, as a *polis* that provides relief from the privations of the *oikis*—but rather as the family writ large, its major function, as we have seen, being to help smaller families, individually and collectively, to regulate themselves. Consequently, a distinction between public and private spheres of life, in modern Western terms, would be very hard to draw.<sup>47</sup>

Needless to say, this pattern of family life bears little resemblance to its counterpart in the capitalist Western democracies, wherein much larger—and much more impersonal—state (public) institutions have taken over many of the functions of Chinese and earlier Western families. Public schools, courts and prison systems, Social Security, Medicare, and other public health programs now attempt to do what in the past was largely done by families. But modern Western states—especially the United States—also do much less for people than families once did, which we can appreciate when we think of the difference between negative and positive human rights. Families, for example, will want to provide the best possible health care for their members, whereas successive American governments

have felt no obligation to provide such for its 47 plus million citizens too poor to provide for themselves and their families.<sup>48</sup>

To many, this weakening of family importance in the West as industrialization and capitalism drew the population away from the values of feudal agrarian society has been viewed as almost an unmixed blessing, not without some reason: the previous life was harsh, the condition of women appalling, and children often valued, it seems, merely for their labor. But granting the merits of this harsh evaluation of Western families past, the changes that have befallen the present family certainly have not come without significant cost.

This point has been well put by a sociologist of China, Richard Madsen, who deserves to be quoted at length:

Modern Western culture is dominated by a powerful liberal myth which narrates the modernization of this culture in terms of a liberation of individuals (through the energies of the economic market and the recognition of inalienable rights within liberal democracy) from rigid primordial loyalties, represented by the feudal family system. . . . According to the liberal myth, the modern family is different from (and better than) the pre-modern family insofar as it is more like a voluntary association than a primordial institution. That is, the modern family is based on a contract between consenting adults, which can (and should) be broken when it is no longer in their mutual self-interests.<sup>49</sup>

Just how much “better” the modern family is seen as being than its earlier form will be largely a function of the extent to which one defines human beings basically as free, autonomous, rights-bearing individuals, which was the definition provided by Enlightenment thinkers as ideological justification for the American and French Revolutions, and includes the notion of person regnant in their “glorious” English predecessor, John Locke (1632–1704).

This Enlightenment definition possesses several virtues, but it is not the view of human beings presupposed in the *Classic of Family Reverence*. Each Confucian person is unique, and of course becomes increasingly individuated through the cultivation of significant relations that make him or her distinctive and distinguished. But such persons are *role* bearers rather than *rights* bearers; they are not free in the sense of being independent, for their lives are intimately and inextricably bound up with the lives of many others. And they are not autonomous, for there is little that they do, or can

do, that does not have significance for the lives of those others. Confucian persons, in other words, are relational selves. We are children, siblings, parents, neighbors, friends, students, colleagues, lovers, and much more. When all of the specific roles we live—not “play”—have been inventoried, and their interconnections made clear, then each of us has been uniquely specified as a person with precious little left over to piece together a bare, autonomous, individual self.<sup>50</sup>

This vision of the person as relational and embedded in the lives of others carries over to the vision of the responsibility of the state. Many Western governments, more or less since the Enlightenment, have been charged with maximizing opportunities for individuals to choose their actions freely. The Confucian central regulatory organizations have the basic obligation to provide the wherewithal for relational persons to fulfill appropriately the demands of their roles beyond their own capacity to do so, most especially those roles to which family reverence is central.<sup>51</sup> The concepts of the person, the family, and the state evidenced in the *Classic of Family Reverence*, grounded in an agrarian society, may be seen as remote from contemporary Western technology-driven capitalist democracies, sufficiently so that it may appear that the sociopolitical dimensions of family reverence cannot have any relevance to anyone living in our present-day social order.

Nevertheless, these concepts continue to deserve to be taken seriously, for they raise questions that are of pressing contemporary concern, such as: If society obligates parents to provide adequate material goods for their children, is the society also obligated to provide employment for the parents if they cannot secure jobs on their own? If our personal responsibilities toward specific others are only toward those specific others with whom we have freely chosen to associate, do children have any obligations toward their parents, siblings, or other relatives, none of whom were “chosen,” freely or otherwise? Is it fair for the state to confer benefits on families (marriages) that it does not grant to singles? Why? And, if the essence of the family is love, respect, and nurturing among and between the family members, what difference does their gender make?

These and a number of similar questions can be developed more fully, but the general point should be clear: Many issues of contemporary sociopolitical concern critically involve familial institutions, and hence it is unlikely that they can ever be resolved if they are discussed only in terms of rights-bearing individuals. Euthanasia, welfare, abortion, and gay and lesbian marriages are four more issues of this same kind. Alternatives to contemporary practices should be contemplated and not simply dismissed

as illiberal or reactionary; indeed, they might turn out to be more progressive than their “liberal” counterparts.

In seeking insight into these issues by reading the *Classic of Family Reverence* and other Confucian writings, it is necessary to resist being seduced by the “liberal myth” of the family in Western history as described by Madsen, or by the corollary myth that history “can be read sideways.”<sup>52</sup> That is to say, there is a belief, as widespread as it is mistaken, that the institution of the family has developed in the same direction the world over, that such development has gone from being more oppressive to more liberating, and that we can thus learn about the evolution of the Western family by studying its more “primitive” antecedents anywhere in the world.

In fact, families have developed very differently in different cultures, a point on which anthropologists have long been in agreement. The Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament—and later, the Qur’an—have exerted overwhelming influence in defining the family, attendant values, and proper family relations in the Western cultural narrative. While it is probably good to honor one’s parents for their own sake, in the end we are to do so because God the (transcendental) Father told us to, and He will punish us if we do not.

The present translators want to bracket the question of the value of the conceptions of the family and proper family relations in the three Abrahamic religions and will leave to others the question of whether the resultant familial institutions in the Western narrative were as uniformly oppressive as liberal critics and opponents of religion would have us believe. Our point is that the early Confucians had a very different view of the world, and consequently a different view of the family within that world and, consequently again, a different view of the person within the family.<sup>53</sup> *Xiao* is indeed “family reverence,” but it is a different family reverence from that of the Jew, the Christian, or the Muslim. Readers of the *Classic of Family Reverence* can only learn from this text if they approach it, at the outset at least, on its own terms, not theirs.

A different sociopolitical perspective will emerge from such reading, we believe. It is a perspective to be weighed seriously, and we largely concur with Madsen’s succinct sociological description of it. To quote him again:

In the Confucian perspective . . . freedom does not consist in choosing which group one will belong to. It consists in creatively contextualizing those commitments which fate has assigned. It

involves ever deeper understanding of the meaning of one's roles as father, son, husband, wife, sibling, friend, subject, so that one can flexibly reconcile them with all of the other roles one must play in a world that is complex and changing, but in the end capable of achieving a harmonious integration among its major institutions.<sup>54</sup>

Shifting from nuclear and extended families, and from neighborhood and the state, to the "global village" that the world is supposedly becoming, there is yet another sociopolitical concern that readers approaching the *Classic of Family Reverence* might profit from bearing in mind. Most of the citizens of the developed nations, and the urban elites in the others, subscribe more or less to the liberal model of society and government that is based on the Enlightenment model of human beings as free, rational, autonomous individuals, a model that has brought many changes to the Abrahamic religious traditions in general and to the idea of the family in particular.

But the great majority of the rest of the world's peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East—certainly more than two-thirds of the human race—do not seem to define themselves fundamentally as free, autonomous (and rights-bearing) individuals. They are concretely daughters and sons, mothers and fathers, spouses, siblings, cousins, neighbors, members of clans—all with close ties to specific geographic areas and communities, religious and secular. Except for the Westernized urban elites in these areas, most of the peoples who live in these places would define themselves much more in a relational, "Confucian" language than in Enlightenment and modern liberal terms; and thus if we seriously desire to engage in cross-cultural dialogue rather than diatribe, the former terms must be allowed into the discourse, even if they do not come to dominate it.

### 3. The Ethical Dimensions of *xiao*

A philosophical analysis of early Confucian ethical or moral thought must begin with the fact that there are no terms in the lexicon of early Chinese that correspond closely to our terms "ethics" or "morals." In itself this semantic fact might not initially give us pause, but there is more: Virtually *none* of the key terms employed in contemporary Western moral discourse—"freedom," "liberty," "rights," "autonomy," "dilemma," "individual," "choice," "rationality," "democracy," "supererogatory," "private," even "ought"—have close analogues in the early Chinese language in which the Confucian texts were written.<sup>55</sup> Now, it seems, we must indeed pause;

absent this concept cluster of basic terms, how can any issues of contemporary moral concern be discussed? “You *ought* not to constrain Jones without very good *reason*, for if you do, you are taking away his *autonomy*, and thereby his *right to freely choose* how he will act.”

Upon reflection, however, these semantic facts should not surprise us, nor be taken as evidence of extreme philosophical naïveté on the part of Confucius or his followers. Speakers of the language definitive of every culture have vocabulary items for describing, analyzing, and evaluating human conduct, but their lexicon will be strongly influenced by a number of cultural factors, not least among them being the worldview of that culture in general and the definition of what it is to be (or become) human within that worldview. Our medieval forebears used terms like “virtue,” “honor,” and “sin” very differently from the way in which these words are used today in describing and evaluating human conduct, and other terms they employed—“soke,” “sake,” “varlet,” “chivalric,” “liegeful,” and so on—we do not use at all.

Similarly, the ancient Greek account of what it is to be a person has significantly influenced our own; but it, too, is distinct from ours in many respects. A number of the basic terms employed in contemporary moral discourse that are absent from the Confucian lexicon are not found in ancient Greek either; and a number of key Greek words used to describe, analyze, and evaluate human conduct—*nous*, *akrasia*, *aretē*, *eidos*, *logos*, *dikē*, *eudaimonia*, *phronēsis*, and so on—have no precise lexical counterparts in contemporary English and are difficult to translate without modifiers, circumlocutions, or a gloss (which is why we are providing a Chinese philosophical lexicon at the end of this introduction, and have already taken up a few of its key terms).

In order not to beg any important philosophical questions against the Confucians early on, then, we must understand how much our own moral vocabulary for describing, analyzing, and evaluating the conduct of our fellows rests on the concept of human beings as fundamentally autonomous individuals, the definition itself utilizing the vocabulary of contemporary moral discourse. This definition of the individual person permeates, not only our moral thinking, but our institutions of government in all three of its branches, and therefore requires closer examination, for it is the default foundation of the conceptual background that Western readers are inclined to bring to the *Classic of Family Reverence*.<sup>56</sup>

The moral dimensions of *xiao* are manifold and deep, even though the concept is in many respects straightforward and intuitively simple, and, in order to be fully understood and appreciated, needs to be placed

in sharp contrast to its Western counterpart(s). For most of the past two-plus centuries—with a process of evolution that stretches back to antiquity—the basic conception of what it is to be a human being in Western civilization has been, as we have already claimed, *individualism*. That we are social creatures, strongly shaped by the others with whom we have interacted, has always been acknowledged on all sides, but it has not been seen as the essence of our humanity, or, at the more abstract level, as being of compelling value. Rather, what gives human beings their primary worth, their dignity, their integrity, their value, and what must command the respect of all, is their *autonomy*, or their capacity to become *autonomous* seen as a potential that applies to all individuals.<sup>57</sup>

With this basic view of human beings in place, certain other qualities must also inhere in them or the notion of the autonomous individual would be incoherent. Individuals must be *rational* if they are to be autonomous; that is to say, they must be capable of going against instinct or conditioning, for creatures that can do neither are surely not autonomous. Further, human beings must enjoy *freedom*; if they are not free to choose rationally between alternative courses of action and then act on the choice made, how can they be said to be autonomous?

Further again, although the quality of being self-interested is not strictly entailed by the basic view of human beings just sketched, it has been standard in most of philosophy (and virtually all of economics) since before the Enlightenment and the rise of capitalism in modern times. Finally, these qualities of individual human beings as most fundamentally autonomous, rational, and free (self-interest has been less thoroughly applauded by some) are taken as unalloyed goods in the ethical sense. To return to an earlier example, any attempt to curb an individual's use of reason or freedom, and hence his/her autonomy, is *prima facie* morally suspect in all cases, requiring especial justification; for such curtailment also robs the individual of primary worth, self-respect, dignity, and value, as he or she becomes merely object, not subject.

If we define human beings in this individualistic manner, it would follow that in thinking about how we ought to deal with our fellows we should seek as general and as abstract a viewpoint as possible. If *everyone* has the (valued) qualities associated with individualism, then gender, age, ethnic background, religious affiliation, skin color, and so on should play no significant role in our decisions about how to interact with them, apart from concern for (ethically irrelevant) detail. Thus, on this orientation, it is incumbent upon us to seek universal values and principles, else the hope of a world at peace, devoid of group conflicts, racism, sexism, and

ethnocentrism, can never be realized. And the way to achieve this is obviously to do all we can to ignore and transcend our own spatiotemporal and cultural locations and, on the basis of pure reason, to ascertain beliefs and principles that should be compelling to all other rational persons, who are equally ignoring and transcending their specific backgrounds that differ from our own. Our diverse heritages divide us and generate conflict; our capacity to reason unites us all, and hence offers a greater hope for a less violent human future than has been the case in the past, and at present. This emphasis on objectivity and impartiality has been a strong argument in favor of seeking universalism in ethics. Many people, and perhaps most Western philosophers, have been swayed by it, making any occasional challenges thereto seem either relativistic or authoritarian or both.

Two such universalistic moral theories—both based on the concept of the individual we have outlined—have gained a hold over the past two centuries: *deontological* ethics, focusing on the concept of one's duty, and *utilitarianism*, based on attending to the consequences of one's actions. The former is associated with Immanuel Kant, whose fundamental moral principle, the categorical imperative, is roughly "Always act on a maxim you could will to become a universal law."<sup>58</sup> Kant sought to establish a certain, universally valid basis for human behavior that could withstand relativism and skepticism—that is, to formulate a logic of moral arguments that, in providing access to moral concepts, reveals our unconditional obligations without reference to historical experience or inclinations. The substance of our autonomy, then, is an inner rational faculty uncorrupted by external circumstances that enables us to comply with moral imperatives, an autonomy that is devoid of our particularities as unique persons living in a particular time and place.

Utilitarianism was developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill three-quarters of a century after Kant, and its most fundamental principle is to act so as to maximize the utility/happiness of the greatest number of people (with the minimal disutility/unhappiness for the rest).<sup>59</sup> For Kant, logic reigns, and the focus is on compliance and consistency rather than consequences; for Bentham and Mill, the situation is more nearly—but not quite—reversed, since for them probabilities must weigh heavily in a moral agent's calculations about the consequences of one's actions. For the utilitarian, calculating utility is a method of reasoning that can be applied to our moral choices.

This sketch, brief though it is, should suffice to make clear the stark contrast between the views of both Kantians and Utilitarians, on the one hand, and the early Confucians on the other, and the relevance of these

differences to understanding the concept of family reverence, or *xiao*. That is, for the Confucian each situation requires the moral imagination necessary to put oneself in the place of the other (*shu* 恕), and then a determination to do one's utmost (*zhong* 忠) to achieve what is optimally appropriate (*yi* 義) under the circumstances. Confucians do not seek the universal, but concentrate on the particular; they do not see abstract autonomous individuals, but rather concrete persons standing in a multiplicity of role relations with one another; they do not focus exclusively on either intentions or consequences (agents or their actions), but on the virtuosity and productivity of the relations themselves. In the Confucian sensibility the appeal is to these particular persons in this particular family, defined by these specific relations. Mothers and daughters become such by virtue of their relations to each other. Indeed, persons *are* what they mean for each other.

The key vocabulary of what we call "role ethics"<sup>60</sup> (as an alternative to deontic, utilitarian, and virtue ethics) is the language relevant to the Confucian pursuit of community. *Li* 禮, or "ritual propriety," is the communal grammar that locates persons in meaningful, reciprocal roles and relations within their families and communities. Given that all situations present us with alternative possibilities, *yi* 義, or an achieved sense of "appropriateness," reports upon the ongoing adjustments that are necessary to optimize the significance of these relations, and in so doing, to deepen and extend them to become an increasingly robust source of meaning. And it is only by beginning with family reverence at home and then extending these same feelings to other members of the community that persons are able, in the fullness of time, to become virtuosic in their relations and thus consummate in their conduct (*ren* 仁).<sup>61</sup>

One dimension of Confucian "family" that must not be overlooked is the role of friendship as an extension of family relations and as a definite, often compensatory family value. In *Analects* 1.8 (repeated in 9.25) Confucius declares: "Do not have as a friend anyone who is not as good as you are." In seeking out and developing our friendships we have a latitude and degree of freedom that is not characteristic of blood relatives. Confucius is keenly aware that such relations, while compensating for family constraints, can still be a source of personal growth as well as personal diminution. He states: "Having three kinds of friends will be a source of personal improvement; having three other kinds of friends will be a source of personal injury. One stands to be improved by friends who are true, who make good on their word, and who are broadly informed; one stands to be injured by friends who are ingratiating, who feign compli-

ance, and who are glib talkers" (*Analects* 16.4). The point is that friendship provides a porous border around the institution of family that allows for a more deliberate shaping of one's own personal relations, and hence one's own person. These voluntary relations, although surrogate, often achieve a degree of feeling and commitment that goes beyond our more formal family bonds. Whereas one is necessarily amicable toward a brother, one can be more critical and demanding with friends (*Analects* 13.28).<sup>62</sup>

Confucians must take full cognizance of, analyze, and evaluate the specific relations that obtain among members of a family in a way that would be difficult for followers of Kant, Bentham, or Mill. For these latter philosophers, if all autonomous individuals are seen in the abstract as requiring equal treatment, for example, then taking the special bonds that exist between parents and children (and other special relations) into account becomes difficult, especially for liberals. Consider the following not atypical puzzle generated by this orientation. Liberals who want to support multiculturalism need to be able to justify the parental authority that must be exerted to instill cultural value systems and worldviews into children. However, such authority may be at odds with liberal demands that citizens be autonomous.<sup>63</sup>

For Kant, a paradigmatic liberal of the classical sort, morality is a function of the purity of the intent that directs our conduct. The moral good is achieved by renouncing one's own personal interests. This is, in our opinion, one of the main reasons why the role ethics of familial relations has attracted relatively little attention in the Western philosophical narrative from earliest times, and certainly over the past two centuries. A major historian of familial moral thinking in the West, Jeffrey Blustein, notes this fact, but does not endeavor to explain it:

After Hegel, philosophers did not stop talking about the normative aspects of parent-child relations altogether. What happened was that they no longer attempted to systematically apply their most dearly held moral and social values to the study of parenthood. The resolution of problems relating to the upbringing of children and to our expectations of them became a sideline, and the most profound issues affecting the lives of human beings in society were seen to lie elsewhere.<sup>64</sup>

In our political and legal thinking, both deontological and utilitarian ethical orientations play a major role, exerting a profound influence on legislatures and in the courts. But because both theories are rooted in the

concept of foundational individualism, developing adequate family laws and policies is difficult—another reason why the ethical study of families has become a “sideline.” In their introduction to a special issue of *Hypatia*, “On the Family and Feminist Theory,” editors Martha Minow and Mary Lyndon Shanley point out “a paradoxical characteristic of family life” in that “the individual must be seen simultaneously as a distinct individual and as a person fundamentally involved in relationships of dependence, care, and responsibility.”<sup>65</sup> But such simultaneous “seeing” is not an option for persons in this way any more than it is for duck-rabbits or any other visual representation that changes dramatically when what is foregrounded changes.

If our analyses of these positions and issues have merit, we can begin to see not only why questions of family versus state loyalties cannot be answered by these Western moral theories: they cannot even be asked. Indeed, *no* moral questions concerning the family can even be framed for examination because, by definition, family members are not abstract, autonomous individuals, parts of the public, but are flesh-and-blood, highly specific, young and old, male and female fellow human beings related to ourselves in deeply intimate ways. Thus all moral questions pertaining to family matters have been swept under the conceptual rug of a “private” realm that involves personal matters of taste and religious belief—a realm wherein moral and political philosophy do not enter.

Only by divesting persons of any uniquely individuating characteristics can we begin to think of developing a theory of moral principles that will hold in all instances. With respect to family, this is precisely what we cannot do if we are even to attempt to formulate the relevant moral questions about loyalties and obligations coherently, for as soon as we use the expression “my mother” in a moral question, we are not dealing with an abstract, autonomous individual, but one who carried us, brought us into this world, nurtured and comforted us, giving of herself extraordinarily for our benefit.

In moral philosophy proper, however, there have been (at least) two recent challenges to seeking universal principles governing abstract (because “unencumbered”) autonomous individuals that require mention, for while both have certain affinities with the Confucian persuasion, the differences remain significant.

Uneasiness with some of the implications of the ethics of Kant and Mill has led some Western philosophers to undertake a reevaluation and reinterpretation of Aristotle’s virtue ethics. Instead of asking, “What principles should guide my moral actions?” we should perhaps be asking,

“What kind of moral qualities should I endeavor to develop?”<sup>66</sup> Following up on these developments in Western moral theory, many comparative philosophers are given to characterizing Confucianism as a “virtue ethics.”<sup>67</sup> But we believe this ascription to be misleading, even when the Greek *aretai* is more properly translated as “excellences” rather than as “virtues.”

In fact, establishing a contrast with Aristotle’s virtue ethics—and in so doing, allowing that Aristotle is certainly a closer analogue to Confucian role ethics than to either the deontic or the utilitarian traditions—provides us with the opportunity to bring role ethics into clearer focus. In the first place, Aristotle was writing largely for and about a warrior aristocracy, and the Confucians were anything but approving of warriors. More important, Aristotle’s virtue theory of ethics seems to require the postulate of universal character traits as a part of human nature,<sup>68</sup> and though the writings of the early Confucians certainly cohere, they are by no means in agreement on the constitution of human nature. They all presume that human beings—or, in the Confucian case, perhaps “human becomings”—are open to and shaped by culturally generated patterns of behavior and taste, a position that is very different from the presumed biological and metaphysical uniformities that we associate with Aristotle.<sup>69</sup>

In a Confucian world, because persons are born into family relations that are considered constitutive of their persons, their “natures” (*xing* 性), or perhaps better, “natural tendencies,” are a combination of native instinct and the cultivated cognitive, moral, aesthetic, religious sensibilities provided by their family locus and initial conditions. That is, persons from their inchoate beginnings are to be understood as embedded in and nurtured by unique, transactional patterns of relations rather than as discrete entities defined by common traits. The notion of *li* locates moral conduct within a thick and richly textured pattern of relations.

If we contrast this Confucian relational person with the Aristotelian notion articulated in his individuating language of potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*energia*), we move from Aristotle’s understanding of persons as the actualization of a given potential—the presumed biological and metaphysical uniformities that make us what we are—to viewing Confucian persons, retrospectively, as the consummation of their careers, with all of the particular relational possibilities that such consummation has entailed. That is, since for the Confucian person one’s “potential” arises *pari passu* within one’s always shifting transactional relationships rather than being resident in one’s person from the outset, “potential” as such can only be determined after the fact.

Human beings are born into a world and begin as a complex of initial familial conditions that are nurtured (or not) into their robust humanity. One's inchoate identity is informed and ultimately transformed by its mature matrix of family relations. In this ongoing process, reference to particular agents or individuals requires a conceptual abstraction from the concrete situation of a loving home constituted by the relational bonds of loving and of being loved. At the same time, the cultivated and distinctive individuality—defined relationally—that is achieved through associated living is the ultimate reward for living the complex moral life. For this reason, Confucian terms such as *ren* 仁 and *de* 德—"consummatory conduct" and "excellence" respectively—far from being uniformities, are generalizations drawn from the life histories of particular persons, and are thus often illustrated by appealing to particular models of conduct rather than by invoking abstract principles or definitions. That is, instruction is largely effected through emulation.<sup>70</sup>

Another way in which Aristotelian virtue ethics differs from Confucian role ethics is that, while Aristotle does assume some *general* notion of community, the community is not in all cases *necessary*, as many of the virtues may be cultivated in solitude. That is, the basic excellences he champions, as noted earlier—temperance, courage, and wisdom—*may* be cultivated in social situations, but they need not be: We can resist the temptation to take third helpings of dessert when we are dining alone; test our courage by skydiving, bullfighting, or performing many other death-defying actions that do not require others; and of course we read, and usually reflect on things, by ourselves.<sup>71</sup>

Further, Aristotle's sense of the polis is a most *general* notion of community, and its basic roles are general—male/warrior/citizen—not the *specific* and *constitutive* set of roles as this son, this mother, this neighbor, and so on, that is required by the Confucian ethic. As we have argued, the Confucian person is irreducibly social; and thus social, moral, and political progress requires others at all times. The basic Confucian excellences can only be acquired in the process of living one's roles appropriately with the others to whom one is related, kin and non-kin alike. As a corollary, it must follow from the Confucian role orientation that we need to look at the patient no less than the agent in ascertaining the extent to which the valued character traits have been properly developed and exemplified. Role ethics are radically situated and can be individuated only as a matter of abstraction.

There are, to be sure, a number of similarities between Aristotle and Confucius in the area of what we call moral thought. We do not dwell

on those similarities herein because many other comparative philosophers have done so, and more important, because we believe the differences between them are far more significant. One way to show these differences, and to sum up what has been said in comparing them thus far, is simply to juxtapose their writings on a similar concept. Consider laws, for example. First, from the *Nichomachean Ethics*:

But it is difficult to get from youth up a right training for excellence if one has not been brought up under the right laws; for to live temperately and hardily is not pleasant to most people, especially when they are young. For this reason their nurture and occupation should be fixed by law; for they will not be painful when they have become customary.<sup>72</sup>

And continuing:

But it is surely not enough that when they are young they should get the right nurture and attention; since they must, even when they are grown up, practice and be habituated to them, we shall need laws for this as well, and generally speaking, to cover the whole of life; for most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than what is noble. (1180a 1-5)

From the *Analects*:

The Master said: "Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves." (2.3)

And again:

The Master said: "If rulers are able to effect order in the state through the combination of observing ritual propriety and deferring to others, what more is needed?" (4.3)

Further, virtue ethics resonates with the deontic and utilitarian models outlined above (and differs from role ethics) in that all three of

them are dependent upon rational calculation to determine moral conduct. Compliance with the moral law or the application of the principle of utility is fundamentally a deliberative, rational exercise, and the less emotive content to it, the better. While Aristotle's doctrine of the mean certainly entails *practical* reason with an "uncodifiability" that is resistant to rules, his understanding of the human being is still defined by appeal to reason and, indeed, the higher aspects of the human being, by appeal to *theoria*:

The actuality of God, which surpasses all of this in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be the most of the nature of happiness.<sup>73</sup>

Confucian role ethics, on the other hand, requires a thick, engaged intelligence rather than an objective rationality. It is an aestheticism in the sense that it is holistic where means and ends are one and the same: One becomes distinguished as a person who behaves with family reverence only to the extent that one behaves with family reverence. One "*xiaos*" in order to be *xiao*, or perhaps better, one "*xiaos*" and is *xiao*. The Confucian excellences differ in form and content from the Aristotelian view in that, for the latter, cultivating the proper emotion and attitude, largely through study, reflection, and disciplined training, is the means for generating approbationary behavior. For the followers of the Master, agency and action, character and conduct, virtues and virtuous action are conterminous and mutually entailing. Meet your obligations consistently, attentively, appropriately—and the requisite dispositions and emotions are omnipresent in those actions. And there are exemplars of such conduct to prove the validity of the teachings when and if one's commitment to following the proper way flags. Concrete models play a greater role in guiding moral conduct than appeal to abstracted principles.

Yet another way in which Confucian role ethics differs from virtue ethics is that, in the former, the religious and the ethical, far from being distinct spheres of cultural interest, are continuous, allowing one to move from the ethical to the spiritual without a break. Indeed, it is civility within the family and community that is the locus of the human-centered Confucian religiousness, and it is inspired human living that is the source of spirituality. Ancestor reverence and sacrifice are important as reinforcing this more concrete and substantial human site of spiritual expression.<sup>74</sup>

Again, the "guidelines" for living our roles are much clearer than the guidelines for what constitutes the practice of virtues, and a moral

epistemology that is grounded in family appeals to one of the most familiar aspects of being human. (As we have seen, Aristotle, too, sees the family as important in habituating the young, but it is the laws that he relies upon, not the exemplars of appropriate behavior that Confucius champions. The contrast is one between abstract law on the one hand and concrete model on the other.) The degree of clarity in these filial guidelines is evident in the fact that one is literally encouraged to “family reverence” (*xiao* 孝) one’s elders and to “younger-brother” (*ti* 悌) one’s older brothers without further stipulation. The expectation is that a person who participates in the life of a family knows intuitively and without further elaboration what it means to behave in a way consistent with such dictates.

Role ethics allows us to shave with Occam’s razor a second time. Just as we might be skeptical of positing the existence of some ontological ground—God, substance, and so on—so too can we question whether we need to posit an individual self (nature, soul, person, character) behind the many roles we live.<sup>75</sup> Role ethics emphasizes the continuity of particular actions and the personal growth entailed by them without reifying these actions and subordinating them to longer-term, abstract dispositions. “Good with” and “good to” are more concrete than “good.” Role ethics focuses upon the aesthetic quality of our moral conduct—its intensity and appropriateness—and requires us to entertain the particular situations of our experience as they are actually felt and lived.

Within the context of cross-cultural accommodation, role ethics avoids intractable moral conflict by abjuring any appeal to universals and assuming that appropriate conduct is always a matter of continuing, collateral negotiation within the complexity of particular circumstances. Indeed, the collaborative nature of moral conduct requires that it be mutual and accommodating.

In sum, while Confucian role ethics surely bears more of a resemblance to Aristotelian than to Kantian or utilitarian ethics, we do not believe that “virtue ethics,” with its conceptual foundation of individualism and developed by rationality, is an appropriate description of the views on the cultivated moral sensibilities of the Master and his followers. Nor do we believe that such a virtue ethics, with its exaggerated emphasis on rationality as method, can serve as a morality for the culturally diverse and rich world of today.<sup>76</sup>

The second recent challenge to the universalistic ethics of Kant, Bentham, and Mill in Western moral theory has been what has come to be called “moral particularism.” According to Jay Garfield, particularists “deny the foundational character of universal moral principles in favor of

the view that moral judgment is ineliminably bound to particular contexts in which matters of perception, judgment, individual relations, etc. play roles that cannot be captured by general principles—can neither explain moral judgments, guide moral action and reasoning, nor enable moral criticism or discussion.”<sup>77</sup> This orientation does indeed have many resonances with the views of the early Confucians, who would surely endorse the view of another philosopher with sympathies toward particularism in his insistence that “Morally, the intuition that we have special moral ties to members of our families which we do not have to others is as secure a moral conviction as that every human being should be treated with dignity.”<sup>78</sup>

As much as contemporary Western particularism might share with Confucianism, however, most of its current champions (who never discuss Confucianism at all) focus on giving *reasons* for following one course of action rather than another, and consequently do not break that sharply with Kant, Bentham, and Mill—or Aristotle—at least from a Confucian perspective. These thinkers tend to work within what might appropriately be characterized as a loose rational-choice theoretical perspective. And as we have suggested, Confucians do not make ethical choices in this narrow, purely rational sense.<sup>79</sup> Rather, dispositions to behave in one way as opposed to another most often do not entail calculated choices at all, emerging spontaneously out of a cultivated sense of appropriateness within family and communal relations. This is in no way to imply that there is anything “anti-” or “ir-” rational in the Confucian persuasion, but rather to simply note that Confucians’ writings will be better understood when it is appreciated that they do not seem to have thought there were any ideas or beliefs utterly devoid of emotional content, nor the converse. Here again the aesthetic analogy is perhaps most appropriate, bringing the full inventory of one’s experience—cognitive and affective—to bear in bringing brush to paper or in throwing a pot.

To return to an earlier illustration, if I must attempt to formulate a universalizable maxim for giving shoulder rubs to grandmothers or calculate the utility or disutility of doing so, if I have to do these things when my grandmother requests a shoulder rub, then, at least for Confucius (and for many more of us, we suspect), I am not at all an admirable grandchild. It is the person who, without deliberation, could not do otherwise who would be the exemplar of Confucian role ethics.<sup>80</sup>

To appreciate this point from another perspective, we may probe a bit more narrowly what it means to be *moral* in modern Western thought. As we noted earlier, there is no term in classical Chinese closely approximating the English term “moral,” so we should examine what the term

means for and to ourselves. What qualities does an act have that makes it a *moral* act? Here we are not asking about the goodness that might be evidenced in the act, but rather what it is about the act that tells us we should describe it as good *or* bad, moral *or* immoral. How are moral and immoral acts to be distinguished from any of the other manifold acts everyone performs every day?<sup>81</sup>

Consider the statement matrix “What she did was X.” A great many expressions can replace X: “contrary to her own views,” “laughable,” “in keeping with the circumstances,” “strange,” “a reflection of her personality,” and much else, depending on a set of specific qualities of the actress, and the specific circumstances in which her actions occurred. In other situations, however, more general but circumscribed evaluative terms are needed to describe the action. “What she did was illegal” is one of those; “What she did was moral” is a second; and “What she did was rude” is a third. These are important, indeed necessary, categories for describing, analyzing, and evaluating human activities in contemporary Western life. But they are not always clearly distinguishable categories, and, in the case of morals, may not be sharply delimitable either.

Imagine the shade of Confucius coming to us to learn about the modern West. Always concerned with using words properly (*Analects* 13.3), he asks us for criteria to use in deciding which human activities fall within the category of moral or immoral, as distinguished from actions that should not be evaluated in such terms. The task would not be an easy one for us. “What he did was legal, but immoral” might describe a number of actions, such as evicting a single mother for nonpayment of rent after she has been laid off from her last job and before she has found another. On the other hand, most people allow that we might, at times, be morally obliged to do something illegal; all cases of civil disobedience are of this kind. Or again, many people who may be said to be altogether moral and never break the law are rather rough-and-ready in their observances of manners and social protocol, while a serial killer might be extremely polite to his victims before dispatching them. In sum, although moral behavior is an important sphere in Western life and thought, it is not easy to circumscribe it with any precision: Why do we evaluate some actions as being either moral or immoral, but do not do so in other cases? Again, then, what makes a moral action moral (or immoral)?

We might immediately think that actions that have the potential to help or hurt others are those that should be adjudged moral or immoral, but this will not do. We sometimes unintentionally hurt others—sometimes, perhaps, even when trying to help them. Doctors regularly hurt

patients in order to help them. Being rude, boorish, insulting, or insensitive can hurt others significantly, but we are strongly inclined to insist on distinguishing immoral from rude behavior (as Confucians would be just as strongly inclined not to do).

These brief reflections on the term “moral” point out two dimensions of ethical thinking that do not receive much consideration in contemporary Western moral philosophy. First, there is no way to ascertain in advance which human actions should be adjudged in terms of the dichotomy moral and immoral; and second, under specified circumstances, virtually any human action may be evaluated in this way. After all, confronted by alternative possibilities in each moment of our experience, we are invariably called upon to make the best of the circumstances. All thoughtful conduct is moral: Though dispositional, it is also reflective and discriminating.

As important as these conclusions might be, they are clearly worthless for giving the shade of Confucius firm guidelines as to how and when to evaluate the actions we engage in today using the terms “moral” and “immoral.” We may, however, draw an additional conclusion from these considerations and claim that under certain circumstances every human action *can* have moral implications, and now we are approaching the text at hand. Within the worldview reflected in the *Xiaojing*, it is better to say that every human action *does* have what we (not the early Confucians) would call “moral” implications.

Returning now directly to this early Confucian “morality” as seen in the *Classic of Family Reverence*, the life of the relational self is at all times intertwined with and inseparable from the lives of others. In the opening passage that sets the theme of this document, Confucius asks Master Zeng:

“Do you understand how the former kings were able to use the model of their consummate excellence (*de*) and their vital way (*dao*) to bring the world into accord (*shun*), and how the people on this account were able to attain harmony (*he*) and to live with each other as good neighbors so that those above and below alike did not resent each other?”

In this question, Confucius correlates the “way” (*dao* 道) and “excellence” (*de* 德) of specific historical figures—the former kings—as sources of harmony within the always hierarchical social institutions. It is instructive to understand that the combination of these two characters—*daode* 道

德—translates the English term “morality” in modern Chinese and means “excelling on the path of life with virtuosic relationality.” This Confucian “morality” is the striving to achieve the most productive and meaningful relations in all that we do. In an important sense we are never alone (as isolated individuals), even when no one else is physically present; there is very little that we do that does not have an impact on the lives of others. When each of us steps up, we bring with us first and foremost our family and, by extension, all of the “relatives” who have come to constitute us as uniquely significant persons.

According to the early Confucian tradition, we are most basically components of five relationships: (1) father–son; (2) husband–wife; (3) ruler–minister (subject); (4) elder brother–younger brother; (5) friend–friend. Role variations—mother–son, father–daughter, aunt–niece, elder cousin–younger cousin, village elder–village peer or youngster, and important, teacher–student—are all to be construed within this same spectrum of communal patterns. The central relations have been male-dominated (father, brother, ruler), and are clearly hierarchical in nature.<sup>82</sup> The Chinese terms used to distinguish these relations describe them as literally between those who are “above” (*shang* 上) and those who are “below” (*xia* 下). Many translators have used “superiors” and “inferiors” in their accounts of these relationships, not without justification, for the relations are obviously hierarchical, and the texts describing the relationships were all too regularly referenced throughout Chinese imperial history to insist that those “below” must grovel at the feet of those “above,” especially in the case of women.

The texts, however, are living documents and can also be read as describing relationships that may be said to hold between *benefactors* and *beneficiaries*, an understanding that imbues these same words with a very different flavor—indeed, it is a reading that a great many passages in them suggest. We believe that such a reading dissolves a number of seeming paradoxes in these documents, eliminates a number of ambiguities in interpreting certain passages, and contributes significantly to construing them as in fact describing and analyzing what might be human relationships held in common cross-culturally, among ourselves today no less than among and between the early Chinese.

To elaborate, while the Confucian relationships are indeed hierarchical, they need not be construed as elitist; as suggested above, elitism logically entails hierarchy, but the converse does not hold. A scientist guiding the research of her graduate students, a doctor interacting with his patients, parents helping their offspring with their homework, a mas-

ter plumber working with apprentices, a friend giving counsel to a friend requesting it—these and numerous similar situations are clearly hierarchical, but to uncritically assume that they are “elitist,” or worse, “coercive,” guarantees that we will not understand the dynamics of these very familiar human interactions.

A second reason for eschewing the “superior” and “inferior” way of describing Confucian relationships is that it inclines us to see the relation as essential and thus set in stone, rather than as constantly shifting in each of us in response to the others with whom we are interacting and when. To be sure, one is always “below,” or “inferior” to one’s father, but most male adults are fathers themselves no less than sons; many brothers have both older and younger siblings; daughters become mothers; young people become elders; and friends in need at one moment regularly come to our aid in another. Put simply, each of us, in the normal course of a day’s activities, spends time being a benefactor—in however small a way—and at other times of the day enjoys being a beneficiary. In the same way, but now more temporally: Overwhelmingly the beneficiary of one’s parents when young, we become their benefactors when they are aged and infirm. We are benefactors to our friends and neighbors when they need our help, and beneficiaries when we need theirs.

Still a third reason why we believe it is appropriate to describe Confucian relationships as holding between benefactors and beneficiaries is that Confucius says that the central theme of all of his teachings is the feeling of proactive deference. As Master Zeng said of Confucius in the *Analects*: “The way of the Master is doing one’s utmost (*zhong* 忠), and putting oneself in the other’s place (*shu*), nothing more” (4.15).

Beneficiaries are to be loyal (which includes the obligation to remonstrate when deemed necessary), obedient, loving, helpful, and respectful. Benefactors in turn must be nurturing, material providers, role models, affectionate. In one sense these are not abstract philosophical prescriptions but simply statements descriptive of what and how parent–child relations are, or ought to be, constituted in any standard definition of “parent” or “child.”

As a child or young adult, following the advice of Confucius to “put one’s self in the other’s place” obliges the child to think of a *specific* other: this grandmother, father, younger brother, mother’s older sister, and so on. This specificity is a part of the reason the *Classic of Family Reverence*, and Confucianism overall, are described as particularistic rather than as universal. There are no fixed rules to follow, no formulae to apply, no purely formal calculations to be made. Being appropriate (*yi*) is indeed difficult,

requiring a broad awareness, imagination, and the commitment to make adjustments to the particularities and implications of each situation. To determine the worth of a human action, the Confucian must ask a number of specific questions: What did you do? With whom? When? Such is Confucius' message when he says: "There is nothing that I can do for someone who is not constantly asking himself: 'What to do? What to do?'" (15.16).<sup>83</sup>

What is central is not doing what is *moral* (remember, that is *our* term), but doing what is optimally *appropriate*, what is fitting (*yi*)—that is, proceeding along one's path in life disposed toward excellence in one's habits of conduct (*daode*). We might show our gratitude to our grandmother by drawing her a picture, but we almost surely would not display gratitude to our six-year-old brother in that way, for we know full well he is not interested in our artistic abilities; a lollipop, or even just a bear hug, would be better.

To understand our familial relations in this manner is to be on the path of familial reverence. But, we may ask, is it a *moral* path? Compared to basic issues in contemporary moral thinking—abortion, euthanasia, cloning, and so on—it might seem that drawing pictures for one's grandmother or giving a lollipop to a kid brother are commendable actions, perhaps, but altogether trivial, shedding no light at all upon larger issues. Yet what is suggested in the *Classic of Family Reverence* is that these little acts do matter, and if we learn to get the little things right on a day-in day-out basis, the "big" things will tend to take care of themselves: We face the future on the basis of the past; we face the world on the basis of our family. If we are to live fruitful lives, and are at all fortunate, we will meet many other people as we mature, and our interactions with them will call for some among a multiplicity of human feelings, depending on the situation: gratitude, loyalty, love, a nurturing sense, respect, and many more. If we have not had opportunities to develop and express these feelings in the home while younger, how can we acquire and express them as adults?

There are several insights in the rather simple logic of Confucian role ethics. First, "morality," deriving from "custom, mood, mode" (that we might associate immediately with *dao* 道 and *de* 德), is a continuing process that attends all human activity because, given the alternative, always unique possibilities entailed by action, there is a need to act on the basis of what is best from among them. Morality in the sense of acting upon what is most appropriate—making the most of a situation—is the source of growth in meaning, and is thus ultimately the meaning of education itself.<sup>84</sup> And selecting what is best and most meaningful in the situation is

captured in the key philosophical term *yi* 義, which unsurprisingly means both “what is most appropriate” and “what is most meaningful.”

Second, loving others is a precondition for behaving morally—that is, for being appropriate and meaningful (*yi*) in one’s actions.<sup>85</sup> Stated negatively, nothing is more dangerous than the shameless individual who acts without regard for others. And said yet another way, there is a violence in ignoring others—that is, immoral conduct is the mafioso’s failure to see the analogy between his own family relationships and the relationships of his victims. Hannah Arendt described Adolf Hitler as “thoughtless”—a seemingly thin rebuke for a genocidal monster. But her point was simple: He failed to make the family connection.<sup>86</sup>

Third, one can only learn to love others by being loved oneself—such intimacy is the only way. Proper family relations in infancy are an essential ground for socializing a person and integrating her or him into the community. Simply put, familial nurturance is not optional in the process of becoming moral.<sup>87</sup>

Fourth, everyone has a family. Consequently, family reverence provides us with the broadest possible basis for developing appropriate ethical feelings, where such feelings are more primordial and comprehensive than thinking or reasoning. Indeed, family plays a key role in producing moral persons. After all, family is the social institution that is most successful in deriving the most from its participants. Generally speaking, we can claim that family is the communal locus to which persons willingly commit themselves utterly and without remainder—their time, their resources, even their body parts. Family is the governing metaphor in the Confucian worldview because it serves as a strategy for optimizing the creative possibilities available to one in one’s relationships.

The ultimate contribution that cultivated family relations makes to the vision of a moral life is preemptive rather than retributive. Rather than offering a strategy for rational and principled calculation when confronted by difficult cases, it provides a fabric of family solidarity that in important degree can preclude the emergence of disintegrative conduct. Better to preclude spousal abuse in the first place than to address the unhappy problem after the fact.

Finally, the immediate implication of a relational understanding of oneself is that, if other members of your family flourish, you flourish too, and by extension, if your neighbor does better, you do better. Without making it crass or commercial, the point is that a generous disposition redounds to your own happiness.

But what if the family atmosphere is *not* conducive to developing

appropriate ethical feelings? What if the children are abused physically and/or psychologically? These are surely proper questions to ask of a Confucian. The answers, however, may be troubling for members of contemporary liberal societies to contemplate seriously for whom notions such as individual rights and privacy are of first-order importance.

An initial answer is simply to repeat that Confucianism is not universalistic or wholesale. Hence, there is no appeal to ready-made general principles that can putatively be evoked to solve the situation by determining how to curb abusive members of a family, especially a parent. We say “putatively” because, in any case, we must allow that the application of such principles even when enforced by law has a very mixed success rate. The tragedy is that nothing can happen until something has happened; and once something has happened, appeal to principles in whatever form usually cannot effectively remedy the situation.

The focus of the Confucian strategy is to establish patterns of human conduct that preclude the problem in the first place. When it comes to infringements of law, Confucius says: “In hearing cases, I am the same as anyone. What we must strive to do is to rid the courts of cases altogether” (*Analects* 12.13). In Confucianism we have a reliance on the resources of ritualized family and community (*li*) to secure communal values, with appeal to law being on occasion necessary but also a clear admission of communal failure. The embeddedness of each one of us within the family and larger community means that, at the very least, we are not likely to face the abuse alone. Our relationality implicates other persons immediately within the situation, and in so doing, encourages a significant degree of shared awareness and concern. Mutual regard and the sincere caring it fosters offer some reassurance.

On the positive side, Confucianism uses this relationality to foster a thick shame culture that encourages seeing and judging our actions from the perspective of others in our family and community (*yi*), and deferring to others in determining what would be appropriate conduct with respect to them (*shu*). Viewing the situation from a possible perpetrator’s perspective, relational embeddedness serves as a constraint on abusive behavior before it happens by fostering a strong sense of shame within the family and community. Indeed, it is the shameless individual who is potentially the most dangerous and abusive member of both family and community, and any institutional arrangement that precludes the emergence of such predatory persons is itself salutary.

The Confucian will also insist that we have the responsibility to prevent or alleviate dysfunctionality in the families of our neighbors as well,

which challenges us to rethink how high the fence of privacy surrounding each person's home should be allowed to be. How long can we turn our eyes away from the bruises we see on our neighbor's children—or spouse—before we believe that the neighborhood has some responsibility to step in, to tell the neighbor we are troubled by his children's or spouse's appearance and demeanor? That is to say, the Confucian emphasis on family reverence and community solidarity obliges us to rethink the supposed sanctity of our neighbor's home. Privacy is a good, to be sure, but can it justify our remaining silent in the face of substantial dysfunctionality and abuse on a neighbor's part? Can laws ultimately settle the matter? Again, Confucianism offers no universal answers to such questions, except an insistence that each of us—as sons and daughters, parents, aunts and uncles, neighbors and friends—understand our obligation to step up when we are confronted by interactive behavior that diminishes rather than dignifies other human beings—and in so doing, diminishes ourselves.

In sum, on this score, a relational understanding of oneself—the heart of role ethics—implies that as other members of your family flourish, so do you flourish; and the same holds true for neighbors and others with whom we interact. Conversely, if my family members live their roles in stifling or oppressive ways, I must needs be stifled and oppressed too; and again, the same holds for me in my role as neighbor—and ultimately, simply as a human being.

In this way we can come to appreciate that family reverence, while grounded in family feeling, must be extended beyond it. This is an important point, for one recurrent criticism of Confucian thought, as we noted earlier, has been that, however useful it may be for interactions with blood relatives, it is worthless in providing guidelines for how to deal with strangers, or even to care enough about strangers to *want* to deal with them in a humane manner. The Confucian texts in general, however, and the *Classic of Family Reverence* in particular, make it clear that family is the entry point for moral competence, and that one must learn to extend family reverence beyond the small family circle to ripple out in ever-widening radial circles, until ideally one embraces and feels at one with the world at large. This idea brings us closer to the spiritual dimensions of family reverence, but there is more to be said on Confucian “morality” before turning directly to the religious sensibilities it implies.

The ethical importance of family reverence, as the texts make clear, lies in understanding that it is only through many and loving interactions with our own grandmother that we learn to interact appropriately with other grandmothers despite their uniqueness. The emphasis

is on the correlation between the person, “Grandmother,” and the role, “grandmother.” In learning to love Grandmother through pictures and shoulder rubs, we come to know how to interact appropriately with *all* grandmothers, regardless of the dialect they happen to speak, the color of their skin, or their religious beliefs. For Confucians, in this one basic sense, when you’ve loved one Grandmother you can love them all.<sup>88</sup> This is the import of the passage entitled “Elaborating upon ‘Consummate Excellence’” in the *Classic of Family Reverence*, where Confucius says:

Exemplary persons (*junzi*) in their teachings (*jiao*) on family reverence do not travel daily from one family to the next to meet with each of them individually. Their teaching of family reverence is their way of showing respect (*jing*) for every father in the empire; their teaching of fraternal deference (*ti*) is their way of showing respect for every elder brother in the empire; their teaching of ministerial deference is their way of showing respect for every lord in the empire.

Another way to expand upon this point is to consider the feeling of gratitude. The *Classic of Family Reverence* insists that we owe an unpayable debt of gratitude to our parents, for without them we would not be. It is not merely for our existence that we should be grateful—this would be a weak reason indeed—but for the nature of their interactions with us, especially when we were very young. In arguing for the importance of the concept of family reverence for virtue ethics, Philip Ivanhoe has looked to such gratitude as an important ground for family reverence:

[T]he gratitude that one feels for the love of parents is not just a token of some general attitude of gratitude. . . . It is the source of and paradigm for not only our general sense of gratitude but our sense of what it is to care for another for that person’s sake. . . . [Filial Piety or family reverence] is partially constituted by the sense that this kindness was done by someone who was dramatically more powerful than oneself and who sacrificed substantial goods of their own in order to care for one in these ways. This is important from an ethical point of view. . . .<sup>89</sup>

We can build on Ivanhoe’s insight when we recall again Confucius’ exhortation to “put oneself in the other’s place,” the heart of deference. Our family reverence is grounded in gratitude, which is grounded in turn

by the knowledge that what our parents have done for us they did for *our* sake, not theirs—surely the best possible experience and preparation they could give us for becoming parents ourselves in the future.

It must be emphasized that a “debt” of gratitude is not at all like most debts “owed” to another. We don’t “owe” our parents the money, the time, or the care they gave us in some kind of tit-for-tat familial rate of exchange.<sup>90</sup> If we feel that, as grown children, we are only discharging this type of debt—if we simply grit our teeth and “do our family duty”—then, while performing the duty is better than neglecting it, we will not have learned what *xiao* is, or how it is to be practiced and felt. Rather, will we be inclined to see ourselves as individuals whose autonomy has been compromised by the earlier efforts of our parents that we did not ourselves request or commit ourselves to repaying; in other words, we will see ourselves as rights bearers whose rights have been more or less abridged, not as potential role consummators who are performing their roles wretchedly. When Master Zeng absorbs the Master’s remarks in the *Classic of Family Reverence*, he is doing so as a person who sees himself, not as an autonomous, rights-bearing individual, but as a person whose life is intimately and constantly intertwined with others with whom he interacts in a variety of roles: here and now as the beneficiary—and younger friend—of Confucius; and later the benefactor—and older friend—of his own students, including Confucius’ own grandson, Zisi 子思.

As a way of making the transition to the spiritual dimensions of family reverence, we may close this section on the ethics of *xiao* by briefly considering what the *Classic of Family Reverence* insists is basic to family reverence: obedience and loyalty. Both qualities have become of questionable value. From the time of the Nuremberg trials to Stanley Milgram’s frightening *Obedience to Authority*,<sup>91</sup> “I was just following orders” has no longer been the signal of a virtue—and surely not of an excellence. Loyalty has fared somewhat better, but a great many other virtues may trump it, and a person remaining loyal to a cause, group, or individual who did not formulate a universalizable maxim, or calculate the utility of doing so, would be considered immoral by most Kantians and Utilitarians alike.

When we are young, there is little we can do other than obey the dictates of our parents; they have too much power over for us to do otherwise. But that is not a good *moral* reason for obeying our parents. A much better one is that, if we are not obedient, our parents cannot properly meet the manifold obligations they have to love, feed, clothe, house, and educate us, as well as see to our health and safety. In Confucian terms the roles are

mutually entailing: The parents are responsible for our care and well-being as benefactors, and we the beneficiary children have the obligation to be obedient so that the parents can properly meet *their* obligations, as well as to comply out of a sense of gratitude and love.

But Confucian obedience was never intended to be total and unquestioning. As soon as children were old enough to ask genuine questions, questions could be asked, politely and with appropriate respect. In Chapter 15 of the *Classic of Family Reverence*, Confucius in a stinging critique upbraids Master Zeng for confusing family reverence with blind obedience. Indeed, Confucius' point is that remonstrance is integral to family reverence, and is thus not optional; it is an obligation that must be respected and acted upon in order for both the family and the government to function properly. And there are several remarks of a similar nature in the *Analects*, in the *Mencius*, and especially in the *Xunzi*. At all times one's primary responsibility, as we have emphasized before, is to do what is optimally *appropriate* (*yi*) for the situation and for the persons involved. As the Master says, "To see what it is appropriate to do, and not do it, is a want of courage" (2.24).

Similar remarks apply to loyalty. In a well-known passage in the *Analects*, Confucius makes it clear that one's highest loyalty is to the family, not to the government.

The Governor of She in conversation with Confucius said, "In our village there is someone called 'True Person.' When his father took a sheep on the sly, he reported him to the authorities." Confucius replied, "Those who are true in my village conduct themselves differently. A father covers for his son, and a son covers for his father. And being true lies in this." (13.18)

This passage goes to the heart of both the family and moral imagination in Confucian role ethics. In Zhu Xi's reading, the father is in dire straits and thus steals out of abject need. But according to such a reading, the putative "crime" of the father evaporates, and the son is just rotten. Perhaps Confucius has a more serious situation in mind.

When we discover that our teenage child has shoplifted at the local store, we are probably not inclined to dial 911 and have him or her arrested. We need more imagination to set the situation right and restore harmony. This would likely require that we accompany the offending child to the store to return the merchandise and apologize—and share in whatever consequences are in order, beginning with the feeling of an acute sense of

shame. Shame is a hugely important factor in Confucian moral philosophy because, unlike appeal to principle (deontic or utilitarian), it usually pre-empt the offence. Confucius' point is that the True Person as described by the Governor of She was deficient in not having had the moral imagination to deal with the situation appropriately. Certainly the owner of the sheep has to be compensated, and certainly the father through remonstrance has to understand that stealing the sheep was not acceptable conduct. But family feeling is the ground of morality in Confucian role ethics—it is where we develop our moral sensibilities. And we cannot abandon this ground when resolving the situation.<sup>92</sup>

This particular saying of the Master has been the cause of much controversy throughout Chinese history, a controversy that continues unabated today among Chinese philosophers and other intellectuals. Critics claim that this family orientation has led to a lack of civic concern in traditional China that, in turn, has been responsible for the emergence of despotic government. Defenders of the view that one's primary loyalty is to the family have countered by saying that of course the state must have its due (taxes, corvée service, and compliance with regulations), but that special relations based on shared history, love, and respect would ensure a better distribution of scarce resources overall than an impersonal state could ever deliver.<sup>93</sup>

We shall not enter into this debate in these pages, wanting to note only the different ways in which loyalty (and obedience) might be interpreted. Keith Knapp, who has studied the evolution of *xiao* both as an ideal and as it was practiced in China, claims that it became increasingly more absolutist and unquestioning with respect to obedience and loyalty as time went on than it had been during the period in which the early Confucians put it forward as an excellence necessary for the cultivation of other excellences. After noting some anecdotes about Master Zeng's familial obedience, Knapp goes on to remark:

This is not to say, though, that filiality necessarily required that children had to obey all of their parents' orders. In fact, early *Ru* [Confucian] texts make it clear that there are times when they must disobey their parents' instructions. . . . Hence, in narratives from before the Eastern Han (AD 25–220), a parent's authority was by no means unconditional. Although a son had to submit to righteous commands, he could circumvent those that were not. Early medieval filial piety accounts differ from their predecessors in that they lay even greater stress on sonly obedience. According

to these tales, no matter how inappropriate or inane a parent's request might be, children should always do their parent's bidding.<sup>94</sup>

Whatever the historical fluctuations in emphasis—and undoubtedly fluctuations there were, for the early Confucians at least—obedience and loyalty were important aspects of *xiao* because they required everyone, as part of their personal cultivation, to be humble, to learn to submit to the customs, traditions, and rituals that were so closely tied to the way each person thought of himself or herself. Moreover, and importantly, when we remember the extent to which ancestor reverence thoroughly permeated the fabric of Chinese society, we can begin to see that family reverence might not include loyalty and obedience merely toward one's father (and mother), but applies to grandfathers and other forebears as well; we are being loyal and obedient to our familial history, traditions, customs, and rituals through the extensive practice of ancestor reverence. It has long been a commonplace in China that one's filial obligations do not cease at the parents' death, nor are these duties confined to respecting and honoring one's immediate parents alone. Indeed, although centered in our present family relations, we owe debts of gratitude extending several generations back, for it is because of who and what our familial ancestors were that we are who and what we are—namely, fellow family members. And herein lies the path to the spiritual.

#### 4. *Xiao* and Human-centered Religiousness

One of the “Four Books” of classical Confucianism—the *Zhongyong*—describes this continuity between *xiao* and reverence for all ancestors explicitly, and movingly too:

Family reverence [*xiao*] means being good at continuing the purposes of one's predecessors and at maintaining their ways. . . . Taking up the places of their forebears, carrying out their ritual observances, playing their music, showing respect to those whom they esteemed, extending their affections to those of whom they were fond, serving their dead as though they were living, and serving those who are long departed as though they were still here—this then is family reverence at its utmost.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, this reverence for the ancestors, when cultivated aright, obliges us to think ahead to generations of our families not yet born, which in turn will lead to a sense of responsibility toward them.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, although the focus and weight of family reverence is on its contribution to our immediate present, it pertains to the past and future as well. It is almost certain that a role-consummating filial Confucian will think about such issues as the environment, organ transplants, stem-cell research, cloning, and much else, much differently than do autonomous individuals; whether for better or for worse, readers of the *Classic of Family Reverence* may decide for themselves after studying the text. And by cultivating oneself to feel a part of the past and the future no less than the present, role-consummating filial persons can come to transcend their spatiotemporal location without seeking some transcendental realm, for in the Confucian cosmology there is no such realm. Rather, it is the Confucian project of personal cultivation that ultimately leads to our ability to sacralize the sacred.

Classical Confucianism is at once a-theistic and profoundly religious. It is a religiousness without a God; a human-centered religiousness that affirms the cumulative human experience itself as sacred. There are several profound differences between this kind of religiousness and that of the three Abrahamic traditions that have largely defined the meaning of religion in the Western cultural experience. We argue that, unlike the retrospective “worship” model that defers to the ultimate meaning of some temporally prior, independent, external agency—what Schleiermacher has called a model of “absolute dependence”—Confucian religious experience is itself a *product* of the flourishing family and community, where the quality of the religious life is a direct consequence of the quality of communal living. Religion is not the root of the flourishing community, nor its seed, but rather its radiant flower.

A second important distinction is that Confucian religiousness is neither salvific nor eschatological. While such religiousness does entail transformation, it is specifically a transformation of the quality of one’s life in the ordinary family-centered business of the day. The family as an institution, and the nexus of ritualized roles and relationships that define it (*li*), provide the model for this optimizing process of making one’s way in the world by both giving to and getting the most out of the human experience. Naïvely perhaps, but certainly sincerely, the Confucian assumption is that persons are more likely to give themselves utterly and unconditionally to their families than to any other human institution. Promoting the centrality of family relations is an attempt to assure that entire persons, without remainder, are invested in each of their actions.

Speaking generally, it is the patterns of deference that make up the family itself, and the appropriate transactions among its members that

give rise to, define, and authorize the specific ritualized roles and relationships (*li*) through which the process of refinement is pursued. What makes these ritualized roles and relationships fundamentally different from rules or laws is the fact that they must be personalized, and moreover, that the quality of the particular person invested in these *li* is the ultimate criterion of their efficacy.<sup>97</sup>

The power of the family to function as the radial locus for human growth is much enhanced when natural family and communal relations can be perceived in Confucian naturalistic terms. It is from the family expanding outward that persons emerge as objects of profound communal, cultural, and ultimately religious deference. Beyond the achievement of an intense religious quality felt in the everyday experience of their lives, exemplary persons emerge as ancestors for their families and communities, and as contributors to the ancestral legacy—*tian* 天—that defines Chinese culture more broadly construed.

The closing chapter of the *Xiaojing* is devoted explicitly to the responsibility of children to the spirits of the deceased parents and to their ancestors:

When their parents are alive they are served with love (*ai*) and respect (*jing*) and when they are deceased they are served with grief and sorrow. This is the basic duty being discharged by the living, the fulfilling of the appropriate obligations (*yi*) between the living and the dead, and the consummation of service filial children owe their parents.

There are two passages in the *Analects* directly dealing with gods and the afterlife that are often interpreted in support of a “humanistic” as opposed to a “religious” reading of Confucius:

Zilu asked how to serve the spirits and the gods. The Master replied, “Not yet being able to serve other people, how would you be able to serve the spirits?” He said, “May I ask about death?” The Master replied, “Not yet understanding life, how could you understand death?” (11.12)

Fan Chi inquired about wisdom. The Master replied, “To devote yourself to what is appropriate (*yi*) for the people, and to show respect for the ghosts and spirits while keeping them at a distance can be called wisdom.” . . . (6.22)

The alternative reading of these passages we would proffer is that Confucius saw robust relations within the thriving family and the flourishing human community as the very source and focus of religious feeling, and considered reverence for ancestors as important but ancillary to respect for elders in the lived world. Revering ancestors certainly entails remembering and paying homage to the departed, but it also has much to do with reinforcing continuity and patterns of deference within the living family and community.

To conclude this all-to-brief reflection on the religious dimension of Confucian role ethics, we want to entertain a common response that many Western readers might have to this *Classic of Family Reverence*.

There is nothing perhaps more familiar than family; after all, that is where the word “familiar” comes from. A conclusion that often emerges from this observation is that Western people are no different from the Chinese in this respect: We all care a great deal about family.

Such a conclusion is true to the extent that Confucian role ethics seeks to be inclusive by grounding its insights on those initial conditions that are most broadly defining of the human experience, thus taking family feeling as its common denominator. That is, from a Confucian perspective, ethics everywhere relies to an important degree upon family feeling—in the West no less than in China itself. Indeed, the visceral recognition of the importance of family within the Western cultural narrative that prompts the response “We care about family too!” is fair proof of this. And undoubtedly many Western persons have lived their family lives with an unrelenting sense of importance and have thus achieved a consummatoriness in their family roles that rivals the best that China has to offer.<sup>98</sup>

But different emphases in cultural importances always entail a trade-off and come at a cost. For example, persons committed to a religiousness grounded in the worship of a transcendent God as ultimate value are going to be inclined to view the Chinese “human-centered religiousness” as little more than a form of humanism; lacking a theology to provide hope for eternal life, there may appear to be a thinness of religious experience that borders on secularity, with not much more to recommend it.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, persons committed to a religiousness grounded in family feeling are going to be inclined to regard such transcendentalism as expensive because of its relative neglect of the world in which we all live, hope, love, fear, dream, sing, dance, and die. That is, the power of the family to function as the focal site of human growth might be diminished when natural family and communal relations are perceived as being in competition with, a distraction from, or dependent upon some higher supernatural relations.

Stated another way, when human relations are subordinated to a personal relationship with a transcendent object of worship, whatever the benefits of such subordination might be, these dividends come at a cost to the fabric of family and community.

In the Confucian case, persons themselves emerge as objects of profound communal, cultural, and ultimately religious deference. Beyond the achievement of an intense religious quality felt in the everyday experience of their lives, these exemplary persons ultimately become ancestors for their families and communities, and live on vividly not only in the memories of their descendants but also in those attitudes and behaviors that make the legacy determinate and meaningful.<sup>100</sup>

The same point about tradeoffs can be made about the individual autonomy that undergirds much of Western ethical and religious thinking. This way of thinking about the human experience brings with it much that we hold in high regard: The qualities of individual freedom and independence, equality, privacy, rights and entitlements, personal integrity, and indeed the sacredness of human life, are, for most of us, good things. But it must be granted that when we give these qualities pride of place in prioritizing our values, we do so at some important cost. Individualism can bring with it a diminished sense of shame and responsibility and a reduced appreciation of our interdependence. Each of us has a moral obligation to respect the civil and political rights of all others. Governments have often been remiss, and worse, in granting such respect, but for persons it is very easy, for we can fully respect those rights simply by ignoring others. You surely have the right to speak, for example, but not to have us listen. Indeed, individualism in its extremes can precipitate feelings of alienation, depression, and selfishness, as well as a continuing tendency to “blame the victim” when confronted with gross social injustice, despite the absurdity of the denial of responsibility.<sup>101</sup> Too much freedom becomes license; too much independence becomes loneliness; too much autonomy becomes moral autism; and too much sacralizing of human beings comes at the cost of massive species extinction.

Our overall argument here is simple. A careful reading of and reflection upon the *Classic of Family Reverence* and a consideration of Confucian role ethics prompt us to inquire into the benefits that come with an increased awareness of the centrality of family feeling. What do we get in exchange—ethically, socially, politically, and religiously—for what we have to give up if we surrender to a degree our emotive attachment to personal autonomy and all that it entails? And is the tradeoff worth it? This, then, is the question that we have raised and reflected upon in

these pages, and it is the question that we would leave with our readers for their own consideration as they turn directly to the *Classic of Family Reverence*.

#### IV. THE LEXICON OF KEY CHINESE PHILOSOPHICAL TERMS

This concluding section focuses on some of the key terms employed in classical Chinese philosophical discourse that have immediate relevance for understanding the language of the *Classic of Family Reverence*. It is consequently somewhat more technical and detailed than earlier sections but is nevertheless an integral component of this introduction, because the lexicon used to articulate a worldview is no less crucial for understanding Chinese than it is for ancient Greek, or for contemporary English.

This brief account of the classical Chinese language is informed by the earlier work of Hall and Ames and of Ames and Rosemont, cited in the bibliography. We have attempted to provide an explanation for some of the key philosophical vocabulary and a justification for the particular English words we selected to translate these terms. In the actual translation, we regularly include the romanization for the key terms listed here to facilitate the cross-referencing of a recurring philosophical vocabulary; we do use different English terms for the same Chinese graph when the context, in our view, requires it. *Jiao* 教, for example, is here rendered as “teachings,” there as “instruction,” and there again as “education.” We hope that parsing the range of meaning of a particular Chinese character with different English equivalents in different contexts will encourage a contextual understanding of these polysemous terms that is historical, dynamic, allusive, and relational rather than simply referential.

In our prior work we have argued consistently for an integrated understanding of Chinese natural cosmology as entailing both persistence and change, and we believe that such a way of thinking and living has shaped the grammar of the Chinese language and its key philosophical vocabulary.<sup>102</sup> We do not deceive ourselves that we are proffering here the be-all and end-all translation of the *Classic of Family Reverence*, or that our interpretation is philosophically neutral; hence, eschewing claims of an impossible objectivity, we feel it obligatory to make the assumptions on which our translation rests explicit and to provide some reasons for why we have made them.

An entailment of the claim that early Chinese cosmology gives privilege to change is that the language that expresses the worldview and

the common sense in which the Chinese corpus is to be located is first and foremost “gerundive”—which requires us at times to stretch ourselves conceptually by “verbing” nouns much more frequently than is the norm for English speakers. Chinese, like ancient Hebrew but unlike most members of the Indo-European family of languages, is more eventful than substantial in its syntactic structure and in much of its semantics as well. It is fairly well known that, apart from context, virtually every Chinese graph can sometimes be a noun, sometimes an adjective, verb, or adverb; less well known, or at least acknowledged by most translators, is the dynamic cosmos reflected in the language itself. “Things” are less in focus than events; nouns that would abstract and objectify elements of this world are derived from and revert back to a verbal sensibility. Indeed, a human being in this world is irreducibly a “human becoming.”

The ontological language of substance and essence tends to defy this linguistic priority of dynamic thinking, committed as it is to the primacy of “things” rather than “happenings,” and to a most substantial “world” rather than the more fluid “experiencing of this world.” It is a fair observation that a careful reading of our introduction and this lexicon is necessitated by the fact that the target language of this translation—English—reflects and reinforces ontological assumptions that differ in crucial respects from the natural cosmology sedimented into the structure of the object language—classical Chinese—and hence can only imperfectly be employed to “speak” the world being referenced in the *Xiaojing*.

We do not at all wish to suggest that the Chinese had no notion of substantiality, or that Indo-European languages cannot well chronicle events. Chinese toes surely hurt when stubbed on rocks, and English joggers are not seen to be performing miracles. Nevertheless, English grammar tempts us to emphasize “thingness” in a way that classical Chinese did and does not, instead providing a framing of the event being referenced. Think of a simple sentence like “The wind is blowing.” This observation would never surprise us, because wind cannot do (verb) anything *but* blow. In fact, wind is nothing more or less than the “blowing” itself. Rain is slightly more versatile: it can “pour”; but what does the “it” (noun) refer to in either “It is raining” or “It is pouring?” A “thing”—a subsisting agency—in our substance language is assumed as a necessary basis for action.

In the same way, while we, the present translators and commentators, cannot easily avoid making statements such as “Master Zeng was the most *xiao* of all the disciples of Confucius,” it would be more sinologically accurate, if stilted, to say that “Master Zeng *xiao*-ed more consistently than any of his peers.” And it would be even more accurate to understand Mas-

ter Zeng himself as a compounding lifetime of “*xiao-ing*” rather than as some discrete, constant entity. Thus our exhortation to the reader: Think verbs first, and try not to impose too many Western philosophically and or religiously pregnant concepts on the text at hand. The close relationship between households and governing institutions that is made so clear in the *Xiaojing*, for instance, should warn the reader not to seek the sharp distinction between private and public that political theory as practiced in the West normally obliges us to draw, for it isn’t there. Nor is the bulk of the other largely exclusive dualisms so historically central in the development of Western philosophy/theology: mind/body, immanent/transcendent, objective/subjective, sacred/profane, individual/collective, appearance/reality, and more.<sup>103</sup> In sum, before we can appreciate the many ways in which the early Confucians were truly “just like us,” we must come to understand deeply the ways in which they were not.

If Ludwig Wittgenstein is insightful in asserting that the limits of our language are the limits of our world,<sup>104</sup> then perhaps we need more language. The self-conscious strategy of this translation is to go beyond word-for-word translation and attempt to enable students of Chinese philosophy to read the seminal texts by providing them with a means of developing their own nuanced understanding of a set of critical Chinese philosophical terms. The premise is that there is no real alternative for students other than to cultivate a familiarity with the key Chinese vocabulary itself. Indeed, word-for-word translation can in the long run be counterproductive by encouraging students who read these texts to inadvertently rely upon the usual implications of the terms in translation rather than on the range of meaning implicit in the complex and organically related, original ideas. When one reads “Heaven” rather than *tian* 天, with all of “Heaven’s” complex range of religious and natural allusions and associations, one reads very differently.

Although the natural cosmology is not the central issue in this human-centered *Classic of Family Reverence*, it is relevant in two important senses. First, the text naturalizes *xiao* by making the point several times that a way of life based upon family reverence enables us to coordinate our experience productively with the natural workings of the cosmos. For example, “Indeed, family reverence is the constancy of the heavenly cycles, the appropriate responsiveness (*yi*) of the earth, and the proper conduct of the people. It is the constant workings of the heavens and the earth that the people model themselves upon” (7).

Another sense in which the cosmological background is relevant is that these basic assumptions are implicit in and give context to the text

itself. Although texts such as the *Analects* and the *Classic of Family Reverence* make only passing reference to the grand scheme of things, to be read and properly understood they must be located within their own worldview and common sense.

道 *dao*. Conventionally translated as “the Way,” *dao* is probably the most pervasive and widely recognized idea in Chinese philosophy. The specific characteristics of Chinese philosophy arise because a dominant cultural factor in the tradition, now and then, has been the priority of the two differing patterns of change—alternation and transformation—over the Western focus on one pattern of change—causation—and on its opposite, the unchanging, the real, the eternal, the True. In the more consistently active cosmology that does not entail other dimensions of metaphysics central to the history of Western philosophy, *dao* speaks to the wholeness of experience as it unfolds, while its correlate, *de*, reflects the commitment to particularity. That is, the wholeness of experience is always entertained and engaged from one particular perspective or another.

In the human world, this cosmology becomes evident in the focus on personal cultivation as a way of producing meaningful relations. Its distance from classical Western metaphysical thinking lies in the contrast between forging one’s way rather than seeking after apodictic knowledge and the truth, between becoming a co-creator with the heavens and the earth rather than discovering what is objectively real. As Confucius made clear in the *Analects*, “It is persons that broaden the proper way (*dao*); it is not the proper way that broadens persons” (15.29). Put another way, we might say that the contrast lies in an emphasis on the pursuit of wisdom rather than on the acquisition of abstract knowledge and truth.

Etymologically, the character *dao* 道 is derived from 導, “to go and bring along,” and is constructed of two elements: *chuo* 辵 “walking,” and hence “to pass over,” “to go over,” “to lead through” (on foot); and *shou* 首, meaning “head”—hair and eye together—and therefore “foremost.” The *shou* “head” component has the suggestion of “to lead” in the sense of “to give a heading.” Taking the verbal *dao* as primary, its several derived meanings emerge rather naturally: “to lead through,” and hence “road, path, way, method, art, teachings; to explain, to tell, doctrines.” At the most fundamental level, *dao* denotes the active project of “moving ahead in the world,” of “forging a way forward,” of “road building.” By extension, *dao* comes to connote a pathway that has been made, and hence can be traveled. It is because of this more passive connotation that *dao* is often nominalized by translating it as “way” or, more problematically, is “nOUNed” once and for all as “the Way.”

The parts of speech that order Western languages—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—encourage us to divide the world up in language-specific ways. Under the influence of these grammatical determinants, we are inclined to separate things from actions, attributes from modalities, where from when, and when from what. But *dao* is both “what is” (things and their attributes) and “how things are” (actions and their modalities). *Dao* has as much to do with the subjects of knowing and their quality of understanding as it does with the objects of knowledge and their attributes. There are no clear lines between things and events, and hence we cannot separate “the Way” as *what* from the “Way” as *how*.

The *Classic of Family Reverence* is certainly located in this cosmology, but it uses the expression “vital way” (*yaodao* 要道) to refer to the way of becoming consummately human that was developed and passed on to future generations by the former sage-kings. This text advocates a compliance with the human way that is indeed conservative. Indeed, for the ministers and high officials who must maintain the tradition:

If an article of dress is not sanctioned (*fa*) by the customs of the former kings, the ministers and high officials would not presume to wear it; if ways of speaking are not sanctioned by the customs of the former kings, they would not presume to use them; if ways of behaving are not consistent with the exemplary conduct (*de-xing*) of the former kings, they would not presume to act in such a way. Hence if it is not sanctioned they do not say it; if it is not the proper way (*dao*) they do not do it. (4)

For Confucians, the road signs for the *dao* are to be found in the ritualized living (*li* 禮) that by definition differs from laws and abstract principles by requiring personalization and reauthorization across generations. It is a historicist and revisionist way of life transmitted through emulation and appropriation rather than through compliance with unchanging verities.

德 *de*. Chinese cosmology begins from the achieved uniqueness of the particular, and the cosmos itself is the unsummed totality of these myriad things. The world is a “pluriverse” rather than a universe, with no single order being privileged above all others as a unifying principle: every “thing” can be seen as concatenated with many other “things,” depending on where you are seeing them from, and why, and when. In the early philosophical literature, *de* has a strong cosmological sense, connoting the insistent particularity of

things, and usually, of human beings. It is for this reason that *de* is conventionally translated as “virtue” or “power,” defining the particular as a focus of potency within its own field of experience. We have eschewed using these terms in rendering *de*, in part because we do not want the reader to impose an overly Aristotelian interpretation on the text—simply reading it as a naïve form of virtue ethics—and also because “power” usually has “coercion” lurking connotatively nearby, and as the *Classic of Familial Reverence* makes absolutely clear, Confucius detests coercion as a means of ordering society. We use “excellence” for *de*, and “consummate excellence” at times. It is also good to keep in mind that when developed as excellence, one’s person takes on charismatic qualities, becoming a model whose conduct will be emulated because of this excellence.

In the *Classic of Family Reverence*, much is made of how the model of the Emperor in his unrelenting attention to the well-being of his own family members is a source of moral edification that has a transformative effect on the human world:

With love and respect being fully expressed in this service to parents, such conduct will educate and transform (*dejiao*) the common people, serving as exemplary in all corners of the world. Such, then, is the family reverence of the Emperor. (2)

法 *fa*. “Standards, norms, laws.” *Fa* refers to both the objects of compliance and also “to emulate” such models of order, suggesting the priority of situation over the specific agency of action. (This anticipates the Buddhist usage of *fa* as a translation of *dharma*: both things and the order of things.) Since this natural cosmology begins from the uniqueness of particulars, emulating “models” does much of the work of obeying principles and laws. To emulate a model requires an appropriate analogical projection between particular persons in their lived situations and the particular models they would emulate. Confucius, for example, does not provide categorical imperatives for right conduct, nor does he appeal to some moral law as a regulative ideal. Rather, he stands as a particular model of order and celebrates others who can be emulated by succeeding generations to the extent that the remembered pronouncements and chronicled events of their lives can be applied productively to always novel situations.

和 *he*. *He* is conventionally translated as “harmony,” and we generally follow that rendering. The etymology of the character is culinary, combining the graphs for “millet” (*he* 禾) and “mouth” (*kou* 口). Throughout the early cor-

pus, the preparation of food is appealed to as a gloss on this sense of elegant, integrative harmony. Although harmony entails the art of combining and blending two or more foodstuffs so that they mutually enhance one another without losing their distinctive flavors, the appreciation of the achieved harmony begins from the experiencing of the dish as a coherent unit. That is, harmony is expressed as each particular ingredient with its own particular characteristics discloses the taste of the dish as a whole.

Needless to say, harmony applies no less to the musical than to the culinary arts, with “instruments of the orchestra” and “voices of the chorus” replacing “ingredients” that combine to form an aesthetically satisfying whole while each element yet retains its uniqueness.

It is in this way that *he* can be seen with respect not only to members of families, but to relations between families and offices of government.<sup>105</sup> The family metaphor pervades the Confucian tradition, encouraged by the intuition that this is the institution in which the members give themselves most fully and unreservedly to the group nexus in interactions that are governed by those roles and observances (*li*) most appropriate (*yi*) to the occasion. Importantly, such a commitment to family, far from entailing self-sacrifice or self-abnegation, requires the full expression of personal worth, and thus becomes the context in which one can most effectively pursue personal realization.

In the *Classic of Family Reverence*, harmony is a quality of life among the people brought about through their emulation of both cultural heroes and exemplary persons in their community. *Xiao* or family reverence defines the relationship between the ruler—the father and mother of the people—and the people as his extended family.

But the analogy works in both directions. That is, to effect proper familial relationships is to participate in governing at its most fundamental level. It is for this reason that when Confucius is asked by a mean-spirited contemporary why he does not serve in the government, he replies:

The *Book of Documents* says: “It is all in showing family reverence (*xiao*)! Just being reverent to your parents and a friend to your brothers is carrying out the work of government. In doing as much I am employed in governing. Why must I be ‘employed in governing?’” (2.21)

In the *Classic of Family Reverence*, it is on this basis that the method the Emperor appeals to in nurturing family feeling within the population broadly is a display of sincere deference to his own parents:

The Emperor who loves (*ai*) his own parents would not presume to hate the parents of others; he who respects (*jing*) his own parents would not presume to be rude to the parents of others. With love and respect being fully expressed in this service to parents, such conduct will educate and transform (*dejiao*) the common people, serving as exemplary in all corners of the world. Such, then, is the family reverence of the Emperor. (2)

諫 *jian*. “Remonstrance.” A key notion to understanding critical engagement in the Confucian world is the important difference between an emphasis on dialectical dispute that assumes two exclusive, competing perspectives, and the idea of remonstrance as an inclusive mode of persuasion that assumes a shared commitment to a common goal. This distinction is echoed in the two rather different uses of the term “protest”: The first usage is to take exception to something (“I protest against the war”), while the second is to affirm with solemnity (“I protest my innocence”). The first sense of protest is dialectical and agonistic—I seek to displace the opposite and thus “opposing” point of view with my own. The guiding assumption is that the positions are exclusive—one is right, the other wrong. The second sense of protest assumes a shared concern and seeks to persuade the other through the quality of my sincerity for our common end.

Both dialectical and remonstrative modes of engagement are attempts to improve and advance a situation. The former is more purely rational and assertive, based upon a sense of external relations that allows each disputant to maintain her/his own integrity and sense of equality. The latter is more rhetorical and exhortative, assuming intrinsic relations that locate the differences among mutually accommodating family members, or members of other groups, who, although hierarchically related, are all concerned to sustain the shared integrity of the family or group rather than just the integrity of its individual members.

The *Classic of Family Reverence* follows the *Analects* in advocating remonstrance rather than dialectical engagement as the primary and most appropriate method of resolving differences. The hierarchically subordinate persons in family and in government not only have a right to remonstrate but an obligation to do so, because such exhortation is in the best interests of everyone concerned, as Chapter 15 insists.

There are several conditions of remonstrance that must not be overlooked. First, the putative goal is behavioral change, and to this end, concerns must be expressed with the utmost tact and respect if they are to be effective. Excessive candor can easily be heard as insulting and

offensive, replacing erstwhile deference with condescension. Second, the sincerity with which the admonishment is proffered is the key to its persuasiveness; there is a world of difference between real shared concern and rebuke. Third, remonstrance is not an option, but an obligation; and to do less is to fail in a solemn and sacred duty. It is in tandem that obedience and remonstrance constitute the substance of loyalty (*zhong* 忠), or, more broadly understood, of “doing one’s best.” Fourth, remonstrance has its limits and can only be taken so far. There is a point at which the remonstrator must relent: The remonstrating party must not simply assume that her/his judgment is better than that of the parent or elder. But again, being particularistic, Confucians would never attempt to specify the point at which one must relent in advance, or abstractly.

教 *jiao*. The etymology of the English word “education” is helpful in articulating the Confucian notion of *jiao*. “Education,” with its root *educare*, is cognate with *educere*, “to educate.” The first means “to cultivate, rear, bring up,” while the second means “to evoke, lead forth, draw out.” *Educare* resonates with the sense of education as rationally ordered guidance; it is the logical and more systematic mode of education that we associate with cognitive understanding. By contrast, *educere* suggests the creative side of education that is complicit with aesthetic understanding and implicates both teacher and student equally through novel and imaginative elaborations of each one’s mode of personal cultivation. Education so construed is a transactional process that entails both continuity and creativity in the growth of both *this* able teacher and *that* able student.

By identifying education primarily with improving upon and extending the proper way forward, the Confucian texts are invested in both the foundational and the creative aspects of education. To say that the function of education is not primarily that of transmission and training but of evocation would be misleading, because *educare* also has a role to play in passing on the details of the rich cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

The *Classic of Family Reverence* has at its center the notion that all education is simply an extension of family feeling. The Emperor loves his parents and extends that same affection to his people as sincere concern for their well-being; the son respects his father and extends that same respect to his sovereign as loyalty. Thus, education that transforms and secures the human experience is naturalized as the extension of family reverence (*xiao*) to the entire world.

Since family feeling is fundamental to the human experience, the

process of education is most effectively accomplished through a process of modeling and emulation both within the family and within the polity. It requires both *educare*—a labored transmission of knowledge from elders to the young—and *educere*—the spontaneous and natural way in which parental affection and parental reverence “educate” and reinforce each other within the family and, by extension, within the state. Indeed, the *Classic of Family Reverence* underscores the role of emulation in education, claiming that “such moral edification (*dejiao*) will transform the common people and will serve as exemplary in all corners of the world” (2).

敬 *jing*. Other translations of the *Xiaojing* render this graph as “reverence,” connoting fear and awe as well. In our view, *jing* connotes seriousness and respect. What is key to our understanding of the notion of respect is to consider how it is “taught” and how it reflexively rewards those persons who extend such respect to the senior members of their own families.<sup>106</sup> That is, the former kings did not teach respect by demanding it from the people, but rather by modeling such an attitude for the people by respecting their own family elders, and by demonstrating to the people that pleasure is to be found in such deference. This notion of leading by example and transforming the people through their own willing participation in a self-regulating communal order is fundamental to Confucianism. The *Analects* provides the contrast between a minimally effective top-down order that applies a coercive strategy for compliance, and a bottom-up participatory order that depends on the people taking ownership of their community:

Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence (*de*) and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety (*li*) and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves. (2.3)

This passage gives us a Confucian version of “noncoercive” governing through participation in a ritually constituted community. Even more strongly put, the Master said:

If anyone could be said to have effected proper order while remaining noncoercive, surely it was Shun. What did he do? He simply assumed an air of deference and faced due south. (15.5)

Similarly, in the *Classic of Family Reverence* we read:

The former kings saw that their teachings (*jiao*) were able to transform the people. Thus, setting their own example of magnanimity (*boai*) before the people, none of the people would neglect their parents; demonstrating excellence (*de*) and appropriateness (*yi*) in their own actions, the people were inspired to conduct themselves accordingly; setting their own example of respect (*jing*) and reverence before the people, the people did not contend among themselves; guiding the people with ritual propriety (*li*) and music (*yue*), the people found harmony (*he*) and accord with each other. . . . (7)

君子 *junzi*. It is often suggested that in the literature prior to Confucius, the expression *junzi*, a diminutive form of *jun* meaning “child of *jun*,” denoted nobility of birth, blood, and rank, with no discernable reference to nobility of conduct. It is demonstrably the case that, with Confucius, this political category was appropriated and used to express the correlative relationship between political responsibility and personal, particularly ethical and spiritual, growth. That is, the cultivation of one’s person necessarily entails active participation both in the family and in the sociopolitical order, not simply in service to others, but as the forum in which the compassion and concern that lead to one’s own personal refinement are expressed. Said another way, one does not first become a *junzi* and then enter the arena of political life; rather, one can only *become* a *junzi* through responsiveness to the social and political obligations that emerge in communal living. Indeed, the term *junzi* can also mean “ruler,” and must be so translated at times.

In the *Analects*, *junzi* are almost always invoked as a model of conduct, presumably for the benefit of the disciples. They have traveled a goodly distance along the way, and live a goodly number of roles. Benefactors to many, they are still beneficiaries of others like themselves. While they are still capable of anger in the presence of inappropriateness and concomitant injustice, in their persons they are tranquil. They know many rituals and much music, and perform all of their functions not only with skill but also with grace, dignity, and beauty, and they take delight in the performances. They are still filial toward their parents and elders, but now take “all under the heavens” as their dwelling. While real enough to be still capable of the occasional lapse in their otherwise exemplary conduct, they are resolutely proper in the conduct of their roles—conduct that is not

forced, but rather effortless, spontaneous, creative. There is, in sum, a very strong aesthetic and ethical dimension to their lives; they have reauthorized the *li*, and are therefore respected authors of the *dao* of humankind.

*Junzi* are frequently contrasted with *xiaoren* 小人—literally “small,” and thus “petty and mean” persons. This contrast would suggest that becoming exemplary in one’s personal conduct is the result of continuing articulation and extension. In fact, achieved persons are on occasion referred to as *daren* 大人—“great persons,” and are depicted in paintings and other representations as larger than life.

In the *Xiaojing*, the *junzi* have responsibilities both as positive models and as negative censors. That is, transformative education is effected in families and community by the emulation that is inspired by these exemplary models, and by the unrelenting introspection needed for their own personal improvement. This same bidirectional and symbiotic dynamic is at work in the relationship between the *junzi* and their rulers, where their utmost loyalty (*zhong* 忠) requires that they actively promote what they find commendable in the conduct of their sovereign while at the same time taking steps to remedy what cannot be condoned through a process of vigilant remonstrance, *jian* 諫.

樂 *le*. *Le* is “en-joyment” or “happiness,” that is, finding shared joy and rejoicing in the circumstances of one’s life. It is that quality of happiness that is felt when the continuities of one’s existence are consummated within the relationships of family, community, and cosmos, and as such, has both a moral and a religious meaning. As Spinoza suggests, such enjoyment is not the reward of virtue but is virtue itself. Virtue as virility, potency, and excellence is an achieved quality of intensive and extensive relatedness that is expressed as patterns of deference paid to effective models within a given population. There is an intensity in the deepening of robust personal bonds, where the meaning that is created becomes the very character of the community itself, its ethos. At the same time, the quality of interpersonal transactions is made extensive by attracting and incorporating an ever-expanding field of participation.

The religious dimension of *le* lies in the kind of spirituality that emerges as members of the community are able to cultivate and contribute their unique individuality to the whole and, in so doing, to find in life a deep and abiding happiness. Religion thus understood is profoundly particularistic, defined as it is through the full participation of truly distinctive persons. As such, religion is the flowering of the communicating community, where an aspiring and inspired people is a spiritual people.

*Le* is that profound sense of belonging that secures one and anchors one through the inevitable vicissitudes of a human life: Even in the most unfortunate circumstances, one can sustain a feeling of depth, stability, and contentment of truly religious proportions. There is a pervasive assumption in the Confucian tradition that the most important thing in the human experience is the quality of the relationships that locate one in community and constitute one as a human being.

In the *Analects*, for example, the contexts in which *le* appears are invariably relational. *Le* is associated with friendship (1.1, 16.5), consummate conduct (4.2), efficacious knowing and social intelligence (6.20, 23), and full participation in ritualized roles and relationships (16.5). As such, *le* is that moral and religious enjoyment inspired by the vital and enduring relationships that locate and define us within our world. At the same time, *le* is disassociated from wealth (1.15, 6.11, 7.16) and sensual enjoyment (16.5), not because prosperity or sensuality in themselves are necessarily unproductive, but because they can lead to egoism and to conflicted habits of the heart that are socially corrosive and disintegrating. In fact, Confucius is explicit in claiming that material well-being can be unproblematic within the context of a community where the flourishing of its members is made possible by the quality of the life that they forge together (1.15).

Much is made of the fact that the same character, pronounced differently, is used for “enjoyment” (*le* 樂) and “music” (*yue* 樂). In *Mencius* 1B1, we have an early Chinese version of Nietzsche’s popular adage “Evil men sing no songs.” That is, while the people will truly celebrate the music (*yue* 樂) of the court if they are enjoying (*le* 樂) life under its benign rule, they will resent the music bitterly if they attribute their dire straits to the court’s misrule. *Le* is also cognate with “medicinal remedies” (*yao* 藥), suggesting that both the enjoyment of music and the music of enjoyment are therapeutic and restorative.

禮 *li*. *Li* has conventionally been translated as “ritual,” “rites,” “customs,” “etiquette,” “propriety,” “morals,” “rules of proper behavior,” and “worship.” Properly contextualized, each of these English terms can render *li* on occasion. In classical Chinese, however, the character *li* regularly carries *all* of these meanings on every occasion of its use, with the particular situation determining the emphasis. The compound character is an ideograph connoting the performance and presentation (*shi* 示) of sacrifices to the primarily ancestral spirits at an altar dedicated to them (*li* 豐), suggesting the profound religious significance that this term entails.

We have chosen to translate *li* as “ritual propriety.” Again, this rendering is a considered choice. On the formal side, *li* are those meaning-invested roles, relationships, and institutions that facilitate communication and foster a sense of community. The compass is broad: all formal conduct, from table manners to patterns of greeting and leave-taking; to graduations, weddings, and funerals; from gestures of deference to ancestral sacrifices; and, importantly, all familial roles such as father, cousin, and grandmother—all of these, and more, are *li*. They are a social grammar that provides each member with a defined place and status within the family, community, and polity. *Li* are life-forms transmitted from generation to generation as repositories of meaning, enabling the youth to appropriate persisting values and to make them apposite to their own situations.

On the informal and uniquely personal side, full participation in a ritually constituted community requires the personalization of prevailing customs, institutions, and values. What makes ritual profoundly different from law or rule is this process of making the tradition one’s own. The Latin *proprius*, “making something one’s own” as in “appropriate” or “property,” gives us a series of cognate expressions that are useful in translating key philosophical terms to capture this sense of participation and personalization: *yi* 義 is not “righteousness” but “appropriateness,” “doing what is fitting in one’s own relationship with others”; *zheng* 正 is not “rectification” or “correct conduct” but “conducting oneself properly”; *zheng* 政 is not “government” but “governing properly in the sense of the ruler winning over the people and the people identifying with the ruler.” *Li* (ritual propriety) is not just “what is ritually appropriate,” but “doing *oneself* what is ritually appropriate.”

For us, there is ostensibly a distinction to be drawn between being boorish and being immoral. For Confucius, however, there are simply varying degrees of inappropriate, demeaning, and hurtful behavior along a continuum on which a failure in personal responsiveness is not just bad manners, but fully a lapse in moral responsibility.

Ritual propriety, like most things Confucian, begins at home. That is, *Zhongyong* 20 is explicit in identifying the familial source of *li*:

The degree of devotion due different kin and the degree of esteem accorded those who are different in character is what gives rise to the observance of ritual propriety.

In defining family reverence (*xiao* 孝), for example, Confucius is not concerned solely with providing parents with food and shelter—we do as

much for our domestic animals (*Analects* 2.7). Indeed, the *Classic of Family Reverence* interprets the core of *xiao* dispositionally, insisting that serving one's parents with the wrong feelings in fact precludes the possibility of being *xiao*:

Until these three attitudes—arrogance, defiance, and contentiousness—are set aside, even though someone were to fete their parents on beef, mutton, and pork, they still could not be deemed filial. (10)

The substance of family reverence lies in the “face or countenance” (*se* 色) one brings to filial responsibility—the bounce in one's step, the cheerful heart, the goodwill with which one conducts the otherwise rather ordinary business of caring for aging parents (*Analects* 2.8). Reverence is much more than proffered respect; it is the joy that one finds in such deference. Importantly, far from being the simply formal gestures that define ritual or ceremonial actions, it is the unrelenting attention to one's roles and relationships in every moment of the day.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to understanding what *li* meant in the world of Confucius is the idea that “ritual” is a familiar dimension of our own world, and that we fully understand what it entails. “Ritual” in English usage is almost always pejorative, suggesting as it often does compliance with hollow and hence meaningless social conventions. A careful reading of the Confucian literature, however, uncovers a way of life carefully choreographed down to appropriate facial expressions and physical gestures, a world in which a life is a performance requiring enormous attention to detail. Importantly, this *li*-constituted performance has its source in the insight that personal refinement is only possible through the discipline provided by formalized roles and behaviors. Form without creative personalization is coercive and dehumanizing law; creative personal expression without form is randomness at best and license at worst. It is only with the appropriate combination of form and personalization that family and community can be self-regulating and refined, and the *li* of the Confucians are one such form.

What the *Classic of Family Reverence* offers as its insight into how ritual propriety is able to secure the human world and promote the visionary way<sup>107</sup> is the intimate relationship that it discovers between a person showing appropriate respect (*jing*) within the hierarchy of human relations and the pleasure that is derived from such deference by the person who extends this respect. Simply put, respect for the father brings pleasure to the

son. Showing appropriate deference, far from being onerous and oppressive, is a well of personal enjoyment from which one draws sustenance. It is the joy of growth that is experienced in emulating inspiring models. To see this behavior only as obedience, or worse, obsequiousness, is to fail utterly to appreciate the Confucian sensibility.

明 *ming*. Just as in the English “bright,” *ming* means both “well-illuminated” and “intelligent.” By extension, *ming* also means “acuity, brilliance, enlightened action.” It is not through some internal struggle of reason against the passions but through “acuity” (*ming* 明)—a mirroring of the things of the world as they are in their interdependent relations with us—that we reach a state in which nothing among all of the myriad “goings-on” in the world will be able to agitate our hearts-and-minds. There is an alternative to familiar exclusive notions of “objectivity” entailed in making an effort to mirror things as they are, and in so doing, taking them on their own terms as our “guests” (*ke* 客). This mirroring enables one to accommodate as many perspectives on a situation as are relevant to its understanding without overwriting the concerns of others with one’s own needs or importances.

In the *Classic of Family Reverence*, *ming* serves as a link between the human and the natural world. It states that “of old the enlightened kings (*mingwang*) served their fathers with familial reverence, and in so doing, served the heavens (*tian*) with acuity”(16). That is, in enabling the people to take the “illumination (*ming*) of the heavens as their model” (7), these enlightened rulers were not only able to bring order to the human experience but also, through ancestral sacrifices made in the Hall of Brilliance (*mingtang* 明堂) (9), were able to coordinate the human landscape that “was peaceful and free of strife,” with the natural landscape, so that “natural disasters did not occur, and man-made calamities were averted” (8).

名 *ming*. In the Confucian tradition, much is made of “making a name for yourself.” In the *Analects*, for example, we read:

Exemplary persons (*junzi*) despise the thought of ending their days without having established a name. (15.20)

The point here is not to commend a crass desire for fame and fortune for its own sake but rather to express the resolute commitment of exemplary persons to making an enduring contribution to their family and commu-

nity. Young people are entitled to respect because of the potential they have to make a difference, and older people, to disdain if they fail to do so. In the *Analects* the Master observes:

The young should be held in high esteem. After all, how do we know that those yet to come will not surpass our contemporaries? It is only when one reaches forty or fifty years of age and yet has done nothing of note that we should withhold our esteem. (9.23)

The *Classic of Family Reverence* underscores the local and developmental nature of such a project, beginning here and extending there:

Thus when one is successful in what one does at home, a name (*ming*) is established that will be passed on to posterity. (14)

In the Confucian tradition, persons do not *perform* roles and *have* relations; in fact they are constituted *by* these roles and relations. A person *is* a daughter, and a friend, and a teacher—and nothing else besides. And such persons become “individuated” and “distinguished” by achieving a quality of behavior that eventuates in patterns of deference among family and friends. Indeed, such distinction is what it means to have become consummately filial: “Distinguishing yourself and walking the proper way (*dao*) in the world; raising your name high for posterity and thereby bringing esteem to your father and mother—it is in these things that family reverence finds its consummation” (1).

情 *qing*. *Qing* is most frequently translated as “emotions,” “passions,” or sometimes “feelings.” Because concrete feelings define the quality of one’s particular interactions, the proper expression of such feelings is a singularly important value in the early Confucian conception of person.<sup>108</sup>

In Confucianism, the function of ritual propriety (*li*) is to effect personal, social, and political order through constantly reauthorizing the concrete feelings evoked in the appropriate performance of our roles and relationships. In the *Classic of Family Reverence*, the generic term *qing* does not occur explicitly, and yet the vocabulary of this text is profoundly affective: love (*ai*), affection (*qin*), respect (*jing*), joy (*le*), pleasure (*yue*), and so on. An argument might be made that the role of these family feelings is so fundamental, in fact, that a generic term is perhaps too gross to do them justice.

仁 *ren*. *Ren* is a fairly simple graph and, according to the *Shuowen* lexicon, is made up of the elements *ren* 人 “person,” and *er* 二, the number “two.” This etymological analysis underscores the Confucian assumption that one cannot become a person by oneself—we are, from our inchoate beginnings, irreducibly social. Herbert Fingarette has stated the matter concisely: “For Confucius, unless there are at least two human beings, there can be no human beings.”<sup>109</sup>

An alternative explanation of the character *ren* 仁 we might derive from oracle bone inscriptions is that what appears to be the number “two” 二 is in fact an early form of “above, to ascend,” *shang* 上, which was also written as 二.<sup>110</sup> Such a reading would highlight the growing distinction one achieves in becoming *ren*: “those consummate in their persons enjoy mountains . . . are still . . . [and] are long-enduring” (*Analects* 6.23; see also 2.1 and 17.3).

*Ren* is most commonly translated as “benevolence,” “goodness,” and “humanity,” occasionally as “human-heartedness,” and even as the clumsy “manhood-at-its-best.” While “benevolence” and “humanity” might be more comfortable choices for translating *ren* into English, our earlier decision to use the less elegant “authoritative person” when translating the *Analects* was a considered one. First, *ren* is one’s entire person—one’s cultivated cognitive, aesthetic, moral, and religious sensibilities as they are expressed in one’s ritualized roles and relationships. It is one’s “field of selves,” the sum of significant relationships that constitute one as a resolutely social person. *Ren* is not only intellectual but physical as well; it includes one’s posture and comportment, gestures and bodily communication. Hence, to translate *ren* as “benevolence” is to “psychologize” it in a tradition that has had no need of the notion of psyche in its efforts to define and enhance the human experience. “Benevolence” impoverishes *ren* by isolating one out of many moral dispositions at the expense of so much more that comprises the complexity of becoming human.

Again, “humanity” as a translation would suggest a shared, essential condition of being human possessed by all members of the species: *humanitas*. Yet *ren* does not come so easily. It is an aesthetic project, an accomplishment, something done (*Analects* 12.1). The human being is not something we *are*; it is something that we *do*, and *become*. Not “human being” but “human becoming” might thus be a more appropriate expression to capture the processional and emergent nature of what it means to become human. It is not an essential, endowed potential, but what one is able to make of oneself given the interface between one’s initial conditions and one’s natural, social, and cultural environments. Certainly, the

human being as a focus of constitutive relationships has an initial disposition (*Analects* 17.2). But *ren* is foremost the process of “growing” (*sheng* 生) these relationships into a vital, robust, and healthy participant in the human community.

The reason the *Analects* is the primary reference for this definition of *ren* is because the term is associated most closely with Confucius. The fact that Confucius was so often asked what he meant by the expression *ren* would suggest that he was reinventing an otherwise obscure term for his own purposes, and that those in conversation with him were not comfortable in their understanding of it. Confucius’ creative investment of new meaning in *ren* is borne out by a survey of its infrequent and relatively unimportant usage in the earlier corpus. *Ren* does not occur in the earliest portions of the ancient classics, and only three times in the later parts. This unexceptional usage contrasts with 105 occurrences in the *Analects* in 58 of the 499 sections.

Given that *ren* denotes the qualitative transformation of a *particular* person, it is further ambiguous because it must be understood relative to the specific concrete conditions of that person. There is no formula, no ideal. Like a work of art, it is a process of disclosure rather than closure, resisting fixed definition and replication.

Our term “authoritative person” as a translation of *ren*, then, is a somewhat novel expression, as was *ren* itself, and usually prompts a similar desire for clarification. “Authoritative” entails the “authority” that a person comes to represent in community by becoming *ren*, embodying the values and customs of his or her tradition through the observance of ritual propriety (*li*). The prominence and visibility of the authoritative person is captured in the metaphor of the mountain (*Analects* 6.23) as still, stately, spiritual, enduring, a landmark of the local culture and community.

At the same time, the way of becoming human (*dao*) is not a given; the authoritative person must be a “road builder,” a participant in “authoring” the culture for his/her own place and time (*Analects* 15.29). Observing ritual propriety (*li*) is, by definition, a process of internalization—“making the tradition one’s own”—requiring personalization of the roles and relationships that locate one within community. It is this creative aspect of *ren* that is implicit in the process of becoming authoritative for one’s own community.

The contrast between top-down, impositional “authoritarian” order and the bottom-up, deferential sense of “authoritative” order is also salutary. The authoritative person is a model that others, recognizing the achievement, gladly and without coercion, defer to and appropriate in the

construction of their own personhood. Confucius is explicit in expressing the same reservations about authoritative relations becoming authoritarian as he is about a deference-driven ritualized community surrendering this noncoercive structure to the rule of law (*Analects* 2.3).

More recently, in response to a general disaffection with the neologism “authoritative person/conduct” among readers and students, and as a concrete illustration that alternative English translations stand as a distant second in our efforts to persuade students of Chinese philosophy to learn the original Chinese terminology, we are now inclined to use “consummate person or conduct” as a translation for *ren*.<sup>111</sup> Again, this is a deliberate choice. “Consummate” has the virtue of using the collective and intensive prefix “con-,” denoting the sense of “together, jointly” that does justice to the irreducible relationality of *ren*. In addition, “consummate” has many of the implications that we have ascribed to “authoritative” above. *Summa* is a form of “completion” that suggests disclosure more than closure, maturation and fruition more than the actualization of a given potential, a particular achievement more than replication of something already accomplished, and the highest and uppermost in the sense of aspiring to go beyond the conventional to set an outstanding example.

神 *shen*. *Shen*, often translated as “spirits” or “gods” has a range of meaning that is revealing of the religious aspect of Chinese cosmology that assumes a continuity between human spirituality and the numinous or divine. In the *Shuowen* lexicon, *tianshen* 天神 is “what calls forth the myriad things,” and one of its commentaries suggests that “the heavens and the earth give birth to the myriad things, and what is master of these things is called *shen*.” So *shen* is the numinous associated with natural phenomena such as the sky, sun, moon, stars, rivers, mountains, forests, valleys, and so on.

But *shen* was a contested concept in and among the various lineages of early Chinese thought, and it has been argued that the ambiguity that attends it is a significant element in its aura and semantic force.<sup>112</sup> Another level of meaning of *shen* is “mysteriousness.” The *Book of Changes* states that “what is unfathomable through the *yin* and *yang* distinction is called *shen*,” and again, “as for *shen*, it is an expression for mysterious phenomena.”

Importantly, *shen* does not simply reference the numinous; it can also refer to human beings, meaning “life” and “spirit.” When *qi* takes form, *shen*—life and spirit—is born. At this level, it is associated with the moral conduct and wisdom of exemplary human beings. The *Huainanzi* says that “to know what others do not know is *shen*,” and “*shen* is a reservoir of

wisdom.” The *Mencius* says that “to be sagacious beyond comprehension is called *shen*.”

聖 (人) *sheng* or *shengren*. What the *shengren*, or “sage,” shares in common with the exemplary person (*junzi* 君子) is that both categories of conduct entail effective communication. For classical Confucianism, the flourishing community is a communicating community, and the *shengren* are consummate communicators. The graph suggests that the sages have the “ears” (*er* 耳) to hear what is valuable to hear, and on that basis communicate or “manifest” (*cheng* 呈) their vision of what will be. Their effectiveness is measured by their success in drawing the hands and hearts of the people together to realize a shared project that shapes what it means to be human. The sage as virtuoso sings the songs that enchant the world. *Shengren* have risen above the level of *junzi*, who themselves stand in awe of the words of the *shengren* (see *Analects* 16.8).

The sage is not portrayed as heroic, performing superhuman deeds. Rather, sages are persons who are able to do the ordinary in an extraordinary way, who are able to inspire the everyday. Also, given that in this cosmology persons are constituted by their relationships, implicated within the sages are the worlds that they have orchestrated to a higher level.

In addition to possessing all of the qualities of the *junzi*, the *shengren* appear to see and feel custom, rituals, and traditions holistically, as defining and integrating the human community broadly, and as defining and integrating as well the communities of the past and of the future. This seeing and feeling of the *shengren* can be described as an awareness that gives one the capacity to go beyond the particular time and place in which we live, effecting a continuity not only with our contemporaries, but with those who have preceded us, and with those who will follow after.

The metaphors used to describe the *shengren* are cosmic and celestial, and the culture that finds its focus in this rare person elevates the human experience to heights of profound aesthetic and religious refinement, making the human being a worthy partner with the heavens and the earth. The model of the *shengren* shines across generations and across geographical boundaries as a light that not only stabilizes and secures the human world but also serves humankind as a source of cultural nourishment and inspiration. It is the *shengren* who leads the way of becoming human (*rendao* 人道) into its more certain future.

Although the conduct of the sages is of cosmic consequence, when in the *Classic of Family Reverence* Master Zeng asks Confucius explicitly

“if there is anything in the excellence (*de*) of the sages that surpasses family reverence,” Confucius’ answer is simple:

Of all the creatures in the world, the human being is the most noble. In human conduct there is nothing more important than family reverence. (9)

Such is the importance of *xiao*.

天 *tian*. *Tian* is a term that we choose not to translate, largely because we believe its conventional English rendering as “Heaven” cannot but conjure up misleading associations drawn from our Judeo-Christian tradition. This translation has been a source of real confusion by making Chinese cosmology appear deceptively familiar by uncritically assuming a congruency between it and our own theistic sensibilities. These theological associations are largely irrelevant to the Chinese experience but have, nonetheless, often overwritten Chinese cultural practices with presuppositions that are alien to them. In any case, we must extricate the term from these misleading associations if we are to approach an understanding of *tian*.

Our understanding of *tian* is painfully vague precisely because it is vague within the Chinese tradition itself. Historically, and in the earliest canonical literature such as the *Book of Documents* and the *Book of Songs*, *tian* is often anthropomorphized, suggesting its intimate relationship with the process of a specifically Chinese version of “euhemerism” that grounds Chinese ancestor reverence, euhemerism being the ascent of historical heroes to the status of gods. The qualification that has to be made when adopting the Greek term “euhemerism” to describe this process as it unfolded in early China is that, in Greece, a becomes b, whereas in China, a becomes A. That is, there are good yet not uncontested reasons to assume that *tian* is not an exception to the claim that Chinese gods are, by and large, dead people. At the least we can say that, in the absence of some transcendent creator deity, *tian* in this earliest conceptualization would seem to stand for a cumulative and continuing cultural legacy formed by the spirits and spirituality of those cultural heroes who have come before.

It was probably a common foundation in ancestor reverence that allowed for the conflation of the culturally sophisticated Shang dynasty’s *di* 帝 (ancestral spirits) with the notion of *tian* associated with the Zhou federation of tribes, militant and revolutionary, who conquered the Yellow River valley at the turn of the first millennium BCE. The Zhou appealed to *tianming* 天命—“the mandate of *tian*”—as a strategy for political legitimization,

claiming that *tian* commands a lineage to rule only if that lineage through their conduct commands its respect. And *tian*'s judgment was to be known through the response of the people to those who would govern.

*Tian* is not only "the sky," but an articulated and patterned sky. *Tian* can thus be understood as the "skies" under which culture accumulates rather than as some more disjunctive, atemporal, and aspatial "Other," some ontologically different order of being. Significantly, there is a continuity between the articulation of nature generally and the inscription of human culture. A corollary to this notion of an invigorated world is the absence of any final boundary between the sentient and insentient, animate and inanimate, living and lifeless. Since spirituality and life go hand in hand, spirituality, like life, pervades all things.

But spirituality does not stand independent of materiality. Indeed, there is also a strong association between *tian* and the natural, physical environment. *Tian* does not speak, but it communicates effectively although not always clearly through human-generated oracles, through perturbations in the climate, and through alterations in the natural conditions that contextualize the human world. *Tian* participates in a discourse with the most worthy persons in the human community. It is assumed that a failure of order in the human world will be reflected in ominous happenings in the natural environment. Although *tian* is not a "personal" deity responsive to individual needs as in the Judeo-Christian worldview, as aggregate ancestor it would seem that *tian* functions impartially on behalf of its progeny to maximize the possibilities of emergent harmony at all levels. Given the interrelatedness and interdependency of the orders defining the early Chinese cosmology, what affects one, affects all.<sup>113</sup>

In some of the earlier texts, the more spiritual dimension of *tian* continues to be emphasized. But as human beings develop a sense of control over their own natural environment, the emphasis seems to shift to a *tian* that takes on an increasingly impersonal character as the operations of nature, albeit a nature that is still suffused with a sense of spirituality. With this connotation of the natural environment, *tian* is often used as an abbreviation for *tiandi* 天地—"the heavens and the earth"—suggesting that *tian* is not independent of this world. The God of the Bible *created* the world, but *tian* in classical Chinese *is* the world. That is, *tian* is both *what* our world is and *how* it is.

順 *shun*. *Shun* is cognate with *chuan* 川 meaning "a stream or river," and also, "to flow." With reference to a situation, it means smooth, easy, pleasant, convenient, and agreeable. When *shun* describes the consequences of ef-

fecting proper governing on the part of the ruler, we translate it as “bringing the world into accord.” But then again we usually translate this term as “compliance” when it is associated with “loyalty” (*zhong*) and describes the deference that the junior extends to the superior. Thus, *shun* is a good example of how Chinese terms give priority to situation rather than agency, meaning at once to effect proper order and to comply with it. Again, the distinction between the two seemingly active and passive senses is not always clear. That is, from the perspective of the ruler, *shun* is orchestrated rather than imposed, and the people have to be complicit in achieving it. From the point of view of the people or the minister, *shun* certainly has a strong sense of “flowing with” and can mean conforming to a given policy, but it can also mean promoting a particular course of action and finding satisfaction and gratification in doing so. In the *Classic of Family Reverence* 17, ministers are not simply docile and submissive, but are exercising their own judgment and standards, and are active supporters when they themselves deem a course of action to be in the best interests of all concerned:

Exemplary persons (*junzi*) when serving those above at court reflect on how they can give their utmost loyalty (*zhong*) to them, and on retiring reflect on how to resolve the excesses of their superiors. They are fully compliant (*shun*) in carrying out what is commendable in the instructions of those above and take steps to remedy what cannot be condoned. It is in this way that those above and below are able to appreciate each other.

孝 *xiao*. We trust that by now our readers will have a basic understanding of the multiple connotations of the term we have chosen to translate as “family reverence,” but a bit more must be said to aid understanding of specific passages that will be met within the text.

Indeed, just as family is the pervasive metaphor in the Confucian worldview, so familial reverence is the heart of Confucian learning. Given the central role of the family in Confucianism, appropriate family feelings are that source from which a pathway through life emerges. The *Classic of Familial Reverence* begins by establishing the centrality of familial reverence in the project of becoming consummately human. The opening passage that seeks to set the theme for this canonical document states clearly that family feeling is the ground of excellence and education:

“It is familial reverence” (*xiao*), said the Master, “that is the root of excellence (*de*), and whence education (*jiao*) itself is born.”

“Education” (*jiao* 教) and “familial reverence” (*xiao* 孝) are cognate characters. Familial reverence (*xiao* 孝) is constituted of “elder” (*lao* 老) and “youngster” (*zi* 子), and “education” (*jiao* 教) adds on the “branch” (*zhi* 支) radical, suggesting that the younger generation grows from the root and trunk of the generations that have come before. The *Shuowen* lexicon defines *jiao* as “that which those above disseminate and those below emulate.” Importantly, the character *jiao* itself underscores the centrality of familial reverence to the actual content of education, just as the cognate relationship these characters have with “emulating” (*xiao* 效) emphasizes the modeling role that the elder generation has for its progeny.

One associates this opening passage of the *Classic of Family Reverence* immediately with the second passage in the *Analects* of Confucius in which family feeling is again presented as the root of what it means to become consummately human in one’s conduct:

It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of family reverence and fraternal deference (*xiaoti* 孝弟) to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion. Exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子) concentrate their efforts on the root, for the root having taken hold, the way (*dao* 道) will grow therefrom. As for family reverence and fraternal deference, it is, I suspect, the root of consummate conduct (*ren* 仁). (1.2)

A basic tenet of familial reverence is the accountability that persons have throughout their lifetimes to protect the body that has been entrusted to them by their parents and ancestors, and the solemn responsibility they have to return this body to their progenitors intact.<sup>114</sup> According to Chapter 1, this vigilance is the beginning of familial reverence; its culmination lies in achieving the illustriousness and distinction that brings great credit to one’s parents and one’s ancestors.

It is important to note that in promoting the family as the pervasive model of order, the Confucian worldview does not accept that hierarchical social institutions are necessarily pernicious or that simple egalitarianism should have an uncritical value. Having said this, an obstacle to more deeply understanding *xiao* can arise from assuming a simplistic equation between filial reverence and obedience. *Xiao* that is focused on the bottom-up deference and respect that children owe their elders must be distinguished clearly from that shown to the paterfamilias, the top-down power and privilege of the father that we associate with Roman culture.

Indeed, at times, being truly filial within the family, like being a loyal minister within the court, requires obligatory remonstrance (*jian* 諫) rather than automatic compliance. In the *Classic of Filial Reverence* 15, Confucius responds impatiently to Master Zeng's suggestion that reverence can be reduced to simple obedience. Master Zeng asks, "I would presume to ask whether children can be deemed filial simply by obeying every command of their father?"

"What on earth are you saying? What on earth are you saying?" said the Master. "... [i]f confronted by reprehensible behavior on his father's part, a son has no choice but to remonstrate with his father, and if confronted by reprehensible behavior on his ruler's part, a minister has no choice but to remonstrate with his ruler. Hence, remonstrance is the only response to immorality. How could simply obeying the commands of one's father be deemed filial?"

Yet such a responsibility to question authority has its limits and is not a warrant to stubbornly pit one's own judgment against that of one's elders. Just because the child has the obligation to remonstrate with the parent, it does not follow that the child's advice should be heeded. As Confucius says in *Analects* 4.18,

In serving your father and mother, remonstrate with them gently. On seeing that they do not heed your suggestions, remain respectful and do not act contrary. Although concerned, voice no resentment.

義 *yi*. *Yi* has usually been translated as "righteousness," and less commonly as "rightness," "morality," and "meaning." Etymologically the graph is a stylized picture of a sheep (*yang* 羊) and the first-person pronoun for "I, we, me, us," (*wo* 我). It is revealing that in a tradition in which a person is irreducibly social, the distinction between the singular "I" and the plural "we" is not indicated in the language; the "I" and the social context are reflexive and mutually entailing.

This pronoun *wo* itself, in many of its early representations and attested in the *Shuowen* lexicon, is a picture of a human hand holding a dagger-axe (*ge* 戈). When it is remembered that sheep were periodically sacrificed at large communal gatherings, we may gloss *yi* as the solemn attitude one assumes, the proper stance one takes, when preparing the lamb for the ritual slaughter.

This stance and its deferential attitude not only make one a sacred representative of the community, but also purify and render the sacrificial animal appropriately sacred. If this be so, then *yi* is a negotiation between self and specific context, and should not be rendered as “righteousness,” because decidedly biblical associations introduce some independent and objective standard of what is right or “moral.” The contextually inclusive “appropriate” or “fitting” are closer English equivalents for *yi*, and that is how the term is translated herein. But the reader should keep in mind that “appropriate,” as we use it to translate *yi*, should be understood in terms not only of its aesthetic and ethical connotations, but also with its social and religious implications in mind. Optimally appropriate relations are not only meaningful—they are also a source of beauty and religious communion.

*Yi*, then, is one’s sense of appropriateness that enables one to act in a proper and fitting manner given the specifics of a situation. By extension, *yi* is also a recognition of “meaning” as it is expressed and comes to reside in personal excellence and conduct. Over time, *yi* becomes the aggregating meaning invested by a living tradition in the forms of ritual propriety that come to define it, and the cultural authority that can be appropriated by persons as they become enculturated in the performance of these roles and rituals. It is this invested significance one appropriates from the social form that makes a salute, a handshake, or a marriage ceremony meaningful, and it is the sense of achieved appropriateness in the performance of the ritual that makes the ritual profoundly personal.

*Yi* is the fittingness in relations that over time produces the fiduciary community and the feelings of credibility and mutual trust that emerge to give one a real sense of belonging in that community. Thus, Confucius in *Analects* 1.13 says, “The trust and credibility entailed by making good on one’s word (*xin* 信) gets one close to appropriateness.”

樂 **yue.** *Yue* is “music,” or better, “making music.” As the constant correlate of “the observance of ritual propriety” (*li* 禮), the importance of this term cannot be overstated. *Li* is an attempt to optimize the possibilities of the human community, to elevate the quality of life, and to transform the patterns of everyday living into profoundly socio-religious practices. It is in this sense that *li* is frequently read as an abbreviation for the binomial *liyue* 禮樂, “observing ritual propriety” and the “making of music.”

Indeed, ritual propriety (*li*) and music (*yue*) are inseparable elements in the classical corpus, with the assumption that they have a collat-

eral function in strengthening relationships within the community. In the “Record of Music” chapter of the *Record of Rituals (Liji)* it is stated:

Music is the harmony of the world; ritual propriety is the world’s array. It is because the manifold of things are harmonious that they all transform; it is because they are arrayed that they are each distinct. Music is initiated in the heavens, and ritual propriety is established by the earth.

*Yue* and cognate expressions such as “enjoyment” (*le* 樂) (the same graph) and “medicine, therapy” (*yao* 藥) reveal how *li* is to be understood. *Li*, defined relationally and processually, is a strategy for orchestrating the “communicating community” into the fullest consonance, with appropriately disposed members resonating productively in their social transactions. To the extent that the community is symphonic, with minimal dissonance, it is not only therapeutic (*yao*) but also productive of enjoyment (*le*) for all who reside within it. To the extent that persons pursue virtuosity in the various discourses that dispose them one to another, they generate a mutually interdependent harmony in which everyone has his or her unique voice in a chorus that is at once one and many. Music thus provides us with an explanatory image from which we can derive a comprehensive vocabulary for personal and communal cultivation, where *li* itself becomes the rhythm of a proper life.

[See also *le* 樂.]

忠 *zhong*. D. C. Lau provides us with a significant corrective for the popular understanding of *zhong* as simply “loyalty” by insisting upon its more primitive meaning as “doing one’s best.”

Translators tend to use “loyal” as the sole equivalent for *chung* [*zhong*] even when translating the early texts. This is a mistake and is due to a failure to appreciate that the meaning of the word changed in the course of time. . . . *Chung* is the doing of one’s best and it is through *chung* that one puts into effect what one has found out by the method of *shu*.<sup>115</sup>

The character *zhong* that is constituted by components “into, interior” (*zhong* 中) and “heart-and-mind” (*xin* 心) means “doing one’s best” or “giving oneself fully” to the task at hand—quite literally putting one’s heart into what one does. When *zhong* is used in the context of the rela-

tionship between ruler and subject, “doing one’s best” becomes more narrowly focused as “loyalty.”

In the *Analec*s, *zhong* appears together with *shu* 恕 as a strategy for appropriate behavior: “putting oneself in the other’s place.” It is only by assuming this kind of mutuality and shared concern that one can exercise one’s judgment on how to do one’s best, entailing as *zhong* does both enthusiastic obedience and sincere remonstrance (*jian*). As the *Classic of Family Reverence* observes, superiors and subordinates can appreciate each other only if subordinates “are fully compliant (*shun*) in carrying out what is commendable in the instructions of those above and take steps to remedy what cannot be condoned” (17).

## NOTES

1. Jagger (1983), p. 239. Note that the focus of criticism is the nuclear, not extended, family.

2. Slote (1998), p. 46.

3. Ci (1999), p. 334. Even more damning is Wolf (1994).

4. Tan (1984), sections 8 and 38.

5. Hu (1999), p. 2. This is the same familiar argument made in Ikezawa (1994). A passage that would challenge the ultimacy of this political motivation and support the centrality of personal cultivation is found in the first chapter of the *Classic of Family Reverence*: “This family reverence then begins in service to your parents, continues in service to your sovereign, and culminates in distinguishing yourself in the world.”

6. This has been a major theme in U.S. sociology for over a half-century at least, from David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* (1953) to Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000).

7. It is beyond dispute that the home is the most influential context for the well-being of children—their intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development. Among the most significant research in the field of human development is that on the attachment between the infant and his or her caregiver, because this is the foundation for any human being’s relationship with others. If a child does not have a normal attachment, that child will have socio-emotional difficulties in later life. Of course, human beings have tremendous resilience. But improvement will only occur if the adverse situation at home changes. John Bowlby (1969) has documented the process of attachment and its significance in human lives.

8. The modifications are already taking place throughout East Asia. According to one recent study in the PRC, primary caregivers to elderly parents

are now predominantly daughters rather than daughters-in-law by a ratio of two to one; Whyte (2004), p. 120. Whyte goes on to describe how Chinese socialism has contributed to enhancing *xiao* with respect to elderly care overall (p. 127). Several of the other papers in this anthology also give accounts of how filial piety is being expressed through changing family patterns in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan as well as in mainland China.

9. This distinction has been made in Rosemont (1997). He has also discussed the distinction in more general terms in Rosemont (2001). Nuyen (2004), p. 206, makes a similar distinction between what he calls philosophical and “politicized” Confucianism.

10. James (1958), p. 377.

11. An especially striking example is that of the 1960s radical feminist Kate Millett (author of *Sexual Politics*, *The Loony-Bin Trip*, *Sita*), who returned to her home in the Midwest over two decades after leaving it to care for her mother so that the latter would not have to be institutionalized during her last years, and described the experience as fundamentally transformative—in a positive way; see Millett (2000). A reviewer of the book made a strong case for the ongoing significance of things familial: “It’s the story of a mother and daughter who, in a sense, save each other: Kate rescues Helen from [the nursing home], and restores her to a respectable retirement [at home]; Helen gives Kate the opportunity to redeem every sharp word spoken, every obscenity put into print, by allowing her daughter to save her life”; Frey (2001), p. 39. Here are *xiao* 孝 (family reverence) and *shu* 恕 (deference) exemplified.

12. *Analects* 7.1.

13. Brooks and Brooks (1998) and Makeham (1996) have both, according to their own respective methodologies, attempted to trace the evolution of the text from its earliest to latest sections, and both arrive at conclusions that are at wide variance with the Chinese commentarial tradition. Lau (1992), on the other hand, makes much of the traditional understanding of the integrity of the text.

14. All quotations from the *Analects* are taken from Ames and Rosemont (1998), hereafter cited only by chapter and section numbers.

15. The analogy with music here is irresistible. Harmony requires each instrument to be itself while simultaneously joining in the other “selves” to form a unity distinct from, and more than, the sum of its parts. See Rounds (1999), with its specific reference to what, how, and why string quartets are what they are. See also Ames (1993a); and, for a culinary turn on the same notion of relationality, Ames and Rosemont (1998), p. 254n215.

16. The expression *guojia* 國家 can certainly mean “country *and* family” as in *Mencius* 4A5: “People have an oft repeated expression: ‘The world, the

nation, the family 天下國家.' The root of the world is in the nation; the root of the nation is in the family; the root of the family is in one's own person." But *guojia* is also frequently found used as a binomial for "country."

17. Sima (1978), p. 2205.

18. It is odd that in a passage without attribution to Confucius himself, or anyone else for that matter, several of Confucius' disciples are criticized rather unkindly, with Master Zeng being described as "thick" (*lu* 魯). Traditional commentaries, making the most they can of this passage, allow that such candor was for the edification and positive improvement of those being gently cudged (11.18).

19. It is important to note that respecting one's own physicality is one dimension of respecting one's continuity with one's ancestors. It is not physical disability itself that is considered shameful: witness *Analects* 15.42, in which Confucius is most solicitous in attending to the blind Music Master:

The blind Master of Music, Mian, had an interview with Confucius, and, on reaching the steps, the Master said, "Here are the steps," and on reaching the mat, the Master said, "Here is the mat." When they had all sat down together, the Master informed him of who was present: "So-and-so is here, and so-and-so is there."

When Master of Music Mian had departed, Zizhang asked Confucius, "Is this the way that one should speak with a blind music master?"

Confucius replied, "Indeed, this has been the way of helping a music master."

See also 9.10 and 10.25.

20. In addition to what has already been quoted, Master Zeng can also be found in *Analects* 1.9, 4.15, 8.3–5, 14.26, and 19.16–18.

21. Chai and Chai (1967), vol. 1, p. 124.

22. See Ames and Hall (2001), pp. 146–148.

23. Accessible translations of these three works—the *Analects*, the *Zhongyong*, and the *Daxue*—are Legge (1960), Ames and Hall (2001), and Wing-tsit Chan (1963), respectively.

24. For more details on the history of the text, consult Boltz (1993). See also Nylan (1996).

25. Creel, Chang, and Rudolf (n.d.), p. 36b.

26. In the *Classic of Family Reverence* 7, we have just such a usage: "family reverence is the constancy of the heavenly cycles" 夫孝天之經.

27. Hu (1999), p. 10, for this discussion.
28. For details of this internecine warfare, see the introductions to *Sun-tzu: The Art of Warfare* and *Sun Bin: The Art of Warfare*, translated by Ames (1993b) and Lau and Ames (1996), respectively.
29. For details, see Boltz (1993).
30. See Hu (1999), p. 8, for a full discussion of the possibilities of authorship, and for his conclusion that the most likely candidate is a student of Master Zeng named Le Zheng Zi Chun 樂正子春, who is mentioned specifically in the *Lushichunqiu* chapter “On Practicing Family Reverence” 孝行覽.
31. It is a photograph of this same stele, kindly provided by Franklin Perkins, that graces the cover of this book.
32. See Hu (1999), pp. 12–13, and Takeuchi (1979), pp. 82–84.
33. For more on the antimilitarist sentiments of the early Confucians, see Rosemont (2008).
34. *Xunzi* HY 25/9/2–3. Cf. Watson (1963), p. 33.
35. A very good translation of the *Shijing*—by topics, with a finding list to the original order of the text—is Waley (1960). For a thorough yet accessible account of the *Shijing*, see Nylan (2001).
36. Stravinsky (1970), quoted in Kupperman (2004), p. 121. Kupperman’s discussion of character development within a tradition also bears on a number of other themes taken up in this introduction.
37. “If in agreement with Plato we take the soul to have three parts, then wisdom is the excellence of the rational, gentleness and bravery of the passionate, temperance and continence of the appetitive.” Aristotle (1984), vol. 2, p. 1982 (1250a).
38. For a psychological analysis of the relationship between loyalty and family reverence, see Hwang (1999).
39. *Analects* 2.24 and 14.22 are perhaps even clearer examples. The theme is also found in the *Mencius*, and even more in the *Xunzi*, especially the chapters “Regulations of a King,” “Human Nature Is Unseemly,” and “The Way of the Son.”
40. Nivison (1979), p. 423. See also Nylan and Huang (2008) and Behuniak (2005). Both Kant and Mill will be taken up below.
41. On “the developmental sense of relationality,” see Wong (2004).
42. In our translation of the *Analects*, the term *zheng* 政 is taken as a verb, “governing effectively”—in the sense of regulating—and not as a noun, “government.” The essay by Jiang (2006) also suggests how Chinese “governments” were more akin to families than to governments in the modern Western sense.
43. Wong (2004), p. 45.

44. Rosemont (2008).
45. Indeed, rulers were obliged to perform sacrifices to those who had died without issue, to keep their spirits content. See Chai and Chai (1967), vol. 2, pp. 206ff.
46. *Xunzi* HY 26/9/5, 20. Cf. Watson (1963), pp. 34–37.
47. See Nosco (2007). We concur with Nosco's analysis. Tan (1984) thinks that, in spite of this history, the tradition does have the conceptual resources to develop a strong civil society.
48. For a more detailed analysis of this issue, see Rosemont (2006).
49. Madsen (2002), p. 280
50. See Rosemont (2006) and Ames (1993a) for details.
51. See Wong (2004), n22. This difference is still very much in evidence in the priority that has been given to "second-generation" welfare rights over first-generation individual rights in the emergence of the new China—that is, a concern over food, housing, health care, education, employment, and so on, rather than individual entitlement and property rights.
52. Thornton (2004).
53. A general account of the Chinese family is provided by Ebrey (1990).
54. Madsen (2002), p. 285.
55. On the philosophical significance of the linguistic differences noted here and below, see Rosemont (1987), and the introduction to our translation of the *Analects*.
56. Individualism has had too many philosophical and political champions to note ever since the Enlightenment began, most of whom have not been overly critical of the concept—including Marx no less than apologists for capitalism—except at the margins, which is why we recommend Macpherson (1964) to provide balance. In Munro (1985), a number of scholars of Chinese thought take up the question of the extent to which individualism can be found therein, showing clearly the foundational nature of the concept for almost everyone, comparative philosophers no less than those of a more Eurocentric tendency.
57. For a survey (and celebration) of the concept, see Schneewind (1998).
58. The locus classicus is his *Critique of Practical Reason*; various editions. An oft-quoted passage from his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* shows his logical consistency yet psychological austerity on the matter: "[M]any persons [are] so sympathetically constituted, they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy, and rejoice in the contentment of others which they have made possible. But I say that, however dutiful and amiable it may be, *that kind of action has no true moral worth, . . . deserv[ing] praise and encouragement but no esteem* Kant (1959), p. 14 [italics added]." It is difficult to imagine

a philosophical position more at variance with classical Confucianism. This is perhaps why Kant could say rather dogmatically that “a concept of virtue and morality never entered the heads of the Chinese”; translated and quoted in Ching (1978), p. 169. At the same time and despite Kant’s antipathy to Chinese culture, we cannot but believe Confucius would wholeheartedly endorse Kant’s other formulation of the imperative “Never treat another human being as a means only, but always and also as an end.”

59. Here the locus classicus is Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, also in various editions.

60. The first use of the expression “role ethics” that we are aware of was by Sin Yee Chan in her Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Michigan; see Chan (1993). As we use the term, its closest analog in Western moral thought is feminist care ethics as exemplified in the work of Carol Gilligan (1982), Nel Noddings (2003), Margaret Walker (2000), Virginia Held (2006), and the works mentioned in Joan C. Tronto (1999), among others. Similarly, there is some resonance in recent work in pragmatist ethics: for example, Lekan (2003) and, particularly, Fesmire (2003).

61. The moral life begins in early childhood. An instructive study of how preschoolers of Chinese or European descent come to view the learning process very differently was done by Jin Li, who concluded that the latter came to focus on mind/tasks attributes in their development; see Li (2004). Also relevant on this and similar themes is Li (2003). An overview of Confucian education during imperial times is de Bary and Chaffee (1989) and several of the other essays in Tu (1996).

62. See Hall and Ames (1995), pp. 77–94, and (1998), pp. 257–269, for a fuller discussion of the Confucian notion of friendship.

63. Major (2002) and Minow and Shanley (1996).

64. Blustein (1982), p. 95.

65. Minow and Shanley (1996), p. 22.

66. Some anthologies on this topic are Sommers (1985), and Paul (1998). While most virtue ethicists have broken with the methodology of seeking universal principles in moral philosophy, they overwhelmingly continue to embrace individualism. Wollroth (2002) is one good example.

67. See, for example, Ivanhoe (2008), most of the papers in Ivanhoe and Walker (2006), Wilson (2002), and Yearley (2003). A typical illustration of one of the problems of focusing on similarities in too strenuous a fashion is Yu (2005). With an admirable command of both the Aristotelian and early Chinese texts, he argues that Aristotle’s *politick zoon* bears a close resemblance throughout to the relational self of Confucius and Mencius. But unfortunately, once the comparisons are made, it turns out that something “*is lacking* in Con-

fucian ethics”; “what Aristotle regards as primary happiness *is missing* in Confucius”; “Confucius . . . appears *to ignore* the theoretical” (pp. 295, 296, and 297 respectively; our italics). If Aristotle and Confucius are saying pretty much the same thing, but the former is saying it more adequately and thus better, then why bother reading the latter? We do not mean to be unfair to Yu. His essay is philosophically respectable, and these quotations from it can be found in a similar language in those who would compare Confucius, not just to Aristotle, but to many other Western philosophers. Sad to say, in virtually all these comparisons, something always seems to be seen as missing in Confucianism. But we do not ever read, “The concept of sage *is lacking* in Aristotelian ethics,” or “the centrality of ritual for human flourishing *is missing* in Aristotle,” or “Aristotle . . . appears *to ignore* the importance of the exemplary person,” and so on. Why not?

68. David Wong (2007) explores this charge as raised by Gilbert Harman and John Doris (in separate works). He responds well to the challenge, but not in a way that would please any virtue ethicist committed to some form of foundational individualism.

69. Most especially, Xunzi. See the “Human Nature Is Evil” chapter in Watson (1963).

70. See, for example, *Analects* 6.30.

71. Wan Junren (2004), p. 129, criticizes Alasdair MacIntyre and Aristotle on precisely this point. To the extent that communities matter for them, “these indispensable factors possess *only theoretical significance as part of the necessary explanatory context* for a given virtue ethic—they do not themselves *constitute the practice of virtue itself*.” MacIntyre (2004a), p. 154, strongly denies that communities are in this way tangential for either Aristotle or himself, citing *Politics* I (1253a1–39), paraphrasing: “To be a member of a political society is to share with others a concept of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, while to be outside political community is to be deprived of the possibility of developing the excellence specific to human beings. Only through the relationships of the household and the political community are human beings able to develop as human beings.” Blum (1996), contra Aristotle and Alasdair MacIntyre, argues for a stronger role for community in the production and practice of moral virtues than he thinks they would allow. We thank Steve Angle for this reference.

72. Commenting on this particular passage, Joel Kupperman (2004) remarks: “[T]here is every reason to believe that Confucius would have been incredulous at Aristotle’s suggestion that law should have an important role in the education of young children” (p. 107); and in commenting on this and other insights of Kupperman—and others—Alasdair MacIntyre (2004b) notes:

"But Confucianism involves not only a rejection of Western deontology and utilitarianism, but also, as Kupperman's comparison of Aristotelian and Confucian views makes clear, a rejection of the basic assumptions of most Western versions of an ethics of virtue" (p. 209).

73. *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1178b 20.

74. See Ames (2003) for a characterization of this Confucian sense of religiousness.

75. William James (2000), in his essay "Some Metaphysical Problems Pragmatically Considered," goes after this same problem of "substance"—that is, "the phenomenal properties of things . . . *adhere*, or *cohere*, rather, *with each other*, and the notion of substance inaccessible to us, which we think accounts for such cohesion by supporting it, as cement might support pieces of mosaic, must be abandoned. The fact of bare cohesion itself is all that the notion of the substance signifies. Behind that fact is nothing" (p. 42).

76. To our mind the best defense of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics that also endeavors to capture some of the Kantian sense of duty is Hursthouse (1999). Onora O'Neill (1996) reverses the emphasis, advocating a deontological ethics that leaves room for the virtues. What Hursthouse and O'Neill share in common is the conceptual foundation of individualism, as do many of the comparative philosophers who consider Confucianism a "virtue ethics."

77. Jay Garfield (2000), p. 179.

78. Blum (2000), p. 206.

79. Nothing follows, however, about the role that reason can or should play in family living. Keeping the life of the mind fully active in the course of her interactive relations with spouse and children is the subtext of philosopher Laura Duhan Kaplan's (1998) *Family Pictures*.

80. Again, it does *not* follow from this claim that Confucians are unreflective, incapable of distancing themselves from their immediate situation, as we already noted with the obligation of remonstrance. Shun (2004), p. 190, also makes this point, as does Karyn Lai: "The *Analects* deals with meta-ethical issues relating to the processes and skills required in ethical deliberation" (2006, p. 80).

81. Rosemont (1976).

82. We believe benefactor/beneficiary analyses do rest on hierarchy but are no less worthy of our consideration for that reason. We believe equally strongly, however, that gender issues are not necessary for such analyses, no matter how crucial they may appear to have been in the past—in China or the West. Patriarchy does not conduce to human flourishing, and we advance the Confucian persuasion because we believe that, when appropriately modified by contemporary moral insights, it can promote family and communal pros-

perity free of coercion. Said another way, patriarchy offends against the fundamental premises of the Confucian project, and the sooner it becomes part of an unfortunate past, the better. Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee (2006) argues persuasively that patriarchal family predates Confucianism, and that Confucianism itself historically has been distorted in service to this institution.

83. We interpret this statement as the Master urging his students to use their imaginations to engage in what we would call “reasonable reflection” that is at once cognitive and affective; an early version of rational choice theory, however, it is not.

84. Dewey (2002), pp. 278ff., in his “Conclusion” to *Human Nature and Conduct*, provides a definition of morality that resonates closely with the Confucian tradition. Perhaps “decision” and “choice” play a more important role in Dewey, while propensity and disposition to act are more of a Confucian emphasis.

85. The role of grandchild, for example, involves personal cultivation in a way different from what we learn from Aristotle, Kant, or Mill. When we strive to see and appreciate the pleasure our grandmother derives from our shoulder rubs by endeavoring to intensify our own pleasure that comes from relieving her pains, what Aristotelian virtue(s) are we developing? What maxim might we universalize? What would “utility” mean in such contexts?

86. Of course, there can be a dark side to family solidarity as well. Far too many family members of Holocaust perpetrators at best attempted to remain silent on the matter of culpability, celebrated when the perpetrators were acquitted (which was 98 percent of the time), and at worst tried to portray the slaughterers as having themselves been “victims.” See Kellenbach (2003).

87. In her review of Susan Miller Okin’s *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, Martha Nussbaum criticizes Okin for not being more critical of the notion of the family itself (Nussbaum 1992), a criticism that obviously could be leveled at us as well. We admit that the institution has often been an instrument of oppression, surely of women, and not infrequently of children too. But when these not inconsequential evils are weighed against the good things that families have brought to their members; when we appreciate just how pervasive family life remains the world over; when we attend to the fact that governments of the future, no matter how well-meaning, are not going to be capable of providing adequate social services for over seven billion people—then, we believe, we are justified in taking the concept of family for granted and for employing Confucian insights to advocate for it as an appropriately humane institution for the twenty-first century.

88. Given that “grandmother” as opposed to the proper and particular

name “Grandmother” can be read as an abstraction, it is difficult at times to appreciate fully the strong focus on specificity in early Confucianism. But even so, the difference between “grandmother” and “individual,” “self,” or “freedom” should be fairly clear. To see this difference in another way, when we focus on specific roles that are familiar, hatred of others is more difficult to sustain. Although there is no essential “grandmother,” there are sufficient “family resemblances” among and between grandmothers the world over that when we attend to them in that role instead of dwelling on their skin color, ethnicity, accent, or religious beliefs, our empathetic association makes seeing them as wholly “other” almost impossible.

89. Ivanhoe (2004), p. 196.

90. Although not with any reference to Confucianism, Jane English (1979) has also argued this point well, although she was altogether inattentive to the importance of intergenerationality in defending her position.

91. Milgram (1974).

92. See Rosemont and Ames (2008) for our attempt to address this ongoing debate.

93. The debate is the subject of a lengthy anthology, Guo (2004). A number of articles from this anthology have been translated into English under the editorship of Yong Huang and will appear in a special issue of *Contemporary Chinese Thought* in 2008.

94. Knapp (2006), pp. 67–68. See also Knapp (1995) and (2005), and Nylan (1996).

95. Ames and Hall (2001), p. 99. In their translation of this text, Ames and Hall have rendered the title *Zhongyong* as *Focusing the Familiar* in order to emphasize the centrality of family as the locus for personal cultivation.

96. This provides a conceptual resource for contemporary Confucians to be ecologically sensitive, requiring that they not only appreciate those programs that are environmentally benign, but also argue for sustainability that will preserve the earth for succeeding generations.

97. See *Analects* 3.3: “What do persons who are not consummate have to do with observing ritual propriety? What do persons who are not consummate have to do with the playing of music?”

98. See Coady and Coady (2003).

99. This kind of criticism is directed at John Dewey, who would reconstruct religiousness as the flourishing community, by scholars such as Michael Eldridge (1998) and Steven Rockefeller (1991).

100. This sense of *belonging*—to a family, to a community, to the human race—may properly be seen as a religious or spiritual sensibility: a feeling that we are an important part of something larger than ourselves, something that

was in the world long before we arrived and that will endure long after we are gone. See Rosemont (2001).

101. Anyone believing that our challenges to individualism must negate the idea of personal self-identity should read the late Robert Solomon's "Recapturing Personal Identity" (Solomon 1993)—indeed a dear friend, whose relational identity is celebrated in our dedication of this book. Wong (2007), too, provides strong arguments for our being *constituted* by the communal roles we live. If his arguments hold, they imply that unless we are role-engaged with others we are nothing.

102. In Nisbett (2003), Richard Nisbett describes how Asian children learn verbs earlier and more quickly than their Western counterparts, whereas the latter excel in the acquisition of nouns. See his chapter 6, especially pp. 139–155.

103. The Western Greek/Judeo-Christian tradition for slicing up the world in these ways is taken up in Hall and Ames (1987, 1995, 1998) and Rosemont (2001). *Universal* "problems" of philosophy they are not.

104. Wittgenstein (1963), pp. 5, 6: "*The limits of my language* means the limits of my world" (italics in the original).

105. In Li (2006), Li Chenyang argues that this Confucian concept of harmony is fully consonant with value pluralism and hence has worldwide applicability; see especially pp. 596–598.

106. Sin Yee Chan has also written of the importance of *jing* as "respect" in early Confucianism and the role it plays in self-cultivation. The careful reader will note, however, how different Chan's angle of moral vision is from ours in discussing the significance of *jing* and its place in the Confucian path of personal cultivation. She is interested in when respect can be commanded by one person from another, akin to a right or an entitlement. Our focus is on deference: the cultivation of respect toward others and the enjoyment derived therefrom. See Sin Yee Chan (2006).

107. For the philosophical importance of this idea, and its relative neglect in Western thought, see Neville (2001), especially pp. 42–44.

108. Geaney (2002) shows clearly what may seem odd to scholars who work only in Western theories of knowledge—that is, *qing* as feelings or emotions are also of great epistemological import in early Chinese thought. And Raphals (2004) argues that *xiao* is an emotion (*qing*), but different for men and women.

109. Fingarette (1983), p. 217.

110. Karlgren (1950c), p. 191.

111. Some of this disaffection is certainly justified, since something like "benevolence" is at least *one* aspect of *ren*.

112. Sterckx (2007), p. 23.

113. Not too much should be made simply of “omens” pertaining to *tian* that were divorced from the affairs of this world. A famous and much cited passage from the *Shujing* 書經 (*Book of Documents*)—predating Confucius—reads: “*Tian* hears and sees as my people do; *tian* reveals its might and majesty as my people stand in awe—such is the connection between what is above and below.” Cf. Legge (1960), vol. 3, p. 74. In short, when the people are oppressed and resist, *tian* is clearly upset.

114. Master Zeng was especially concerned with this obligation. See *Analects* 8.3.

115. Lau (1992), p. xvi.



# Classic of Family Reverence (*Xiaojing*)

## CHAPTER 1 SETTING THE THEME AND ILLUMINATING ITS MEANING 《開宗明義章》<sup>1</sup>

仲尼居，曾子侍。子曰：「先王有至德要道，以順天下，民用和睦，上下無怨，汝知之乎？」曾子避席曰：「參不敏，何足以知之。」子曰：「夫孝、德之本也，教之所由生也。復坐，吾語汝。身體髮膚，受之父母，不敢毀傷，孝之始也。立身行道，揚名於後世，以顯父母，孝之終也。夫孝始於事親，中於事君，終於立身。《大雅》云：『無念爾祖。聿脩厥德。』」

Confucius was at leisure in his home, and Master Zeng was attending him. The Master said, "Do you understand how the former kings were able to use the model of their consummate excellence (*de*) and their vital way (*dao*) to bring the empire into accord (*shun*), and how the people on this account were able to attain harmony (*he*) and to live with each other as good neighbors so that those above and below alike did not resent each other?"

Master Zeng rose from his mat to respond, and said, "I am not clever enough to understand such things."

"It is family reverence (*xiao*)," said the Master, "that is the root of excellence, and whence education (*jiao*) itself is born.<sup>2</sup> Sit down again and I will explain it to you.

"Your physical person with its hair and skin are received from your parents. Vigilance in not allowing anything to do injury to your person is where family reverence begins;<sup>3</sup> distinguishing yourself and walking the proper way (*dao*) in the world; raising your name high for posterity and thereby bringing esteem to your father and mother—it is in these things that family reverence finds its consummation. This family reverence, then, begins in service to your parents, continues in service to your lord, and culminates in distinguishing yourself in the world.

"In the 'Greater Odes' section of the *Book of Songs* it says: 'How can you not remember your ancestor, King Wen? You must cultivate yourself and extend his excellence.'"<sup>4</sup>

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EMPEROR AS SON OF “TIAN” 《天子章》

子曰：「愛親者，不敢惡於人；敬親者，不敢慢於人。愛、敬盡於事親，而德教加於百姓，刑于四海，蓋天子之孝也。《甫刑》云：『一人有慶，兆民賴之。』」

The Master said, “The Emperor who loves (*ai*) his own parents would not presume to hate the parents of others; he who respects (*jing*) his own parents would not presume to be rude to the parents of others. With love and respect being fully expressed in this service to parents, such conduct will educate and transform (*dejiao*) the common people, serving as exemplary in all corners of the world. Such, then, is the family reverence of the Emperor.

“The *Book of Documents* says: ‘Where this one person behaves so well in serving his parents, the entire population will look up to his example.’”<sup>5</sup>

## CHAPTER 3

### THE HEREDITARY LORDS 《諸侯章》

在上不驕，高而不危。制節謹度，滿而不溢。高而不危，所以長守貴也。滿而不溢，所以長守富也。富貴不離其身，然後能保其社稷，而和其民人。蓋諸侯之孝也。《詩》云：「戰戰兢兢，如臨深淵，如履薄冰。」

When the hereditary lords are not arrogant, though of lofty status they are not in jeopardy of being toppled. When they are frugal and impeccable in their conduct, though sufficient in their resources they are not extravagant. To be lofty in status without jeopardy is the way to preserve nobility; to be sufficient in their resources without extravagance is the way to preserve their wealth. With nobility and wealth secure in their persons, they are able to protect the altars to their lands and crops and bring harmony (*he*) to their people. Such, then, is the family reverence of the hereditary lords.

The *Book of Songs* says, “Ever so cautious, as though peering over a deep precipice or treading upon thin ice.”<sup>6</sup>

## CHAPTER 4

### THE MINISTERS AND HIGH OFFICIALS 《卿大夫章》

非先王之法服不敢服，非先王之法言不敢道，非先王之德行不敢行。是故非法不言，非道不行。口無擇言，身無擇行，言滿天下無口過，行滿

天下無怨惡。三者備矣，然後能守其宗廟。蓋卿、大夫之孝也。《詩》云：「夙夜匪懈，以事一人。」

If an article of dress is not sanctioned (*fa*) by the customs of the former kings, the ministers and high officials would not presume to wear it; if ways of speaking are not sanctioned by the customs of the former kings, they would not presume to use them; if ways of behaving are not consistent with the exemplary conduct (*dexing*) of the former kings, they would not presume to act in such a way. Hence if it is not sanctioned they do not say it; if it is not the proper way (*dao*) they do not do it.

There is nothing arbitrary in what the ministers and high officials say and nothing arbitrary in what they do. Though their words fill the empire, there is no indiscretion in what is said; though their actions are evident everywhere in the empire, they provoke neither resentment nor animosity. With dress, speech, and conduct being as they should be, they are able to safeguard their ancestral temples. Such, then, is the family reverence of the ministers and high officials.

The *Book of Songs* says, "Whether night or day they are never remiss in their service to their one sovereign."<sup>7</sup>

## CHAPTER 5 THE LOWER OFFICIALS 《士章》

資於事父以事母而愛同，資於事父以事君而敬同。故母取其愛，而君取其敬，兼之者父也。故以孝事君則忠，以敬事長則順。忠順不失，以事其上，然後能保其祿位，而守其祭祀。蓋士之孝也。《詩》云：「夙興夜寐，無忝爾所生。」

The lower officials drawing upon their devotion to their fathers to serve their mothers, the love (*ai*) they feel toward them is the same; drawing upon their devotion to their fathers to serve their lord, the respect (*jing*) they feel for them is the same. While to their mothers love is rendered and to their lord respect is shown, it is only in service to their fathers that both love and respect combine.

Hence, service to the lord with family reverence is loyalty (*zhong*); service to elders with family reverence is compliance (*shun*). With loyalty and compliance being firmly in place in service to those above, they are able to maintain their tenure in office and to continue their ancestral sacrifices. Such, then, is the family reverence of the lower officials.

The *Book of Songs* says, "Rise early and retire late to make sure you never disgrace those who gave you life."<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER 6. THE COMMON PEOPLE 《庶人章》

用天之道，分地之利，謹身節用，以養父母，此庶人之孝也。故自天子至於庶人，孝無終始，而患不及者，未之有也。

By making the most of the seasonal cycle (*dao*) and discriminating among the earth's resources to best advantage, and by being circumspect in their conduct and frugal in what they use, they take proper care of their parents. Such, then, is the family reverence of the common people.

Thus it is that for the Emperor down to the common people, the way of family reverence being inclusive and comprehensive, there should be no one concerned that they are inadequate to the task.<sup>9</sup>

## CHAPTER 7. THE THREE POWERS AND RESOURCES 《三才章》

曾子曰：「甚哉！孝之大也。」子曰：「夫孝、天之經也，地之義也，民之行也。天地之經而民是則之，則天之明，因地之利，以順天下。是以前王見教之可以化民也，是故先之以博愛，而民莫遺其親，陳之（於）〔以〕德義而民興行，先之以敬讓而民不爭，導之以禮樂而民和睦，示之以好惡而民知禁。《詩》云：『赫赫師尹，民具爾瞻。』」

Master Zeng replied, "Incredible—the profundity of family reverence!"

The Master continued, "Indeed, family reverence is the constancy of the heavenly cycles, the appropriate responsiveness (*yi*) of the earth, and the proper conduct of the people. It is the constant workings of the heavens and the earth that the people model themselves upon. Taking the illumination (*ming*) of the heavens as their model and making the most of the earth's resources, they bring the empire into accord (*shun*). This is the reason that education can be effective without being severe, and political administration can maintain proper order without being harsh.

"The former kings saw that their teachings (*jiao*) were able to transform the people. Thus, setting their own example of magnanimity (*boai*) before the people, none of the people would neglect their parents; demonstrating excellence (*de*) and appropriateness (*yi*) in their own actions, the people were inspired to conduct themselves accordingly; setting their own example of respect (*jing*) and reverence before the people, the people did not contend among themselves; guiding the people with ritual propriety (*li*) and music (*yue*), the people found harmony (*he*) and accord with each other; showing the people what they deemed acceptable and unacceptable, the people understood what was proscribed.<sup>10</sup>

“The *Book of Songs* says, ‘Illustrious Grand Tutor Yin, the people all look up to you.’”<sup>11</sup>

## CHAPTER 8.

### GOVERNING THROUGH FAMILY REVERENCE 《孝治章》

子曰：「昔者明王之以孝治天下也，不敢遺小國之臣，而況於公侯伯子男乎？故得萬國之歡心，以事其先王。治國者不敢侮於鰥寡，而況於士民乎？故得百姓之歡心，以事其先君。治家者不敢失於臣妾，而況於妻子乎？故得人之歡心，以事其親。夫然，故生則親安之，祭則鬼享之，是以天下和平，災害不生，禍亂不作。故明王之以孝治天下也如此。《詩》云：『有覺德行，四國順之。』」

The Master said, “Of old when the enlightened (*ming*) kings used family reverence to bring proper order to the empire, they would not presume to neglect the ministers of the smallest state, how much less so the dukes, earls, and other members of the high nobility. Thus all of the different vassal states participated wholeheartedly in their service to these former kings. Those who would bring proper order to the vassal states would not presume to ignore the most dispossessed, how much less so the lower officials and common people. Thus the various families all participated wholeheartedly in their service to these former lords. Those who would bring proper order to the various families would not presume to overlook their servants and concubines, how much less so their wives and children. Thus all of the people participated wholeheartedly in their service to their parents. In such a world, the parents while living enjoyed the comforts that parents deserve, and as spirits after death took pleasure in the sacrificial offerings made to them.

“Hence, the empire was peaceful (*he*) and free of strife, natural disasters did not occur, and man-made calamities were averted. In this way the enlightened kings used family reverence to bring proper order to the empire.

“The *Book of Songs* says, ‘So admirable is the excellence (*de*) of his conduct that all of the states in the four quarters repair (*shun*) to him.’”<sup>12</sup>

## CHAPTER 9.

### SAGELY GOVERNING 《聖治章》

曾子曰：「敢問聖人之德，無以加於孝乎？」子曰：「天地之性，人為貴。人之行，莫大於孝，孝莫大於嚴父，嚴父莫大於配天，則周公其人也。昔者周公郊祀后稷以配天，宗祀文王於明堂以配上帝。是以四海之內，各以其職來祭。夫聖人之德，又何以加於孝乎？故親生之膝下，

以養父母日嚴。聖人因嚴以教敬，因親以教愛，聖人之教，不肅而成，其政不嚴而治。其所因者本也。父子之道，天性也，君臣之義也。父母生之，續莫大焉。君親臨之，厚莫重焉。故不愛其親而愛他人者，謂之悖德，不敬其親而敬他人者，謂之悖禮。以順則逆，民無則焉。不在於善，而皆在於凶德，雖得之，君子不貴也。君子則不然，言思可道，行思可樂，德義可尊，作事可法，容止可觀，進退可度，以臨其民。是以其民畏而愛之，則而象之，故能成其德教，而行其政令。《詩》云：『淑人君子，其儀不忒。』」

Master Zeng said, "May I presume to ask if there is anything in the excellence (*de*) of the sages that surpasses family reverence?"

The Master replied, "Of all the creatures in the world, the human being is the most noble. In human conduct there is nothing more important than family reverence; in family reverence there is nothing more important than venerating one's father; in venerating one's father there is nothing more important than placing him on a par with *tian*. And the Duke of Zhou was able to do this.<sup>13</sup>

"Of old, the Duke of Zhou performed the *jiao* sacrifice on the outskirts of the capital to the first ancestor of Zhou, Hou Ji, to place him on a par with *tian*, and in the Hall of Brilliance he performed the ancestral sacrifice to his father, King Wen, to place him on a par with *shangdi*.<sup>14</sup> It was for this reason that all of the nobility within the four seas came each according to his office to assist in the sacrifices. How then could there be something in the excellence of the sages that surpasses family reverence?

"Affectionate feeling for parents begins at their knee, and as children take proper care of their fathers and mothers this veneration increases with the passing of each day. The sages build upon this veneration in their teachings about respect, and build upon this affection in their teachings about love. In these teachings proffered by the sages they are able to be effective without being severe, and in their governing they are able to achieve proper order without being harsh because what they have built upon lies at the very root.

"The proper way (*dao*) between father and son is a natural propensity that by extension becomes the appropriate relationship (*yi*) between ruler and minister. There is no bond more important than the father and mother giving life to their progeny, and there is no generosity more profound than the care and concern this progeny receives from their ruler and parents.

"It is for this reason that to love others while not loving one's parents is depravity (*de*),<sup>15</sup> and to respect others while not respecting one's parents is a sacrilege (*li*).<sup>16</sup> To base the norms to be followed (*shun*) upon

such perversity would leave the people without any standards. No decency is to be found in this—only decadence (*de*).<sup>17</sup> Even though such persons might enjoy a measure of success, exemplary persons (*junzi*) would not esteem them.

“Exemplary persons (*junzi*) are nothing like this. They are concerned that what they say be credible, and what they do be a source of enjoyment (*le*). Their excellence (*de*) and sense of appropriateness (*yi*) is to be esteemed and they are to be emulated (*fa*) in what they do. In their bearing and deportment they are to be looked up to, and in their undertakings they are to be taken as a standard. It is in this way that they care for their people. This is why the people, holding them in awe, love them, and taking them as their model, emulate them. Therefore they are able to succeed in their moral education (*dejiao*) and produce effective governmental policies.

“The *Book of Songs* says, ‘This good man, this exemplary person, his deportment is beyond reproach.’”<sup>18</sup>

## CHAPTER 10. A RECORD OF FAMILY REVERENCE IN PRACTICE 《紀孝行章》

子曰：「孝子之事親也，居則致其敬，養則致其樂，病則致其憂，喪則致其哀，祭則致其嚴。五者備矣，然後能事親。事親者，居上不驕，為下不亂，在醜不爭。居上而驕則亡，為下而亂則刑，在醜而爭則兵，三者不除，雖日用三牲之養，猶為不孝也。」

The Master said, “Filial children in serving parents in their daily lives show them real respect (*jing*), in tending to their needs and wants strive to bring them enjoyment (*le*), in caring for them in sickness reveal their apprehension, in mourning for them express their grief, and in sacrificing to them show true veneration. With these five dispositions firmly in place, they are truly able to serve their parents.

“Those who are truly able to serve their parents are not arrogant in high station, are not rebellious in a subordinate position, and are not contentious when only one among many. To be arrogant in high station leads to ruin; to be rebellious in low position incurs punishment;<sup>19</sup> to be contentious among the many leads to violence. Until these three attitudes—arrogance, defiance, and contentiousness—are set aside, even though someone were to fete their parents on beef, mutton, and pork, they still could not be deemed filial.”<sup>20</sup>

### CHAPTER 11. THE FIVE PUNISHMENTS 《五刑章》

子曰：「五刑之屬三千，而罪莫大於不孝。要君者無上，非聖人者無法，非孝者無親。此大亂之道也。」

The Master said, "The crimes that are addressed by the Five Punishments number some three thousand,<sup>21</sup> and none of them is graver than to be wanting in family reverence. To coerce one's lord is tantamount to repudiating the institution of rulership; to denounce the sage is tantamount to repudiating law (*fa*) itself; to denounce family reverence is tantamount to repudiating parenthood altogether. Such offences pave the way (*dao*) to mayhem and anarchy."

### CHAPTER 12. ELABORATING UPON "THE VITAL WAY" 《廣要道章》<sup>22</sup>

子曰：「教民親愛，莫善於孝。教民禮順，莫善於悌。移風易俗，莫善於樂。安上治民，莫善於禮。禮者、敬而已矣。故敬其父則子悅，敬其兄則弟悅，敬其君則臣悅。敬一人而千萬人悅。所敬者寡，而悅者眾，此之謂要道也。」

The Master said, "There is nothing more effective than family reverence for teaching (*jiao*) the people about love and affection; there is nothing more effective than deference for elders (*ti*) for teaching the people about ritual propriety (*li*) and compliance (*shun*); there is nothing more effective than music (*yue*) for changing the ways and customs of the people; and there is nothing more effective for safeguarding the lord and bringing proper order to the people than observing ritual propriety.

"Ritual propriety is simply a matter of respect (*jing*). Thus, the son finds pleasure in respecting his father; the younger brother finds pleasure in respecting his elder brother; the minister finds pleasure in respecting his lord; and all of the people find pleasure in respecting the Emperor. Those who are respected are few, but those who find pleasure in showing this respect are legion. This is what is called the vital way (*dao*)."

### CHAPTER 13. ELABORATING UPON "CONSUMMATE EXCELLENCE" 《廣至德章》

子曰：「君子之教以孝也，非家至而日見之也。教以孝，所以敬天下之為人父者也。教以悌，所以敬天下之為人兄者也。教以臣，所以

敬天下之為人君者也。《詩》云：『愷悌君子，民之父母。』非至德，其孰能順民如此其大者乎！」

The Master said, "Exemplary persons (*junzi*) in their teachings (*jiao*) on family reverence do not travel daily from one family to the next to meet with each of them individually. Their teaching of family reverence is their way of showing respect (*jing*) for every father in the empire; their teaching of fraternal deference (*ti*) is their way of showing respect for every elder brother in the empire; their teaching of ministerial deference is their way of showing respect for every lord in the empire.

"The *Book of Songs* says, 'The kind and congenial lord—he is the father and mother of the people.'<sup>23</sup> If he were not someone of consummate excellence (*de*), how could he be the person to bring such remarkable accord (*shun*) to the people?"

#### CHAPTER 14.

#### ELABORATING UPON "RAISING ONE'S NAME HIGH FOR POSTERITY" 《廣揚名章》

子曰：「君子之事親孝，故忠可移於君。事兄悌，故順可移於長。居家理，故治可移於官。是以行成於內，而名立於後世矣。」

The Master said, "It is only because exemplary persons (*junzi*) serve their parents with family reverence that this same feeling can be extended to their lord as loyalty (*zhong*). It is only because they serve their elder brothers with deference (*ti*) that this same feeling can be extended to all elders as compliance (*shun*). And it is only because they maintain a proper home life that this same sense of organization can be extended as proper order to the offices of government. Thus, when one is successful in what one does at home, a name (*ming*) is established that will be passed on to posterity."

#### CHAPTER 15.

#### ON REMONSTRANCE (*JIAN*) 《諫諍章》

曾子曰：「若夫慈愛、恭敬、安親、揚名，則聞命矣。敢問子從父之令，可謂孝乎？」子曰：「是何言與！是何言與！昔者天子有爭臣七人，雖無道，不失其天下；諸侯有爭臣五人，雖無道，不失其國；大夫有爭臣三人，雖無道，不失其家；士有爭友，則身不離於令名；父有爭子，則身不陷於不義。故當不義，則子不可以不爭於父，臣不可以不爭於君。故當不義則爭之。從父之令，又焉得為孝乎！」

Master Zeng said, "Parental love (*ai*), reverence and respect (*jing*), seeing to the well-being of one's parents, and raising one's name (*ming*) high for

posterity—on these topics I have received your instructions. I would presume to ask whether children can be deemed filial simply by obeying every command of their father.”

“What on earth are you saying? What on earth are you saying?” said the Master. “Of old, an Emperor had seven ministers who would remonstrate with him, so even if he had no vision of the proper way (*dao*), he still did not lose the empire. The high nobles had five ministers who would remonstrate with them, so even if they had no vision of the proper way (*dao*), they still did not lose their states. The high officials had three ministers who would remonstrate with them, so even if they had no vision of the proper way (*dao*), they still did not lose their clans. If the lower officials had just one friend who would remonstrate with them, they were still able to preserve their good names (*ming*); if a father has a son who will remonstrate with him, he will not behave reprehensively (*buyi*).

“Thus, if confronted by reprehensible behavior on his father’s part, a son has no choice but to remonstrate with his father, and if confronted by reprehensible behavior on his ruler’s part, a minister has no choice but to remonstrate with his ruler. Hence, remonstrance is the only response to immorality. How could simply obeying the commands of one’s father be deemed filial?”

## CHAPTER 16. RESONANCE 《感應章》

子曰：「昔者明王事父孝，故事天明。事母孝，故事地察。長幼順，故上下治。天地明察，神明彰矣。故雖天子，必有尊也，言有父也；必有先也，言有兄也。宗廟致敬，不忘親也。脩身慎行，恐辱先也。宗廟致敬，鬼神著矣。孝悌之至，通於神明，光于四海，無所不通。《詩》云：『自西自東。自南自北。無思不服。』」

The Master said, “Of old the enlightened kings (*mingwang*) served their fathers with family reverence, and in so doing, served the heavens (*tian*) with acuity (*ming*); they served their mothers with family reverence, and in so doing, served the earth judiciously. With the young in compliance (*shun*) with their elders in this manner, proper order prevailed among those above and those below. With the enlightened kings being acute and judicious in their service to the heavens and to the earth, the gods and spirits sent down their blessings upon them.

“Thus, even the Emperor must show reverence—referring here to his father’s generation. And must place others before him—referring here to his elder brothers’ generation. At the ancestral temple his offering of

respect (*jing*) was in remembrance of his parents. He would cultivate his person and be circumspect in his conduct for fear of disgracing those who have come before.

"When at the ancestral temple the Emperor offers his respects, the ghosts and spirits acknowledge him with appreciation. When familial and fraternal deference reaches this level, the feeling resonates with the gods and spirits, shines throughout the four corners of the world, and affects everything everywhere.

"The *Book of Songs* says, 'From north to south, from east to west, everyone did him homage.'"<sup>24</sup>

## CHAPTER 17. SERVING ONE'S LORD 《事君章》

子曰：「君子之事上也，進思盡忠，退思補過，將順其美，匡救其惡，故上下能相親也。《詩》云：『心乎愛矣，遐不謂矣，中心藏之，何日忘之。』」

The Master said, "Exemplary persons (*junzi*) when serving those above at court reflect on how they can give their utmost loyalty (*zhong*) to them, and on retiring reflect on how to resolve the excesses of their superiors. They are fully compliant (*shun*) in carrying out what is commendable in the instructions of those above and take steps to remedy what cannot be condoned. It is in this way that those above and below are able to appreciate each other.

"The *Book of Songs* says, 'In my heart there is love for him—where is too distant that I cannot declare it to be so? In my heart I treasure him—when could it be that I could ever forget him?'"<sup>25</sup>

## CHAPTER 18. MOURNING FOR PARENTS 《喪親章》

子曰：「孝子之喪親也，哭不偯，禮無容，言不文，服美不安，聞樂不樂，食旨不甘，此哀感之情也。三日而食，教民無以死傷生，毀不滅性，此聖人之政也。喪不過三年，示民有終也。為之棺、槨、衣、衾而舉之，陳其簠簋而哀感之，擗踊哭泣，哀以送之，卜其宅兆而安措之，為之宗廟以鬼享之，春秋祭祀以時思之。生事愛敬，死事哀感，生民之本盡矣，死生之義備矣，孝子之事親終矣。」

The Master said, "When filial children are in mourning for a parent, they weep without prolonged wailing, they participate in the funeral ceremony (*li*) without attention to their personal appearance, they speak plainly

without trying to be eloquent. They are uncomfortable in elegant clothing, are unable to find any enjoyment (*le*) in listening to music (*yue*), and have no appetite for fine food. This is because of their feelings of grief and distress.

“After three days they break their fast in order to teach (*jiao*) others not to harm the living on account of the dead and not to threaten life through a lack of restraint. This is the policy laid down by the sages. Mourning must not exceed three years to make it clear to the people that they must find closure.

“The inner and outer coffins are prepared, the burial shroud is readied, the corpse is dressed and covered, and is then lifted into the coffin. The funerary vessels are set out with grief and sorrow. Beating their breasts and stamping their feet, weeping and wailing, the mourners escort the coffin to the grave site. Divination is used to determine the proper location, and the body is interred in peace. The ancestral temple is prepared to make offerings to the spirit of the deceased. The spring and autumn sacrifices are performed to provide a proper occasion to cherish the memory of the departed.

“When their parents are alive they are served with love (*ai*) and respect (*jing*) and when they are deceased they are served with grief and sorrow. This is the basic duty being discharged by the living, the fulfilling of the appropriate obligations (*yi*) between the living and the dead, and the consummation of service filial children owe their parents.”

## NOTES TO THE CLASSIC OF FAMILY REVERENCE

1. From the commentarial tradition we learn that these chapter titles were added on at various stages of the later transmission of the text and were not part of the earliest compilation.

2. Cf. *Analects* 1.2. “Education” refers to moral education within the five relations, where the father is instructed in appropriateness (*yi* 義), the mother in commiseration (*ci* 慈), the elder brother in friendship (*you* 友), the younger brother in respectfulness (*gong* 恭), and the son in family reverence (*xiao* 孝).

3. In the *Record of Rituals*, the *Liji* 25.36/128/6, it says: “Lezheng Zichun observed: ‘I learned this from Master Zeng who in turn had learned it from the Master. He said: “Among those things born of the heavens and nurtured by the earth, nothing is grander than the human being. For the parents to give birth to your whole person, and for one to return oneself to them whole is what can

be called family reverence. To avoid desecrating your body or bringing disgrace to your person is what can be called keeping your person whole.””

4. *Songs* 235. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 431, and Karlgren (1950b), p. 187.

5. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 600.

6. *Songs* 195. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 333, and Karlgren (1950), p. 143.

7. *Songs* 260. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 543, and Karlgren (1950B), p. 229.

8. *Songs* 196. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 335, and Karlgren (1950B), p. 145.

9. The ancient script commentary provides an alternative reading: “Thus it is that from the Emperor down to the common people, calamity always befalls those found wanting in family reverence.”

10. The structure of this passage is reminiscent of *Analects* 2.3: “Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame; lead them with excellence (*de*) and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety (*li*) and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves.”

11. *Songs* 191. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 309, and Karlgren (1950b), p. 133.

12. *Songs* 256. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 511, and Karlgren (1950b), p. 217.

13. The Duke of Zhou was the son of King Wen, the younger brother of King Wu, and the uncle of King Cheng. He served as regent for his young nephew, King Cheng. *Tian* is the ancestral and cultural deity of the Zhou dynasty.

14. *Shangdi* is the ancestral and cultural deity of the Shang dynasty that was appropriated and used interchangeably with their own ancestral deity, *tian*, by the conquering Zhou dynasty.

15. Literally, “perverse excellence or potency” (*beide* 悖德).

16. Literally, “perverse propriety” (*beili* 悖禮).

17. Literally, “malevolent excellence or potency” (*xiongde* 凶德).

18. *Songs* 152. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 223, and Karlgren (1950b), pp. 95–96.

19. In the *Analects* 1.2 it is observed: “It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of family reverence and fraternal deference to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion.”

20. This passage is reminiscent of *Analects* 2.7: “Those today who are filial are deemed so because they are able to provide for their parents. But even dogs and horses are given that much care. If you do not respect (*jing*) your parents, what is the difference?”

21. The five punishments current at the beginning of the Han dynasty were branding, amputation of the nose, amputation of the leg, castration for men and sterilization for women, and decapitation.

22. This chapter and the two that follow are an elaboration of the terminology established in the first chapter that sets the themes for the text.

23. *Songs* 251. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 489, and Karlgren (1950b), pp. 207–208.

24. *Songs* 244. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 463, and Karlgren (1950b), pp. 198–199.

25. *Songs* 228. Cf. Legge (1960), p. 415, and Karlgren (1950b), p. 181.

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