

# Anxiety over the Filial Body: Discussions on *Xiao* in Early Confucian Texts

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This paper reexamines the concept of filial piety (*xiao*) from a specific perspective, asking how filial piety is performed by and observed on the body. I argue that in pre-Qin and Han Confucian texts, there was a strong anxiety over the potential hypocrisies of filial deeds; that is, the fact that filial piety could be abused and transformed to become a mere show intended for gaining fame and reputation. Because of this, early commentators felt the need to create methods and criteria for evaluating filial piety. One important way to do this was to examine how filial piety was materialized through the ritual performance of the body. Filial piety was thus embodied and evaluated in terms of corporality. Ironically, this embodiment of filial piety had its own paradox as filial piety could become oversimplified as physical care of the parents and the ritual of *xiao* be reduced to a performance.

## INTRODUCTION

In his 1998 article titled “The Place of Filial Piety in Ancient China,” Donald Holzman (1926–2019) complains that there is “very little secondary material [in Western languages] on the subject” of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) in early China.<sup>1</sup> Almost twenty years later, as I prepared to write this paper, I found myself experiencing the same surprise that Holzman expressed decades ago. Indeed, compared to the growing popularity of research on filial piety in later imperial China, inspired and influenced by recent Western social and cultural theories, especially those of Michel Foucault, English-language scholarship concerning filial piety in early China remains stagnant and inadequate. The paramount position of filial piety in the sociopolitical sphere of premodern China and its continuing influence on people’s lives in contemporary Chinese communities deserve scholarly attention.

Holzman points out that many scholars regard the importance of filial piety in ancient China to be self-evident, and therefore assume that there is little use in studying it. This may well be because researchers pay too much attention to the meanings and significance of filial piety while ignoring the practical issues surrounding *xiao* in early China. This paper therefore investigates *xiao* in ancient China from a specific perspective; that is, how filial piety was performed and examined. I argue that, as a social norm, *xiao* must be realized through human actions, and the evaluation of this moral quality is in turn made possible by inspecting the bodily performances of *xiao*. The body materializes the notion of filial piety through the performance of *li* 禮, ritual, so that *xiao* can become visible and measurable. However, the performative nature of filial piety causes a fundamental paradox and anxiety in the Confucian promotion of *xiao*: the problem of distinguishing between genuine filial affection and fake behavior for the sake of fame and social benefit. To be more specific, I argue that ritual, intended to shape and control filial emotions, tended to become perceived as a meaningless formality, and thus required more and more extreme forms of behavior designed to show that emotions such as grief were real. Consequently, when *xiao* is expressed by the body and

1. Donald Holzman, “The Place of Filial Piety in Ancient China,” *JAOS* 118.2 (1998): 185.

bodily performance thus becomes the material for evaluation, it creates a systemic dilemma that cannot be resolved in Confucian society.

English-language studies of filial piety in early China reveal a trajectory of interests from comparing the notions of filial piety in China and the Western world to investigating the sociopolitical significance of *xiao* in early Chinese society. From Max Weber and George Jamieson's differentiation of submission and power in Chinese *xiao* versus European patriarchy to contemporary Western conceptualizations of the social implications of filial piety, Western scholars have examined the Chinese ethical principle of *xiao* to reflect upon Western culture and tradition.<sup>2</sup> Students of early China studies, on the other hand, focus on the public nature of filial piety and investigate how this virtue connects the individual and society. Departing from traditional Chinese scholars' promotion of *xiao* as the ultimate goal of Confucian moral cultivation and the way to social harmony,<sup>3</sup> Qingping Liu indicates that there is conflict between familial affection and social responsibility in the Confucian advocacy of filial piety. Defining Confucianism as consanguinitism that values the supremacy of kinship love, Liu demonstrates the unsolvable moral dilemma of pitting filial devotion against loyalty in a Confucian society.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Nylan has also discussed the conflict between family devotion and loyalty to the state. In her 1996 article titled "Confucian Piety and Individualism in Han China," Nylan analyzes this inherent systemic problem.<sup>5</sup> Focusing on the Han court's promotion of filial piety for political purposes, Nylan convincingly demonstrates how the notion of *xiao* was extended beyond family to society and how it was deeply intertwined with political policies and practices.

Donald Holzman takes a different approach in his article "The Place of Filial Piety in Ancient China." Unlike Nylan, Holzman is interested in the extreme filial actions often seen in Later Han records. Holzman devotes almost half of his article to quoting and trying to make sense of the stories of fourteen Later Han men and women who performed, in Holzman's words, "inhuman and uncommon" filial acts. These actions of mutilating one's body and even sacrificing one's own life for the sake of *xiao* became a "mania" and reached a cli-

2. See Gary Hamilton, "Patriarchy, Patrimonialism and Filial Piety: A Comparison between China and West Europe," *The British Journal of Sociology* 41.1 (1990): 77–104. Hamilton argues that patriarchal authority and *xiao* in Chinese society are "based upon specific roles and upon a belief in the inherent correctness of these roles." *Xiao* therefore concerns "role-defined actions and emotions." For an introduction to contemporary Western theories on filial piety, see Chenyang Li, "Shifting Perspectives: Filial Morality Revisited," *Philosophy East and West* 47.2 (1997): 211–32.

3. For example, in his discussion of the codification of patriarchy in Chinese law, Ch'u T'ung-tsu 瞿同祖 (1910–2008) argued that it "was all a question of filial piety." Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) also confirmed that filial piety is the "organizing principle of a society based on a family system." Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990) even defined Chinese culture as "the culture of filial morality" 孝的文化. Probably the most romantic description of the importance of filial piety in Chinese society was given by Hsieh Yu-wei 謝幼偉 (1905–1976) who, in a short summary, asserts the "paramount position" of *xiao* in Chinese ethical rules and concludes that filial piety is the "primary and leading theme" in Chinese ethical principles and the "fountain-head of the morality" of the Chinese people. In Hsieh Yu-wei's view, all Chinese virtues "have been based upon the filial concept and have thus radiated from this starting point." For Ch'u T'ung-tsu, see his *Law and Society in Traditional China* (Paris: Monton, 1961), 29. For Fung Yu-lan, see Hamilton, "Patriarchy, Patrimonialism and Filial Piety," 85. For Qian Mu, see Li, "Shifting Perspectives," 219. See also Hsieh Yu-wei, "Filial Piety and Chinese Society," *Philosophy East and West* 9.1/2 (1959): 56–57.

4. Qingping Liu, "Filiality Versus Sociality and Individuality: On Confucianism as Consanguinitism," *Philosophy East and West* 53.2 (2003): 234–50.

5. Nylan, "Confucian Piety and Individualism in Han China," *JAOS* 116.1 (1996): 1–27.

max around the third and fourth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Holzman is certainly right in noticing that these types of filial anecdotes reappear throughout Chinese history, although he does not present a strong and convincing theory explaining the reason behind these extreme filial acts.

Probably the most important and extensive research on the Confucian promotion of filial piety in premodern China is found in Keith Knapp's book *Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China*.<sup>7</sup> Based upon the extensive reading of more than three hundred filial tales, Knapp refutes the traditional understanding of filial tales as created primarily for educating children. Instead, the often extreme filial devotion in these widely circulated tales was intended for adults to imitate and repeat. In other words, filial deeds were performative in nature, a concept that I will explore in this paper. The "reverent caring" Knapp discusses in his book also finds ample expression in early documents, the likes of which feature prominently in my current research.

Compared with his book on filial piety in medieval China, Keith Knapp's article, "The *Ru* Reinterpretation of *xiao*," is even more relevant to my present discussion.<sup>8</sup> Knapp begins his article with a thorough study of the evolving concept of *xiao* from the Western Zhou to the Warring States, the period when certain groups of *Ru* began to transform the notion and practices of *xiao* in order to cope with the changing political and social environments. The *Ru* reinterpretation of filial piety, as Knapp summarizes it, focuses on the following three notions: first, rejecting the notion that *xiao* simply requires feeding one's parents; second, promoting obedience to parents as filial deeds; third, extending this familial affection to political loyalty.<sup>9</sup> To support this argument, Knapp divides his analyses of the *Ru* reinterpretation into two arenas where filial deeds were performed: one concerns serving the living and the other serving the dead. Knapp concludes that Warring States *Ru* emphasized reverent caring rather than simply providing food in serving the living, which also promoted children's submission to their parents' will. The three-year mourning ritual was an important *Ru* invention that related to serving the dead, who, in this new mode of filial thought, became fetishized by filial children.

In addition to the consensus on the importance of filial piety in premodern Chinese society, the above-mentioned studies all highlight the public nature of *xiao* and understand it as an ethical rule defined by social roles, performed through actions, and displayed with emotion. This practicality of *xiao* needs to be further addressed in association with ritual, *li*. After all, filial requirements were a part of the overall Confucian advocacy of ritual, which in practice constituted a set of bodily performances codified and specified with consideration of the interrelationship of the participants in a certain space. As ritual performance was judged by society, the display of filial emotions was also important to sustaining and advancing one's social status. Because these filial acts were by nature public performances, they could be transformed into political and social assets and manipulated for the sake of fame and reputation. This potential self-interest connected to *xiao* caused anxiety in early Confucian discussions of filial morality. Many strong arguments and competing doctrines concerning filial practices are found in early texts, and together they speak to the complexity and unsolvable systemic dilemma in the Confucian promotion of *xiao*.

6. Holzman, "Place of Filial Piety," 189, 192.

7. Knapp, *Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

8. Knapp, "The *Ru* Reinterpretation of *xiao*," *Early China* 20 (1995): 195–222.

9. Knapp, "*Ru* Reinterpretation of *xiao*," 197.

## SERVING LIVING PARENTS: NOURISHMENT VS. REVERENCE

Discussions on filial piety often draw on the *Analects* in order to support their arguments. Unlike the notions of *ren* 仁, humaneness, and *li*, ritual, *xiao* is not a topic upon which we see Confucius expounding frequently in this text. A close examination of the *Analects* finds a total of fourteen passages that mention filial piety.<sup>10</sup> Nearly half of these passages present *xiao* as a desirable quality and stress its social value. The other half can be understood as Confucius's definition of filial piety, in both affirmative and negative comments. According to Confucius, filial piety denotes obedience to one's parents while they are alive and submission to their will even after they have died. In a famous passage, Confucius describes filial piety as follows:

父在觀其志；父沒觀其行；三年無改於父之道，可謂孝矣。

When someone's father is still alive, observe his intentions; after his father has passed away, observe his conduct. If for three years he does not alter the ways of his father, he may be called a filial son.<sup>11</sup>

An almost identical passage found in *Analects* 4.20 also stresses the importance of honoring parents' will. This repetition of Confucius's words might convey special significance, as chapter one and chapter four are generally considered to be the oldest and therefore most authentic stratum of the book. It is interesting that in Confucius's definition, emotion and affection for one's parents seem to be irrelevant, or are at least not mentioned. Instead, Confucius places emphasis on absolute obedience to and respect for one's parent. This submission is not generated or sustained by kinship love or the biological bond between parents and children. Rather, Confucius suggests the function of ritual in guiding filial deeds. *Analects* 2.5 records a conversation between Confucius and his student Fan Chi:

孟懿子問孝。子曰：“無違。”樊遲御，子告之曰：“孟孫問孝於我，我對曰‘無違’。”樊遲曰：“何謂也？”子曰：“生事之以禮；死葬之以禮，祭之以禮。”

Meng Yizi asked about filial piety. The Master replied, “Do not disobey.” Later, Fan Chi was driving the Master's chariot. The Master said to him, “Just now Meng Yizi asked me about filial piety, and I answered, ‘Do not disobey.’” Fan Chi said, “What did you mean by that?” The Master replied, “When your parents are alive, serve them in accordance with the rites; when they pass away, bury them in accordance with the rites and sacrifice to them in accordance with the rites.”<sup>12</sup>

Here *xiao* suggests absolute obedience that is strictly guided by ritual; at the same time, love and affection are excluded from Confucius's description of familial relationships. Although Confucius never denies the biological nature of people and acknowledges the expression of genuine feelings, the ideal person in Confucius's view is one who can control

10. These passages are: 1.2, 1.6, 1.11, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.20, 2.21, 4.20, 8.21, 11.5, 13.20, and 19.18. Scholars generally agree that chapters three to eight are the earliest and most authentic parts of the *Analects*. Bruce Brooks argues that chapters 1–3 and 11–20 are late additions to the book. The passages concerning filial piety are found mostly in the first two chapters. If we follow Brooks's theory, they were likely added by the disciples of Confucius. For a summary of the layers of the *Analects* concerning filial piety, see Knapp, “*Ru* Reinterpretation of *xiao*,” 205 n. 3.

11. See *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注, comm. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 7. Translation adapted from Edward Slingerland, *Confucius: Analects* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 5. The last sentence appears almost identically in *Analects* 4.20. See *Lunyu yizhu*, 39; Slingerland, *Confucius*, 36.

12. See *Lunyu yizhu*, 13; Slingerland, *Confucius*, 9. An alternative reading of 無違 is “not transgressing [social rites].” Confucius's following explanation on obeying rituals in serving, burying, and offering sacrifice to parents seems to support this reading. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of my paper for this suggestion.

his emotions and maintain a harmonious (*he* 和) state of mind.<sup>13</sup> The key to achieving this state is through ritual, as Confucius asserts that one must “restrain oneself and return to the rites” *keji fuli* 克己復禮.<sup>14</sup>

In this transformation of the biological body into the social body, Confucius seems to emphasize the distinction between emotion and attitude. Emotions such as joy, worry, sorrow, and anger are spontaneous, unregulated, and have the tendency to become excessive. Attitude, on the other hand, is a composed bodily gesture and expression, trained and restrained by *li*. In other words, attitudes are ritualized emotions tailored for social interactions, including the relationship between father and son.

Among the proper attitudes a filial son must present to his parents, *jing* 敬, reverence, is the most important in serving the parents when they are alive. Confucius especially distinguishes *jing* from *yang* 養, nourishing, which, in the Master’s view, is a false filial practice. When his student Ziyou 子游 inquired about filial piety, Confucius replied,

今之孝者，是謂能養。至於犬馬，皆能有養；不敬，何以別乎？

Nowadays “filial” means simply being able to provide one’s parents with nourishment. But even dogs and horses are provided with nourishment. If you are not respectful, wherein lies the difference?<sup>15</sup>

The sentence concerning dogs, horses, and nourishment is slightly ambiguous and has thus led to different interpretations.<sup>16</sup> However, Confucius’s rejection of equating filial piety with physical nourishment is clear. This ritualized attitude *jing*, reverence, is more important than *yang*, nourishment; in Confucius’s words, *jing* defines humanity.

There is no question that Confucius believes that the filial attitude *jing* should come from a genuine affection for one’s parents. However, Confucius is also aware of the difficulties and challenges in fulfilling filial duties. After all, we can be overpowered by our own feelings

13. For example, in 16.7 Confucius acknowledges physiological impulses of men: “The gentleman guards against three things: when he is young, and his blood and vital essence are still unstable, he guards against the temptation of female beauty; when he reaches his prime, and his blood and vital essence have become unyielding, he guards against being contentious; when he reaches old age, and his blood and vital essence have begun to decline, he guards against being acquisitive” 孔子曰：“君子有三戒：少之時，血氣未定，戒之在色；及其壯也，血氣方剛，戒之在鬪；及其老也，血氣既衰，戒之在得。The Master himself also occasionally expresses strong feelings. When his favorite student Yan Yuan 顏淵 died young, Confucius lamented, “Oh! Heaven has bereft me! Heaven has bereft me!” 顏淵死。子曰：“噫！天喪予！天喪予！”，and he “cried for him excessively” 子哭之恸。Confucius once even suggested that fear is a desirable feeling and said that he would rather work with someone who has a “proper sense of trepidation” and who “came to a decision only after having thoroughly considered the matter” 必也臨事而懼，好謀而成者也。However, in Confucius’ view, the ideal person, the gentleman, should be free of emotional disturbance. When his student asked about the gentleman, Confucius replied, “The gentleman is free of anxiety and fear” 君子不悅不惧。See Slingerland, *Confucius*, 195, 114, 67, 127; *Lunyu yizhu*, 174, 111, 67, 122. A passage in *Zhongyong* 中庸 provides an explanation of Confucius’s seemingly conflicting views on emotions. The opening paragraph reads: “While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue” 喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和；中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。What ensures harmony is ritual. See James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1: *The Doctrine of the Mean* (rpt. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 1982), 384.

14. See *Lunyu yizhu*, 121; Slingerland, *Confucius*, 125. For a discussion on 克己復禮, see Du Weiming, *Quanshi Lunyu “keji fuli wei ren” zhang fangfa de fansi* 詮釋《論語》“克己復禮為仁”章方法的反思 (Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo, 2015). I am grateful to Stephen Durrant for this reference.

15. *Analects* 2.7. See *Lunyu yizhu*, 14; Slingerland, *Confucius*, 10.

16. For different readings of this sentence, see *Lunyu yizhu*, 14.

and emotions in a way that affects our care for our parents. In the passage immediately following the above quote, Confucius reaffirms that filial piety consists of more than just physical care of elders. In addition to this, he acknowledges that consistently keeping a pleasant appearance and respectful demeanor in front of one's parents is not easy (*se nan* 色難).<sup>17</sup> It is by means of a ritualized attitude that a proper manner is made possible.

Confucius's concerns about some common practices among the people lead to his criticism of false acts of *xiao*. In *Analects* 2.7 cited above, Confucius disagrees with the contemporary understanding of filial piety as just providing nourishment. In the passage that follows, he questions the equation of *xiao* with physical care. Confucius seems to feel the need to reject the oversimplification of *xiao* as providing nourishment and instead promotes the ritualized attitude of *jing* as the essence of filial acts. This anxiety in fact reflects a tension between reverence and nourishment in early Confucian discussions of filial piety, especially when it comes to serving parents when they are alive.

The popular view of filial piety as physical care is mentioned in *Mencius* in a passage in which Mencius engages in a conversation with his student concerning a certain Kuang Zhang 匡章, a man condemned by everyone in the state for being unfilial. When the student asks why Mencius befriends such a notorious man, Mencius replies:

世俗所謂不孝者五：惰其四支，不顧父母之養，一不孝也；博奕好飲酒，不顧父母之養，二不孝也；好貨財，私妻子，不顧父母之養，三不孝也。從耳目之欲，以為父母戮，四不孝也；好勇鬥狠，以危父母，五不孝也。

There are five things which are pronounced in the common usage of the age to be unfilial. The first is laziness in the use of one's four limbs, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The second is gambling and chess-playing, and being fond of wine, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The third is being fond of goods and money, and selfishly attached to his wife and children, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The fourth is following the desires of one's ears and eyes, so as to bring his parents to disgrace. The fifth is being fond of bravery, fighting and quarrelling so as to endanger his parents.<sup>18</sup>

Of these five unfilial deeds "in the common usage of the age," the first three involve neglecting to provide nourishment to one's parents while the last two concern endangering their lives or harming their reputation. As Mencius points out, Kuang Zhang did not fail to provide nourishment to his father nor did he bring any harm to the parent, and he is therefore not guilty of being unfilial. Kuang Zhang's reputation was tarnished because of a disagreement between him and his father during which, Mencius explains, Kuang Zhang reproved his father and urged him to do what was proper. Mencius suggests that urging one another to do what is good by way of reproof is the way of friends and such a choice between father and son is a great injury to the affection between them (責善，朋友之道也；父子責善，賊恩之大者).<sup>19</sup>

17. For Yang Bojun's discussion of this difficulty, see *Lunyu yizhu*, 15. Slingerland translates "It is the demeanor that is difficult." Slingerland, *Confucius*, 10.

18. James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2: *The Works of Mencius* (rpt. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 1982), 337.

19. Legge, *Works of Mencius*, 337. It is not clear what happened between Kuang Zhang and his father. Yang Bojun cites a *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 passage as an explanation. It states that Master Zhang's 章子 father killed his mother and buried her under the stables. Master Zhang wanted to rebury her but was not able to do so as his father died without leaving instructions. D. C. Lau disagrees with Yang Bojun and argues that this *Zhanguo ce* account does not mention a dispute between father and son. See *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯註, comm. Yang Bojun (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 201; D. C. Lau, tr., *Mencius* (London: Penguin Classics, 2004), 96 n. 12.

We see Mencius playing with double standards in order to defend Kuang Zhang. Mencius exonerates Kuang Zhang from guilt by citing a popular view of *xiao*, which focuses on nourishment and physical care. At the same time, Mencius suggests that while Kuang Zhang's disagreement with his father was aimed at goodness and came out of sincerity, his action violated *jing*, reverence, required by Confucius. After all, reproving one's father is to be disobedient and therefore morally wrong. To Mencius, Kuang Zhang is caught between defending what is good and doing what is filial, and consequently he falls victim to this Confucian moral dilemma.

This popular standard for judging filial piety by nourishment and physical care is adopted and further developed in the chapter "Filial Conduct" ("Xiaoxing lan" 孝行覽) in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋. After repeated emphasis on the social importance of *xiao*, the chapter presents the following detailed requirements:

養有五道：修宮室，安床第，節飲食，養體之道也。樹五色，施五采，列文章，養目之道也。正六律，蘇五聲，雜八音，養耳之道也。熟五穀，烹六畜，蘇煎調，養口之道也。蘇顏色，說言語，敬進退，養志之道也。此五者，代進而厚用之，可謂善養矣。

For nourishing, there are five types of Dao: The Dao of nourishing the body is to keep palaces and rooms in repair, make beds comfortable, and moderate the diet. The Dao of nourishing the eyes is to set up the five pure colors, exhibit the five intermediate shades, and array the green and red symbols and the red and white emblems. The Dao of nourishing the ears is to keep the sounds true to the six pitch-standards, harmonize the Five Tones, and blend together the eight timbres. The Dao of nourishing the mouth is to cook the Five Foods thoroughly, steam the Six Meats, and harmonize their fragrances and flavors. The Dao of nourishing the inner mind is to be agreeable in your expression, cheerful in your speech, and respectful in your gestures. To promote each of these five in succession and expand their use is properly called "skill in nourishing."<sup>20</sup>

In this list of the ideal filial deeds, four out of five focus completely on perfecting the material comfort of one's parents and providing meticulous physical care to them. Examined together with the above-mentioned passage from *Mencius*, this suggests that in the pre-Qin era (before 221 BCE), filial piety was understood by both the general population and certain groups of Confucians as providing physical care to one's parents. Nourishment was both the goal and the demonstration of *xiao*.

However, this understanding and practice of *xiao* are exactly what Confucius criticized as false. To Confucius, *jing*, ritualized reverence, is more important than simply providing food and care. Other early Confucian texts echo this notion. For example, the "Jiyi" 祭義 ("Meaning of Sacrifices") chapter in the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*) divides filial deeds into three levels: the highest is honoring the parents, the second is not causing humiliation to the parents, and the lowest is being able to provide them nourishment (大孝尊親，其次弗辱，其下能養).<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the chapter cites Zengzi's 曾子 words that "to prepare the fragrant flesh and grain that one cooked, tasting, and then presenting them before one's parents is not filial piety; it is only nourishing them" 亨孰膾臠，嘗而薦之，非孝也，養也。<sup>22</sup> What qualifies a son as filial is his reverent attitude toward his parents, and this, moreover, distinguishes gentlemen from lesser men. As the "Fangji" 坊記 ("Records of the Dykes") chapter remarks:

20. Translation with slight adaptations from John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, tr., *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), 305.

21. See *Liji yijie* 禮記譯解, comm. Wang Wenjin 王文錦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 693. See also *Da Dai Liji jiegou* 大戴禮記解詁, comm. Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 83.

22. See *Liji yijie*, 694. Interestingly, this sentence is not found in the *Da Dai Liji*. Translation adapted from James Legge, *The Li Ki: The Sacred Books of China* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1885), part IV, 226.

“The Master said, ‘Small men are all able to support their parents. If the superior man does not also reverence them, how is his supporting to be distinguished from theirs?’ 子云：小人皆能養其親，君子不敬，何以辨。<sup>23</sup>

Competing discourses on the importance of reverent care as opposed to mere nourishment are even found in the *Lüshi chungqiu* chapter on filial piety, quoted above. After the list of five nourishments, the author of the chapter argues that filial piety is the fundamental teaching for the people and filial conduct on their part is called “nourishing.” However, the chapter continues by comparing *yang*, nourishing, and *jing*, reverence, and concludes that “when a person has become capable of nourishing, acting with strict reverent care becomes difficult” 養可能也，敬爲難。<sup>24</sup> Thus reverence is valued as superior to mere nourishment.

#### SERVING DECEASED PARENTS: EMACIATION VS. SINCERITY

To Mencius, filial piety comes from the child’s innate care for the parents and is manifested in acts, for example, providing one’s deceased parents a burial. In refuting the Mohist advocacy of simple burials, Mencius tells the following story:

蓋上世嘗有不葬其親者：其親死，則舉而委之於壑。他日過之，狐狸食之，蠅蚋姑嘍之。其類有泚，睨而不視。夫泚也，非為人泚，中心達於面目。蓋歸，反藁裡而掩之。掩之誠是也，則孝子仁人之掩其親，亦必有道矣。

In the most ancient times, there were some who did not inter their parents. When their parents died, they took them up and threw them into some water-channel. Afterwards, when passing by them, they saw foxes and wild-cats devouring them, and flies and gnats biting at them. The perspiration started out upon their foreheads, and they looked away, unable to bear the sight. It was not on account of other people that this perspiration flowed. The emotions of their hearts affected their faces and eyes, and instantly they went home, and came back with baskets and spades and covered the bodies. If the covering them thus was indeed right, you may see that the filial son and virtuous man, in interring in a handsome manner their parents, act according to a proper rule.<sup>25</sup>

As Mencius states, filial piety originates from the spontaneous love that children have for their parents; such genuine affection is physically manifested by the bodies of the children and encourages them to protect the deceased by burying their bodies. Filial actions in serving one’s deceased parents thus begin with proper burial.

Early Confucian texts carefully distinguish the rules of burial and the ritual of sacrifice and prescribe different bodily performances accordingly. In both situations the expression of strong emotions such as sadness (*bei* 悲), sorrow (*ai* 哀), bitterness (*ceda* 惻怛), and pain (*tongji* 痛疾) are expected. These emotions are displayed by dramatic physical actions such as wailing (*ku* 哭), weeping (*qi* 泣), beating the chest (*pi* 辟), leaping (*rong* 踊), crawling (*pufu* 匍匐), and even symbolically casting oneself out from one’s role as a legitimate member of society (*routan* 肉袒). In principle, early Confucianism requires filial sons to “serve the dead in the same way as one serves the living” 事死如事生, which demands the continuation of obedience to one’s parents after their death. However, the sanctioned and even encouraged expression of extreme emotions is clearly at odds with Confucius’s promotion of meditated emotions and a ritualized attitude. The following conversation between Zengzi and his son found in the *Liji* demonstrates this tension:

23. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 291.

24. Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *Annals of Lü Buwei*, 306.

25. Legge, *Works of Mencius*, 259. See also *Mengzi yizhu*, 135.



曾申問於曾子曰：“哭父母有常聲乎？”曰：“中路嬰兒失其母焉，何常聲之有？”

Zeng Shen asked Zengzi, saying, “In wailing for a parent, should one do so always in the same voice?” The answer was, “When a child has lost its mother on the road, is it possible for it to think about the regular and proper voice?”<sup>26</sup>

Here when Zeng Shen asks a ritual question about mourning parents, Zengzi’s answer nevertheless focuses on the spontaneous expression of sorrow which is regarded as a genuine filial deed; to Zengzi, meditated emotions seem not only to be unnecessary but also to undermine the sincerity of filial affection. It was probably because of this that Zengzi was not interested in reconciling the conflict. Because of the belief in such a strong emotional bond, the *Liji* often describes how children, after their parents had died, continued to imagine that their parents were still alive and searched for their voices and faces in the household. Even at the funeral, filial children still searched for their parents. This strong attachment to and vivid memory of the parents, as well as the realization of the permanent loss, caused the children extreme emotional distress, as the *Liji* vividly describes:

求而無所得之也，入門而弗見也，上堂又弗見也，入室又弗見也。亡矣喪矣！不可復見矣！故哭泣辟躄，盡哀而止矣。心悵焉愴焉、愴焉愴焉，心絕志悲而已矣。

They had sought [the deceased], and could not find him; they entered the gate, and did not see him; they went up to the hall, and still did not see him; they entered his chamber, and still did not see him; he was gone; he was dead; they should see him again nevermore. Therefore they wailed, wept, beat their breasts, and leaped, giving full vent to their sorrow, before they ceased. Their minds were disappointed, pained, fluttered, and indignant. They could do nothing more with their wills; they could do nothing but continue sad.<sup>27</sup>

An extended display of grief to the point of losing one’s focus would certainly affect one physically. Combining medical thought with Mencius’s view of the materialized display of inner virtue, the *Liji* presents the following theory of a corporeal manifestation of a filial son’s sorrow:

親始死，... 惻怛之心，痛疾之意，傷腎乾肝焦肺，水漿不入口，三日不舉火，... 夫悲哀在中，故形變於外也，痛疾在心，故口不甘味，身不安美也。

Immediately after his father’s death . . . In the bitterness of his grief, and the distress and pain of his thoughts, his kidneys were injured, his liver dried up, and his lungs scorched, while water or other liquid did not enter his mouth, and for three days fire was not kindled [to cook anything for him] . . . The internal grief and sorrow produced a change in his outward appearance; and with the severe pain in his heart, his mouth could not relish any savoury food, nor his body find ease in anything pleasant.<sup>28</sup>

Here we see a chain reaction in mourning, one leading naturally to the other: genuine grief in one’s heart causes damage to one’s internal organs and eventually produces a change in one’s physical appearance, resulting in the weakening of the body.<sup>29</sup> Emaciation, *hui* 毀

26. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 161.

27. Legge, *Li Ki*, 376.

28. Legge, *Li Ki*, 375.

29. In traditional Chinese medical theory, the kidneys are where the vital essence (*jing* 精) of the body is stored. One important source of *jing* is the parents’ reproductive essence. This is how a life begins. It is interesting that the *Liji* passage begins the detailing of the physical impact of sorrow with the damage to the kidneys; a theory that indicates a corresponding relation. The liver rules flowing and spreading, according to traditional Chinese medicine. It controls and adjust emotions and is in turn affected by emotions. It is associated with tears. Extreme emotions such as sorrow and grief certainly cause liver problems. According to *Neijing* 內經, the lungs “store the Po Soul.” The Po Soul is the emotional reactivity, it can be erratic and untamed and is especially sensitive to mourning and grief. The

or *huiji* 毀瘠, is then understood as the “manifestation of sorrow in the bodily appearance” 此哀之發於容體者也, which is expected of a filial son.<sup>30</sup>

Following this logic, it is no surprise that emaciation is often mentioned in *Liji* passages concerning funerals and mourning. *Hui* or *huiji* is treated as a common practice. Nevertheless, once emaciation was defined as a natural physical demonstration of internal sorrow and used to evaluate the intensity of filial affection, this gave rise to competition for filial display and became subject to manipulation for the sake of fame. After all, if deeper sorrow causes a more withered appearance, one can emaciate his body excessively in order to gain the greatest public recognition. Because of this, warnings against excessive emaciation are found side by side with endorsements. For example, the “Tangong xia” 檀弓下 chapter in *Liji* admonishes that “when mourning a father, one should not be concerned about the discomfort of his own resting place, nor, in emaciating himself, should he do so to the endangering of his life” 喪不慮居，毀不危身。<sup>31</sup> The warning against dangerous emaciation probably comes from another filial requirement: the responsibility to maintain one’s body intact because it is a gift given by the parents. Damaging the body, even because of grief for one’s parents, would certainly violate this rule. Thus *Liji* concludes that “a superior man will not emaciate himself so as to be ill” 毀瘠為病，君子弗為也。<sup>32</sup>

However, in the Confucian view, the funeral is never merely a family matter; rather, it is an important public event involving participants in hierarchical relationships connected by complex social networks. Funerals provide a stage for all participants to display not only their emotional ties with each other but also, more importantly, their status as legitimate social members acting in accordance with shared customs. At the funeral, everyone is both a performer and an observer, judging and being judged. For those who are in mourning, funerals provide a chance to showcase familial tradition and confirm social status. Filial deeds such as emaciation are visual displays of familial virtue as well as subjects for moral evaluation. *Hui* thereupon becomes a vehicle for one to accumulate social capital in the form of fame and recognition; however it has the potential of degrading into an insincere display. As Xunzi 荀子 criticizes, “To show off emaciation and compete over it with each other, this is the way of the vile . . . it is not the true disposition of a filial son. It is rather the behavior of one acting for ulterior purposes” 相高以毀瘠，是姦人之道 . . . 非孝子之情也，將以為者也。<sup>33</sup>

If the expression of extreme emotions is sanctioned, yet emaciation as the result of mourning can become a mere show, then what is the proper way to mourn and how can one distinguish a true filial son from those “acting for ulterior purposes”? The answer again is reverence. The “Zaji xia” 雜記下 chapter in the *Liji* contains Confucius’s response to Zigong’s 子貢 inquiry about mourning:

敬為上，哀次之，瘠為下。顏色稱其情；威容稱其服。

Reverence is the most important thing; grief is next to it; and emaciation is the last. The face should wear the appearance reflecting the inward feeling, and the sorrowful demeanor should be in accordance with the dress.<sup>34</sup>

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lungs are easily affected by loss and longing. See Paul Unschuld, *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003), 133.

30. Legge, *Li Ki*, 385.

31. Legge, *Li Ki*, 192.

32. Legge, *Li Ki*, 160.

33. Translation adapted from Eric Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2014), 210.

34. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 153.

Here reverence, emotion, and bodily manifestation are listed in a hierarchical order in the words of Confucius: *jing* is the most important, grief is accepted, and emaciation should be carried out with caution. While Confucius does not completely dismiss the necessity of corporeal displays of sorrow, he expects them to be sincere and requires them to be guided by *li*: facial expressions are not exaggerated and sorrowful demeanors correspond to the mourning dress.

The *Liji* often describes this ideal balance, in which true affections are presented through proper bodily performance. For example, the “Jiyi” chapter prescribes detailed rules for a filial son when offering sacrifice to his parents. The filial son should first adjust his mind to be reverent in preparation for the event. When offering sacrifice, his countenance should be mild, his movements anxious, and his gestures changing as if he was serving his parents. In this way the filial son’s “ingenuousness was never absent from his person, his ears and eyes were never withdrawn from what was in his heart, the exercises of his thoughts never left his parents.” The passage then concludes that “what was bound up in his heart was manifested in his countenance; and he was continually examining himself” 結諸心，形諸色，而術省之。<sup>35</sup>

The standard that a filial son uses to continually examine himself is clearly ritual. In addition to the above requirements of facial expressions reflecting mind and demeanor in accordance with proper dress, the *Liji* defines sacrifice to one’s parents as “not a thing coming to a man from without; it issues from within him, and has its birth in his heart.” However, when the heart is deeply moved by love and sorrow, expression must be guided by ritual ceremonies” 夫祭者，非物自外至者也，自中出生於心也；心怵而奉之以禮。<sup>36</sup> Again, emotions are permitted but they must be controlled by *li*. As the “Zengzi wen” 曾子問 chapter concludes: “a superior man’s use of ceremonies is to give proper and elegant expression to the feelings” 君子禮以飾情。<sup>37</sup>

Here the verb *shi* 飾 (to adorn, to decorate, to polish) indicates the performative function of ritual. In addition to its important social, political, and cultural aspects that are much discussed on the metaphysical level, ritual is also at its most basic level a set of rules that members of society use to negotiate and acknowledge their relationships in certain situations. Ritual is meant to be performed, allowing compromise and confirmation to occur. In practice, ritual consists of codified bodily movements with each action expressing symbolic meanings understood by the participants in the ceremony. Displaying proper gestures and demeanors is crucial in any ritual setting. As the *Liji* argues, the “beginning of ritual lies in the correct arrangement of the body and demeanor, the proper adjustment of the countenance and in the natural order of speech” 禮義之始，在於正容體，齊顏色，順辭令。<sup>38</sup> In this hierarchical order, physical gestures are valued the highest. The following *Liji* passage highlights this emphasis on embodying ritual, breaking down the demeanor of the individual in a granular way:

君子之容舒遲，見所尊者齊遯。足容重，手容恭，目容端，口容止，聲容靜，頭容直，氣容肅，立容德，色容莊，坐如尸，燕居告溫溫。

The carriage of a gentleman is easy, grave, and reserved when he sees anyone whom he wishes to honor. He does not move his feet lightly, nor his hands irreverently. His eyes look straightforward, and his mouth is kept quiet and composed. No sound from him to break the stillness, and his head is carried upright. His breath comes without panting or stoppage, and the way he stands

35. Legge, *Li Ki*, 234.

36. See Legge, *Li Ki*, 236.

37. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 331.

38. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 425.

gives an impression of virtue. His looks are grave, and he sits like an impersonator of the dead. When at leisure and at ease, and in conversation, he looks mild and bland.<sup>39</sup>

There are two important aspects of the above quotation. One concerns the detailed regulations for the body and its gestures, involving feet, hands, eyes, mouth, head, breath, standing, and sitting. These strictly controlled gestures and demeanors are aimed to train the body to be socially acceptable. Consequently, the ritualization of the body eliminates the biological characteristics of the individual and transforms the biological body into the social body. The best example of this transformation is in a passage found in the “Neize” 內則 (“Internal Family Rules”) chapter in the *Liji*:

在父母舅姑之所，有命之，應唯敬對。進退周旋慎齊，升降出入揖游，不敢噦噫、噉咳、欠伸、跛倚、睥視，不敢唾洩；寒不敢襲，癢不敢搔。

When with their parents, [sons and their wives], when ordered to do anything, should immediately respond and reverently proceed to do it. In going forward or backward, or turning around, they should be careful and grave; while going out or coming in, while bowing or walking, they should not presume to eructate, sneeze, or cough, to yawn or stretch themselves, to stand on one foot, or to lean against anything, or to look askance. They should not dare to spit or snivel, nor, if it be cold, to put on more clothes, nor, if they itch anywhere, to scratch themselves.<sup>40</sup>

What is most striking in the above passage is the rigorous control of the body. The twelve actions prohibited here are indeed instinctual behaviors. By forbidding these natural human actions, ritual transforms people from biological beings into social beings. Serving such a purpose, ritual texts function as manuals for daily social interactions and teach people what to do and what not to do. The “Neize” passage, for example, is not only a training program for a filial son and his wife; it also functions as a checklist for the parents and others to judge them.

When functioning as a manual for proper social behaviors, these *Liji* passages feature polished language with highly regulated syntax that allows easy memorization and recital. For example, the above quoted requirements for a gentleman meeting honorable guests begin with a pair of six-syllable sentences, which are followed by ten three-syllable sentences prescribing the bodily performances. Similar patterns are also found in the “Neize” passage quoted above, which begins with two six-syllable sentences, followed by five bi-syllabic stops and then two parallel four-syllable lines.<sup>41</sup>

All of these patterns in the syntax are aimed to make these instructions memorable and easy to recite, which further serves the pedagogical function of ritual texts. As manuals, ritual texts train the body and normalize bodily performances. In doing so, an individual’s behaviors are rendered predictable, and harmony thus becomes possible in a hierarchical society. For this pedagogical purpose, exemplary ritual performances are important for people to learn and to imitate. Because of this, early ritual texts often include descriptions of the elegant ritual behaviors of Confucius and his disciples. Similar records of the filial actions of these masters are abundant in other early writings as well. What we see in these records and anecdotes are reduplications of the exemplary filial body; that is, exceptional and even extreme filial deeds are imitated and repeated in order to inspire more filial acts. Moreover,

39. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 25. *Liji* also states that “ritual means embodiment” 禮也者，猶體也； see *Liji yijie*, 320.

40. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 453.

41. Some of the sentences even rhyme. For instance, 遲 and 齊 end on “əj,” 重 and 恭 on “oŋ,” 止, 直, 肅, and 德 on “ək” finals. The finals of the “Neize” passage rhyme in “ək-s” (噦 and 咳), and “ajʔ” sounds (倚, 視 and 洩). See William Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014).

this reduplication is not restricted to texts only; more encouragement is actually given for copying *xiaoxing* 孝行, filial behavior, in real life, and more attention is paid to recording these duplicated actions. This is especially true when *xiao* is adopted as political capital and *xiaoxing* is understood as a demonstration of the merit of a family or region, and even the success of imperial rule. As a result of such a competition, the performative nature of *xiao* is overly emphasized and exemplary deeds give way to exaggerated actions. Consequently, a new paradox occurs in the Confucian promotion of *xiao* concerning serving deceased parents: when finely choreographed ritual and ceremony become a mere show, sincerity is again demonstrated through extreme corporeal performances, including excessive emaciation and other forms of self-mutilation. This is true even in the fourth century, when Han-period notions of Confucianism were severely undermined by nonconformists. The following story from *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 illustrates this:

王戎、和嶠同時遭大喪，俱以孝稱。王雞骨支床，和哭泣備禮。武帝謂劉仲雄曰：“卿數省王、和不？聞和哀苦過禮，使人憂之。”仲雄曰：“和嶠雖備禮，神氣不損；王戎雖不備禮，而哀毀骨立。臣以和嶠生孝，王戎死孝。陛下不應憂嶠，而應憂戎。”

Wang Rong [234–305] and He Qiao [d. 292] experienced the loss of a parent at the same time, and both were praised for their filial devotion. Wang, reduced to a skeleton, kept to his bed; while He, wailing and weeping, performed all the rites. Emperor Wu [r. 265–290], remarked to Liu Zhongxiong [Liu Yi, ca. 210–285], “Have you ever observed Wang Rong and He Qiao? I hear that He’s grief and suffering go beyond what is required by propriety, and it makes me worry about him.” Liu Zhongxiong replied, “He Qiao, even though performing all the rites, has suffered no loss in his spirit or health. Wang Rong, even though not performing the rites, is nonetheless so emaciated with grief that his bones stand out. Your servant is of the opinion that He Qiao’s is the filial devotion of life, while Wang Rong’s is the filial devotion of death. Your Majesty should not worry about Qiao, but rather about Rong.”<sup>42</sup>

Here we see a contrast between He Qiao’s extravagant performance of mourning ritual and Wang Rong’s simple and private emaciation. As Liu Zhongxiong points out, the ritual performance of He Qiao lacks sincerity while Wang Rong’s weakening of his body is caused by genuine grief. In Liu Zhongxiong’s view, extreme emaciation demonstrates true filial emotion while perfectly performed ritual without any physical damage caused by mourning is nothing but an empty display. Another *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote serves as an example of this influential view in the fourth century:

阮籍當葬母，蒸一肥豚，飲酒二斗，然後臨訣，直言“窮矣！”都得一號，因吐血，廢頓良久。

When Ruan Ji [210–263] was about to bury his mother, he steamed a fat suckling pig, drank two dipperfuls of wine, and after that attended the last rites. He did nothing but cry, “It’s all over!” and gave himself to continuous wailing. As a result of this he spit up blood and wasted away for a long time.<sup>43</sup>

In the story extreme actions serve both as criticism and exhortation. Ruan Ji’s actions of eating and drinking are blunt violations of the funeral rites, yet they are also the strongest rebukes of insincerity disguised by choreographed ritual performances.<sup>44</sup> The real filiality of

42. Translation adapted from Richard Mather, *Shi shuo xin yu: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2002), 9.

43. Translation adapted from Mather, *Shi shuo xin yu*, 402–3.

44. Ruan Ji’s violations against proper ritual were criticized by his contemporaries. For example, He Zeng 何曾, upset about Ruan Ji’s drinking and eating meat during the mourning period for his mother, urged Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211–265) to banish Ruan Ji and set right the teaching of public morals. See Mather, *Shi shuo xin yu*, 400.

Ruan Ji is demonstrated by his extreme corporeal acts, vomiting blood and wasting away. In the stories of Ruan Ji and Wang Rong, ritualized bodily performance contains no expression of ingenuous feelings; sincerity has to find manifestation in extreme corporeal expressions including excessive emaciation. What was once condemned by early Confucians now becomes admirable among the nonconformists, and the paradox develops.

#### CONCLUSION

We now can respond to Holzman's expression of bewilderment over the records of "inhuman and uncommon" filial acts that feature dramatic mutilation of one's body and even sacrifice of one's life from the third and fourth centuries.<sup>45</sup> The Confucian promotion of *xiao* as a social norm has to rely upon the body, and the body in turn must be ritualized. However, because of the performative nature of ritual, the body and its performance can either be manipulated for personal interests or transformed into an empty show without genuine feelings. The need to demonstrate true filial emotions then leads to extreme bodily acts, which, again, become the subjects of ritual regulation.

This systemic paradox in the Confucian promotion of *xiao* caused anxiety and debate among ritual experts.<sup>46</sup> In early ritual, philosophical and historical writings, we see discussions and different views presented concerning filial piety. In the section above, I have cited a *Liji* conversation, in which Zengzi praises a child crying for his deceased parents as a spontaneous expression of affection. The same act of *rumu* 孺慕 was at the center of the debate between two students of Confucius as reported in the *Liji*:

有子與子游立，見孺子慕者，有子謂子游曰：“壹不知夫喪之踴也，予欲去之久矣。情在於斯，其是也夫？”子游曰：“禮：有微情者，有以故興物者；有直情而徑行者，戎狄之道也。禮道則不然，人喜則斯陶，陶斯詠，詠斯猶，猶斯舞，舞斯愠，愠斯戚，戚斯嘆，嘆斯辟，辟斯踴矣。品節斯，斯之謂禮。”

Youzi and Ziyou were standing together when they saw [a mourner] giving all a child's demonstrations of affection. Youzi said, "I have never understood this leaping in mourning, and have long wished to do away with it. The sincere feeling [of sorrow] which appears here is right, [and should be sufficient]." Ziyou replied, "In the rules of propriety, there are some intended to lessen the [display of] feeling, and there are others that purposely introduce things [to excite it]. To give direct vent to the feeling and act it out as by a short cut is the way of the rude Rong and Di. The method of the rules is not so. When a man rejoices, he looks pleased; when pleased, he thereon sings; when singing, he sways himself about; swaying himself about, he proceeds to dancing; from dancing, he gets into a state of wild excitement; that excitement goes on to distress; distress expresses itself in sighing; sighing is followed by beating the breast; and beating the breast by leaping. The observances to regulate all this are what are called the rules of propriety."<sup>47</sup>

What Youzi saw as genuine affection in crying becomes the subject of Ziyou's scrutiny. Ziyou argues that spontaneous emotions continuously look for bodily expression, which, in

45. Holzman, "Place of Filial Piety," 192.

46. There is ample evidence that early Confucians were aware of the criticism that *Ru* only acted virtuously in order to gain fame and material rewards. In response to this, they created texts such as the Guodian's 郭店 *Five Kinds of Action* (*Wuxing* 五行), which argues for a physical display of inner virtues cultivated without any ulterior motivation. Although this text does not discuss *xiao*, it reveals the same concern as the ritual texts discussed above; that is: how does one prove the sincerity of one's ritual performance. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), chap. 2, esp. 82–86. For an English translation of *Wuxing*, see Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2012), 1: 485–520. I am grateful to the anonymous JAOS reviewer for this reference.

47. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Ki*, 176.

turn, must be regulated by ritual. Ritual does not fake affection, and, as Ziyou concludes, it is needed to sustain affection so everyone can be filial.<sup>48</sup>

At the center of early Confucian discussions of filial piety there is a strong emphasis on sincere affection. However, this sincerity cannot be completely spontaneous because unrestrained emotions lead to excessiveness. Therefore Confucian scholars promote ritualized sincerity in which affection is well controlled and harmoniously expressed. However, because ritual is embodied by codified corporeal display, ritualized sincerity is then undermined precisely by the performative nature of *li*. As a result, the circle of regulating the excessive filial body and embodying filial affection with extreme corporeal acts is unsolvable in Confucian ethical teaching and has become a perpetual source of anxiety for Confucian ritual experts.

48. An anecdote in the “Tangong shang” chapter in *Liji* serves as a reference to Youzi’s remark: a man of Bian was weeping like a child on the death of his mother. Confucius said, “This is grief indeed, but it would be difficult to continue it. Now the rules of ceremony require to be handed down, and to be perpetuated. Hence the wailing and leaping are subject to fixed regulations.” See Legge, *Li Ki*, 146.