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Confucian Affect (*Qing* 情) as the Foundation for Mutual Care and Moral Elevation

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Abstract

Western psychology primarily studies human emotions via physiological reactions to external stimuli. Research suggests that cultural variations lead East Asians and Western-heritage individuals to experience distinct emotional patterns beyond bodily responses. A more thorough understanding of affect, involving culturally influenced emotions, remains unexplored in cross-cultural contexts. Influenced by Confucianism, East Asian cultures show unique emotional patterns. Unlike the Western focus on rationality, Confucian philosophy values human affect (*qing* 情), going beyond conventional emotions. This paper delves into the transformative nature of Confucian affect, specifically its four facets: (1) philosophized (*zhelihua* 哲理化), (2) moralized (*dehua* 德化), (3) ritualized (*lihua* 禮化), and (4) aestheticized (*meixuehua* 美學化). These dimensions redirect human emotions towards mutual care and moral elevation. Despite limited empirical research, contemporary East Asian experiences shed light on Confucian affect's ongoing significance in daily life. This paper illuminates existing research to elucidate Confucian affect and proposes future directions for exploration. By recognizing the interplay of cultural influences and emotions, a richer comprehension of affective experiences across cultures emerges, offering insights into the intricate tapestry of human emotions shaped by diverse philosophical and cultural foundations.

Keywords: Confucian affect, philosophizing, moralizing, ritualizing, aestheticizing, self-cultivation

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I. Introduction

Among the three major philosophical schools of thought of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism in East Asian cultures, Confucianism has engaged more in contemplating, expressing, and practicing a particular kind of human affect, or *qing* 情. However, such human affect is not the "raw" emotion (e.g., I smile because I feel happy), as psychology traditionally defines and studies. Confucian affect is instead transformed feelings toward the goal of realizing moral self-cultivation and mutual care. In this paper, I first review how human emotions have been studied traditionally in psychology and other related fields, presenting evidence that despite common human emotional capacity, people across cultures experience, express, and respond to emotions differently. These variations are associated with different cultural values and norms. Next, I introduce the "affect evaluation theory" as advanced by Jeanne Tsai with empirical evidence that humans do not typically feel emotions "naturally." Instead, individuals are socialized since childhood in *how to feel* in accordance with their cultural values and norms. Different cultures have different affective ideals to fit their life purposes and processes. I employ Tsai's theory to ground and analyze Confucian *qing* as exhibiting at least four transformations such that human affect is (1) philosophized (*zhelihua* 哲理化), (2) moralized (*dehua* 德化), (3) ritualized (*lihua* 禮化), and (4) aestheticized (*meixuehua* 美學化). As a result, people experience, express, and respond to affect accordingly to foster mutual care and moral growth. Further, I review available empirical research that lends support for these types of transformed affect despite a lack of directly relevant research on these transformations. Finally, I venture to point out some research directions for the future.

II. The Western Conventional View of Human Emotion

When it comes to emotions, it takes little effort for us to think about our emotional life with clearly observable physiological reactions such as laughter for happiness and tears for sadness. Indeed, in psychology,

biology, and other related fields, that is how human emotions have been studied. In these fields, emotion is understood as our bodily responses to external stimuli with three general characteristics: episode, discreteness, and valence. "Episode" refers to the *temporal* process of emotion that is usually segmented as (1) antecedence perceived/coded, (2) the ensuing feeling state, (3) action in response to the actual emotion felt, and (4) coping (Frijda 1986; Tangney and Fischer 1995). An emotion typically begins with some antecedent event, cause, or instigation that the person experiences and then codes as self-relevant (e.g., hearing a sudden loud boom). Upon such a quickly processed encounter, an appropriate bodily response, namely, feeling state of fear, follows. Feeling thus, our natural action tendency is self-protection (e.g., fleeing). The last part of the episode is called "coping" because we routinely engage in some thinking, interpretation, and justification of the emotion and associated action we have experienced. Depending on the nature of the evaluation, we either strengthen our accumulative emotional repertoire if we deem our response as successful and beneficial, or correct our inappropriate or mistaken action if we think we made a blunder (e.g., apologize to a coworker for using hurtful words; See Lewis 1993).

Pertaining to discreteness, emotions are typically felt one at a time (Buck 1999; Fischer et al. 1990; Izard et al. 2010; Larsen et al. 2001). This means that when we feel happy, for example, we are physiologically unlikely to feel simultaneously sadness, fear, or some other distinct emotion although people in some cultures (e.g., East Asian) report mixed emotions to the same event more than in other cultures (e.g., U.S. and U.K.; See Grossmann et al. 2016). Most of our emotions are automated physiologically, responsive to the specific event coding of a given antecedent (Frijda 1986). If we experience a positive event, our automated response is usually happiness or some similar emotion (such as joy or pleasure). Likewise, if we experience a negative event (e.g., failing a job interview), we are likely to feel disappointed. Finally, the idea of valence refers to positivity and negativity of emotions. There is no such a thing as neutral emotion. A given emotion is either positive or negative although the level of arousal of any emotion could be any degree between low and high (Tsai et al. 2007). If a felt state is neutral,

then it would mean that our body is not aroused to respond to an antecedence.

Other than the concept of emotion, psychology also uses the concept of affect to address human emotionality. *Affect* as an umbrella term includes not only emotion but also feelings that are not necessarily accompanied by clear physiological responses. For example, we say "I feel weird." This state of feeling is neither visibly cognitive nor emotive with clear detectable bodily arousals. Yet, it is nonetheless human feeling. Whereas emotion may have a narrower range, feelings can vary widely and are more complex (Tangney and Fischer 1995).

In traditional Western thought, affect as a whole was viewed for a long time as irrationality that underlay personal, social, and religious troubles and therefore ought to be controlled by reason for higher human purposes. However, recent empirical research and theory underscore the fact that affect is fundamentally adaptive, promoting successful human functioning more than interfering with it (Damasio 2005; Sznycer and Cohen 2021; Tangney and Fischer 1995). Affect plays an essential role in human motivation to action and is centrally involved in our cognitive, social, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic life.

III. How to Feel, but Not How We Feel "Naturally"

However, within the realms of cultural psychology and anthropology, there is a significant amount of evidence indicating that the perspective that focuses solely on biology as the basis for understanding human emotions has its limitations. Human emotional life varies widely across cultures. It is one thing that humans are endowed with the emotional capacity (Izard et al. 2010; Schore 2016); it is another how frequently, intensively, and differently people experience a given emotion (e.g., anger) across cultures (De Leersnyder et al. 2021; Kitayama et al. 2006; Mesquita 2003). Such emotional variation reflects the fact that affect inextricably serves wide-ranging human purposes and functions under the influence of different cultural values and norms (De Leersnyder et al. 2021; Kitayama et al. 2006; Mesquita 2003; Tamir et al. 2016; Tsai at al. 2006).

Among various theories, Jeanne Tsai's "affect valuation theory" articulates well how culture shapes human emotionality. Her research demonstrates that the so-called natural emotions that we are led to believe are, after all, not that natural. Instead, our culture often socializes us *how to feel* in accordance with our cultural values and norms, but not *how* we feel our "raw" emotions as our bodily arousal leads us to feel (also see Lutz 1988). Culture promotes its ideal affects (how to feel) but discourages those in discord with its ideal (how not to feel) in daily life. Research by Tsai and others indicates that different cultures have their ideal affects and expressions (De Leersnyder et al. 2015; Kitayama et al. 2006; Tamir et al. 2016; Tsai 2017; Tsai et al. 2019). For example, European Americans have higher emotional arousal by the same stimulus (seeking higher excitement and happiness along with stronger expressivity and positivity) due to their culture's high value placed on individuals' emotional expression while discouraging devalued emotions (e.g., shame). In comparison, East Asians experience lower arousal, orienting toward less excitement and positivity, but more placidity and tranquility toward a balance between the two extreme valences (Kirchner et al. 2018; Tsai et al. 2006, Tsai 2017). Furthermore, among East Asians, sad sentiments and sorrow may be savored more openly (Eid and Diener 2001; Fung 1998; Li et al. 2013; Scollon et al. 2005), presumably toward relationality and mutual care.[1]

IV. Confucian Affect (*Qing* 情)

In this paper, I hope to analyze Confucian affect[2] (*qing* 情) as a kind of cultivated human feeling in light of the theory and research as advanced by Tsai (affect valuation theory) and others (De Leersnyder

[1] Enculturation of how to feel across cultures begins early on and continues throughout life, perhaps enabling children to become affectively functional members of their culture (Fung 1998; Li and Fung 2020; Tsai et al. 2007; Wang and Fivush 2005).

[2] *Qing* 情 is not easily translated into any Western language. Some scholars translate it into *sentiment*. I prefer *affect* mainly because *qing* is often connected to bodily arousal. Nevertheless, it is not only bodily arousal but transformed feelings that people experience.

et al. 2021; Mesquita 2003; Tamir et al. 2016; Tsai 2006). In my reading and lived experience, *qing* is the general term connoting "ideal affect," not only in Chinese culture but also across the so-called Confucian-heritage cultures that include China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and the diasporic East Asian groups across the world. As such, *qing* is desired, thus primarily positive.[3] It is inevitably normative, expressing not merely feelings but also moral, virtuous, and ethical intent.

A. Why Confucian?

It is well-known that in East Asia, three major schools of thought have been predominant throughout history, despite the presence of Christianity over the past 150 years: Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Of the three, the first two were Chinese native philosophy; whereas Buddhism originates from India. Regarding affect, Daoism does not really address it because Daoist tenet is yin-yang balance, and the ideal human emotional state is calm with no particular positive or negative emotion. Likewise, Buddhism teaches that everything in the world is illusion. Therefore, to achieve enlightenment is to detach oneself from any attachment and any emotion. Thus, affect is regarded as interference with one's enlightenment. Central to Buddhist teaching is the idea of compassion. Although it is easily linked to our moral emotions of empathy and sympathy, Buddhist compassion is still theorized and practiced as spirituality rather than a direct expression of one's bodily arousal.

Confucian philosophy is the only one that embraces human affect. The general term is *qing* 情. The character is made of two parts: the meaning of heart (*xin* 心 [忄]) and the sound of blue/green (*qing* 青), thus *qing* 情. Due to the fact that there is no English equivalence of the full meaning of *qing* 情, I use *qing* in this paper.

According to both ancient and contemporary thinking, Confucian philosophy does not rest on pure reason as Western philosophy, but

[3] Certainly, other-directed negative emotions and feelings exist (e.g., anger and contempt), but they are not part of *qing* that I address in this paper.

human feelings (*shengming qinggan* 生命情感). Chinese contemporary philosopher Wang Defeng 王德峰 maintains that Confucianism philosophizes the meaning of human feelings so as to help us embody, express, expand, and elevate our human feelings (Wang 2022a). In Confucian persuasion, human feelings are rooted in our relationality that is not conveyed and felt merely for the moment (episodic), but toward lasting mutual care, honoring each other, and realizing human dignity. Through *qing*, one self-cultivates toward Confucian virtues such as humaneness (*ren* 仁), rightness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信).

V. Further Exploring Confucian *Qing*: Four Transformations

Following Tsai's affect evaluation theory and psychological research on how to feel, the most noticeable characteristic of Confucian affect is that it does not focus on the "raw" emotions, namely, pure bodily arousal, but highly enculturated feelings. From what I could discern, Confucian-felt *qing* exhibits at least four interrelated transformations from the "raw" emotions/feelings: (1) philosophized (*zhelihua* 哲理化), (2) moralized (*dehua* 德化), (3) ritualized (*lihua* 禮化), and (4) aestheticized (*meixuehua* 美學化). I discuss each in that order.

A. *Qing* as Philosophized (*Zhelihua* 哲理化)

The term *philosophized* (*zhelihua* 哲理化) may seem unusual. Other terms such as *theorized, highly cognized*, and *culturally valued* could also serve the purpose. I considered these but still prefer *philosophized.* Then, it is necessary to explain briefly what philosophizing might entail in the way I use the term here. In my view, philosophizing refers to systematic contemplation of life.

This intellectual engagement frequently results in a body of scholarly work, primarily centered around theorizing and ongoing debates concerning the nature of the phenomena. These activities include describing, delineating, and similar endeavors, aiming to understand how these phenomena operate and how humans perceive

and experience them. Confucian *qing* is one phenomenon that has been subject to philosophizing since the rise of Confucianism. Philosophizing *qing* is not the same as other human endeavors (e.g., making art or empirical research). Surely, the other three transformations to be discussed in this paper are related to the philosophizing of *qing*, but each addresses a different facet of it.

B. The Traditional Chinese View on *Qing*

It is not the purpose of this paper to trace all the philosophical origins of Confucian *qing*; it suffices to look at a few major ideas and their relations. Although *qing* was discussed in most Confucian texts such as the *Analects, Mencius,* and *Xunzi*, a number of books during the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) reveal more concentrated philosophizing of *qing*. The oldest Chinese dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (121 CE) explains *qing* as human inner feelings (人之陰氣有欲者) as we experience them in daily life, which is our raw emotion. "Seven emotions" (*qiqing* 七情) are listed: happiness, anger, sadness/sorrow, pleasure, fear, love, and disgust (喜怒哀樂懼愛惡) (See Xu [121] n.d.). Earlier, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (ca 239 BCE) discusses "six desires" (*liuyu* 六欲): eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (眼耳鼻舌身意) as human bodily senses through which emotions are generated (See Lü [239 BCE] 2007). *The Record of Ritual* (*Liji* 禮記), one of the five classics, states that humans have innate ability to feel the seven emotions without any need to learn them. Subsequently, the Confucian philosopher Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE) elucidated that as human desire *qing* can be limitless without discipline. Finally, Chinese traditional medicine, as has been practiced throughout East Asian history to date, has an extensive theory on how emotions are related to bodily functions as signs of health/illness and related treatment (Zheng 2019).

Qing as a subject of philosophy and practice was studied more by Neo-Confucians during the Song-Ming eras (960–1279 and 1368–1644, respectively; See Chen 2011). As a result of their attention to the role of affect, raw human emotions need to be regulated, experienced, expressed, and elevated in order to promote Confucian moral self-cultivation. Among the Four Books, there is *Centrality and Commonality*

(Zhongyong 中庸), which was carefully selected and annotated by the renowned Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) to be essential reading and a central subject for the Chinese Civil Service Examination (ca. 1300 to 1905). In this book, a noteworthy passage indicates:

> When joy and anger, sorrow and happiness are not yet manifest, call it "the center." When they are already manifest, and yet all are hitting the proper measure, call it "harmony."[4] (As translated in Angle and Tiwald 2017, 91)

It is clear that the goal is to strive for a balanced affective life by self-discipline to avoid excessiveness and being engulfed by our sheer bodily desires.

C. Prevalence of *Qing* and Its Wisdom for Life

Consequently, philosophized *qing* has entered most, if not all, domains of life. This development influences people's worldviews, values, and purposes of life. These orientations further shape how people view their personhood, develop their relationships, and engage in social interactions. The prevalence of *qing* is quite evident in the Chinese language (also in Vietnamese,[5] and likely in other East Asian languages as well). Two facets are noteworthy: (1) there is a large lexicon of *qing*, differentiating nuances, and (2) within this lexicon, there are also large numbers of accumulated folk sayings, proverbs, idioms, and aphorisms that reveal *qing*-related wisdom for people to draw on as their life guidance.

An important theory as advanced by anthropologist Robert Levy serves to illuminate this large lexicon. Levy (1984) uses *hypercognize* versus *hypocognize* to differentiate domains of human life that a given culture conceptualizes in accord with that culture's value system and norm. Domains that are hypercognized in a culture (e.g., anger in Tahiti) have many more terms and ways to differentiate fine nuances of the

4 喜怒哀樂之未發, 謂之中; 發而皆中節; 謂之和.

5 See Fung and Thu (2019).

domain. By contrast, domains that are hypocognized in the same culture (e.g., sadness in Tahiti) have fewer terms and ways to conceptualize differences of that domain. *Qing* seems to be a hypercognized domain in Chinese culture (and possibly across Confucian-heritage cultures).

Qing has a very large lexicon because *qing* is present in most of life, including both social and cognitive realms. Roger Ames (2011) explains: "*Qing*. . . is both the facticity of and the feeling that pervades any particular situation" (74). During my exploration of the Chinese Online Dictionary (n.d.), I came across a wealth of entries incorporating the term *qing*. I selected five common *qing*-terms with both literary and non-literal translations: (1) *shiqing* 事情 (circumstancing/mattering feeling vs. a matter/event/issue), (2) *qingkuang* 情況 (feeling situation vs. situation), (3) *qingxing* 情形 (feeling circumstance vs. circumstance), (4) *qingjing* 情境 (feeling scenario vs. scenario), and (5) *qingli* 情理 (feeling pattern vs. pattern/reasoning). All these literal translations in English sound bizarre, but they are very natural in Chinese!

To verify such prevalence of *qing* in Chinese culture empirically, a recent study asked 60 young adults in China what *qing* means in each of the above five terms. Although most people (87%) indicated that the first term does not carry the central meaning of *qing* as affect, but rather serves a linguistic function, the next three terms involve *qing* and *qing*-related situations, states, and descriptions more (42%, 45%, and 45%), with the last term expressing the most *qing* (76%) (Yang 2023).

Pertaining to the large idiomatic expressions of *qing*-related folk wisdom, I present three examples. First is the term *minqing* 民情, literally "people's feelings." This term is primarily used in matters of governance. When government officials go to local areas to investigate people's livelihood/complaints, they use the expression "investigating people's feelings" (了解民情). Why are feelings instead of factual data collection emphasized here? From what I can discern, it is because in any social situation human feelings are always at the center. Human-relevant situations and involved feelings are stressed over dry, abstract, logical reasoning. It is indeed sensible to perceive human interactions in this manner, given that all human interactions are primarily rooted in human emotions. Placing them in the center of any human matter is the key to handling human interactive tensions effectively. Thus,

one Chinese approach to conflict resolution is "moving the parties by feelings before reasoning" (動之以情, 曉之以理).

The second example is the common proverb "presenting swan feathers a thousand miles away, *qing* is weighty despite the trifling gift" (千裏送鵝毛, 禮輕情意重). This saying came from a true story: a tributary state sent a convoy to present a swan (a rare but "auspicious" animal then) to the Emperor Taizong during Tang dynasty. Unfortunately, the swan escaped leaving a few feathers. The convoy still traveled over a thousand miles and presented the feathers as a gift. Upon learning the truth, the Emperor was moved, accepting the gift. The proverb clearly conveys that the actual value of the gift matters much less than *qing* that the gift conveys. The third example is the (also common) saying "To meet an old friend in distant land is like sweet rain after a long drought" (久旱逢甘雨, 他鄉遇故知). The enlightening meaning here is that as humans need rain to grow food, our affective comfort from old friends in a strange land is also essential for our well-being.

To sum, *qing* as philosophized reflects concerted contemplation beyond "raw" emotions that people feel and express in daily life. Philosophized *qing* then becomes a way to construe the world, to guide us in how to lead a meaningful life, how to interact with others, to regard, and to relate to each other. Due to their millennia-long influence, *qing* is well-integrated with life. As such, East Asians experience *qing* prevalently and deeply in the Confucian way.

D. *Qing* as Moralized (*Dehua* 德化)

Qing is not morally neutral but highly relationally conducive, morally elevating, and expansive feelings expressed and felt, that is, moralized. I would venture to say that there is no Confucian virtue without *qing*. For example, in the *Analects* (17.21), we read a famous conversation between Confucius and his student Zaiwo on what it means to practice filial piety toward one's deceased parents:

> Zaiwo inquired, "the three-year mourning period on the death of one's parents is already too long. [Zaiwo next gives several reasons that such long mourning might impede people's daily life including making

> music]. Surely a year is good enough." The Master replied, "Would you then be comfortable eating fine rice and wearing colorful brocade?" Zaiwo said he would indeed. The Master said "If you are comfortable, then do it. When exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子) are mourning, they can find no relish in fine-tasting food, no pleasure in the sound of music, and no comfort in their usual lodgings, that they do not abbreviate the mourning period to one year. Now if you are comfortable with these things, then by all means, enjoy them." When Zaiwo had left, the Master remarked, "Zaiwo is really perverse (*buren* 不仁). . . ." (As translated in Ames and Rosemont 1998)

Ren 仁 (*humaneness*) is the highest human virtue as advocated by Confucius. Unfeeling or hurried grief toward deceased parents is regarded as un-*ren* (*buren* 不仁), or a lack of humaneness, by Confucius. Thus, feeling comfortable eating fine-tasting food, wearing beautiful clothes, enjoying music, namely seeking personal pleasure here is not just a bodily caloric drive or momentary enjoyment, but inseparable from one's virtuous self-cultivation.

Another example of *qing* as moralized is the very first opening three sentences of the *Analects* (1.1):

> The Master said: "Having studied [Confucian way (*dao* 道)], to then repeatedly practice what you have learned—is this not a source of pleasure? To have like-minded friends from afar [to learn with oneself]—is this not a source of enjoyment? To go unacknowledged by others without harboring frustration—is this not the mark of an exemplary person (*junzi* 君子)? (As translated in Ames and Rosemont 1998)

Here Confucius' pleasure (*yue* 說), enjoyment (*le* 樂), and without frustration (*yun* 慍) in seemingly mundane activities are expressed in conjunction with one's virtuous and moral self-cultivation.

Finally, the well-known four moral germinations of humans by Mencius are all *qing* sentiments: (1) *empathy* as the germ of humane conduct, (2) *shame and distain* of rightness, (3) *courtesy and deference* of ritual propriety, and (4) *approval and disapproval* of wisdom (Mencius 1970, 2A.6). Neo-Confucians during the Song-Ming era (960–1279 and

1368–1644 CE, respectively) further argued that Confucian virtuous self-cultivation requires *qing*, which facilitates one's internalization of Confucian virtues as to enable one to spontaneously practice them. Practicing one's virtues is never a sheer reasoning-based act but one that engenders genuine enjoyment via *qing*. Thus, true Confucian self-cultivation is a cycle and intertwinement of understanding and enjoyment toward higher virtues (Chen 2010).

Below is a sample of other important virtues with clear *qing*. The first group has been pursued since antiquity: mindheart (*xin* 心), sincerity/wholeheartedness (*cheng* 誠), tender love (*ci* 慈), fondness of (*hao* 好), deference (*gong* 恭), kindness/generosity (*hui* 惠), broad-mindedness/benevolence (*kuanhou* 寬厚), earnestness/focus (*du* 篤), deferential yielding (*rang* 讓), and humility (*qianxun* 謙遜). The second group is more recent: kindness (*youshan* 友善), respect (*zunzhong* 尊重), politeness (*keqi* 客氣), gratitude (*baoda* 報答), holding someone's kindness in heart (*jiqing* 記情), and perseverance (*jianren* 堅韌).

E. *Enqing* (恩情)

To provide some concrete examples of Confucian affect considered thus far (philosophized and moralized), I discuss next *enqing* 恩情, that is, possibly the highest Confucian *qing*. What is *en* in *enqing*? It is deep kindness/care (*houhui* 厚惠) (See Xu [121] n.d.). Thus, *enqing* is what one person extends to another (one-directional) deep-hearted care. As I discern, at least five features merit initial analysis.

First, *enqing* is not mutual affect, hence not between equals such as friendship that rests on mutual care, liking, and trust. Instead, *enqing* occurs in an unequal or hierarchical relationship between Person A (P_1) and Person B (P_2).[6] The relational nature is that P_1 possesses higher position, status, and power (e.g., positional, intellectual/skill, financial,

[6] For 2000 years (Baidu n.d.), Chinese people have been using the term *enai* 恩愛 to refer to the affect between husband and wife, but not the term *aiqing* 愛情 that denotes romantic love. As such, *enai*, according to contemporary philosopher Wang Defeng, is not romantic love, that is, more pure emotion, but transformed to the Confucian affect between the couple, emphasizing the mutual ethical commitment and care. See Wang (2022b). My paper does not address *enai*.

and social resources). With such capacity, although without any duty, P_1 volunteers to help, rescue, relieve, care for, support, protect P_2 at a lower position, status, at risk, facing challenges.

Second, P_1's help does not stem from a calculation of personal gain, expectation of return, or utilitarian/manipulative purposes, but what Mencius refers to as empathy/compassion and sheer kindness. Neither does P_2 expect, request, and feel entitled to P_1's help. Third, *enqing* is not expressed for trivial, but significant matters in P_2's life. Sometimes, P_1 may not regard small help as *en*-significant, but P_2 regards P_1's *enqing* as significant and very meaningful.

Fourth, the principle of "a spring of gratitude to a drop of kindness" solidifies the relationship between the two. *Enqing* is sheer kindness, irrespective of how P_2 responds. Nonetheless, the more P_1 intends and acts this *en*-way, the more P_2 feels compelled to enact the principle. For any *enqing*, even just "a drop, one shall reciprocate it with a spring," a common Chinese aphorism (滴水之恩, 當湧泉相報). Still in reality, because of the unequal status/resources between the two, P_2 can never reciprocate to P_1 enough. Finally, P_1 does not regard the deed as anything special, but often downplays the significance, and continues P_1's *en*-acts toward P_2. Yet, because of this fourth principle, P_2 will remember P_1's kind deed and reciprocate whenever P_2 can, thus the expression of "gratitude forever" (*yongshi buwang* 永世不忘).

Having presented these five features of *enqing*, it would be helpful to look at a few typical forms of *enqing*. The first one is the *en* of *parental* unconditional tender love/care (*fumu yangyu zhi en* 父母養育之恩) with parental utter devotion and sacrifice. Such parental *en* calls for the deepest gratitude from children. This is probably why filial piety, or reverence, for parents, is such a profound virtue that is undoubtedly also expressed as a Confucian affect.

The second form is the *en* of teacher/mentor (*enshi* 恩師). A teacher, who recognizes P_2's goodness/potential, teaches P_2 with unusual dedication (beyond the call of duty), care, and support, without holding back any knowledge/skill. P_2 will work/live to honor the *en*-teacher/mentor. The third form is lifesaving *en* (*jiuming zhi en* 救命之恩). Suppose, P_2's life was saved by a stranger (doctors or rescue workers belong to this type of *en*, but they are not regarded as strangers). P_2 must remember

such *en* and express gratitude to P_1 for life. The fourth form is the *en* of encounter and recognition (*zhiyu zhi en* 知遇之恩), where P_2's talent/ability/potential is recognized by a superior, thanks to an unexpected encounter (good luck). P_1 helps P_2 realize P_2's potential and guides P_2 to great achievement.

The final form to be featured here is unspecified *en* (*youen yuwo* 有恩於我) where P_2 receives something special that P_2 is unable to reciprocate to P_1. P_2 bears P_1's kindness in mind and takes an opportunity to express gratitude to such *en* (could be years later) whenever an occasion arises. Here is one vivid example—Siddharth Chatterjee, current Indian Senior UN official in China overseeing 27 agencies. Chatterjee hoped to give something back to China since childhood because of a pair of boots. When he was nine, his father took him to a local bazaar. In a shoe store owned by a Chinese man, Chatterjee saw a pair of beautiful boots and asked his father to buy them. But his father said no, because they could not afford it. As Chatterjee and his father were leaving, the owner handed Chatterjee a gift bag. The father and son went home and opened the bag (a local custom) to discover the boots that Chatterjee wanted. His parents returned to the store wanting to pay for the boots, but the owner refused, because his own nine-year-old son died of illness a year before. Chatterjee reminded him of his own son. Chatterjee felt not just compassion from the owner, but also fatherly love to Chatterjee as if he were the man's son. Many years later, Chatterjee was able to "reciprocate" the owner's *enqing* by sharing the story with Chinese people (CCTV 2021).

Given the weighty nature of *enqing*, failure to express due gratitude for it, or worse, inflicting harm to the *en*-giver (e.g., abusing one's parents) is a serious moral wrongdoing, called in Chinese "forgetting *en* and failing rightness" (*wangen fuyi* 忘恩負義). Of course, failure happens in any culture. The most serious is unfilial (*buxiao* 不孝), which is understood as the child not caring or trashing parental tender love and sacrifice. When unfilial behavior occurs, it really hurts, which is likely to result in the condemnation by the larger kin and community.[7] Such

[7] Currently, China and other East Asian societies (e.g., Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong) have to different degrees codified filial piety into law. For example, Chinese law

outrage coheres with Mencius' long-standing exposition that lacking such basic humaneness signals serious character flaw and problems (Mencius 1970, 2A.6). Such failure is likely to lead to a breakdown of important relationships at home and beyond. Those who are once associated with such a person may distance themselves, avoiding interacting with the person.

Beyond *enqing*, there are many other common and important kinds of *qing*, for example, that of family (*qinqing* 親情), siblings (*shouzu zhiqing* 手足之情), friends (*youqing* 友情), study peers (*tongchuang zhiqing* 同窗之情), those who share a hometown (*xiangqing* 鄉情), those who have interacted substantially (*xiangqing* 交情), and humans in general (*renqing* 人情). All of these kinds of *qing* serve the same purpose of moral/virtuous self-cultivation.

F. *Qing* as Ritualized (*Lihua* 禮化)

The third posited transformation of Confucian *qing* is through ritual, thus the term *ritualized* (*lihua* 禮化). A fundamental way East Asians express their *qing* is through *ritual propriety* (*li* 禮). Despite changes throughout history, *li* has been persistently practiced since antiquity. However, *li* is not easy to describe even by East Asians to themselves, let alone to non-East Asians (J. Li 2021). Amazing is the fact that East Asians do this without the need to verbalize *li*'s meaning and even how to do it (right). They just do it naturally all the time. For example, at the dinner table, a mother always hands the first bowl of her best food to her young son to give to Grandma. Yet, the same food is right in front of her. She could easily serve it herself. But nobody questions this seemingly irrational, inefficient, or pointless nature of this act.

What's going on here? The mother asked her son one day why she takes the "trouble" to have him bring the food to Grandma like that. Without any hesitation, her son said "so we *show* her that we love and respect her!" The boy grasps the essence of it. However, this prompts us to delve deeper into why this ritual act achieves the goal

stipulates that adult children are obligated to care for and provide psychological support to their parents.

of expressing love/respect for Grandma? Furthermore, we're intrigued to explore what this ritual accomplishes that other methods, such as straightforward verbal expressions like "I love you, Grandma!" supposedly can not achieve.

Here may lie probably one of Confucius' greatest achievements. To exposit the idea, two senses of Confucian ritual distinguished by Eric Hutton, translator of *Xunzi* (Xunzi 2016), are helpful. First, there is a set of standards for behavior that has been traditionally passed down over several millennia that people observe, despite changes throughout history (e.g., wedding ritual).[8] Confucian ritual in this sense is translated into *rites*. The second sense is the personal tendency to practice ritual as a *personal* virtue, and this sense of Confucian ritual is translated into ritual propriety. For my purposes, I address *ritual propriety* while holding rites as the cultural backdrop. My focus here is on the *personal*. As such, I would argue that ritual propriety is surely a psychological domain because individuals think about, feel, and practice it.

According to an influential treatise on Confucian's profound teaching of ritual propriety by contemporary philosopher, Li Zehou (2015), ritual propriety was originally shamanistic performance to the cosmos (*tian* 天) and other supernatural powers for tribal survival with tribal heads as shamans themselves. Gradually, the fear and awe toward the cosmos underwent a humanizing transformation. Now, the cosmos was more interwoven with humans so that "it sees with the eyes of my people, and it hears with the ears of my people" as declared by King Wu[9] ("Taishi zhong" n.d.). Instead of relying on the cosmos as an independent superpower, human welfare became the judgment of cosmic operations. While shamanic ritual continued, something significant took place: Duke of Zhou 周公 (ca twelfth to eleventh century BCE) established their governing system known as "ritual and music" (*lile zhidu* 禮樂制度). In this system, ritual was both the principal way of

[8] Such ritual is not the same as the general notion of convention (e.g., quietly listening to a priest's sermon in itself is not ritual); ritual is a much complex event.

[9] Who mobilized his people and succeeded in overthrowing Shang dynasty's cruel and tyrannical king (Di Xing known as Zhou Wang, 1105–1145 BCE).

governance for all the kingdom's affairs as well as a conventional code to regulate commoners' conduct to each other. Music as detailed in the *Record of Ritual* (Liji n.d.) and *Xunzi* (Xunzi 2016) served in conjunction with ritual propriety to shape and educate people toward an orderly, peaceful, and harmonized society. Unfortunately, after several centuries, Zhou's central power declined, resulting in many vassal states fighting against each other for several more centuries. During this time, as lamented by Confucius, the well-functioning system became "ritual disintegration and music decay" (*libeng yuehuai* 禮崩樂壞). Eventually, Zhou ended by the Qin emperor 秦始皇 (259–210 BCE) conquering all vassal states, uniting China. How to return to the human way (*rendao* 人道) in such chaos was a great question for political leaders and intellectuals (Qian 2013).

According to Li, Confucius' epoch-making contribution regarding ritual propriety is that, in the midst of such disorder, he turned previously human-to-deity awe to human-to-human dignification, that is, initiating the process of dignifying humans. Confucius insisted that all humans have the worth of dignity and the capacity to achieve it. But this is not the kind of dignity we are familiar with today, but something more inspiring. What would happen, to take Confucius' conviction a bit further, if we humans turn to each other and treat each other the way we deify the cosmos and spirits? What, with this shift, would happen to each *one of us* and to *everyone* we interact with? Confucius concluded that we would become persons with cosmic quality, that is, achieving the highest human excellence, which he termed *ren* 仁, consummate humaneness. Thus, Confucius repurposed shamanic ritual by bringing it to the between-human world, which became the core of Confucian relationality. Li expounds that this underlies the true meaning of Confucian "oneness of the cosmos and humanity" (*tianren heyi* 天人合一) and moral/virtuous self-cultivation. This new and brilliant philosophizing of mutual human treatment and regard is tantamount to making the mundane sacred in daily life. Who under the sun would not like to live a life with dignity?! Herbert Fingarrette (1972) was probably the first Western scholar who saw this unprecedented philosophical achievement by Confucius. Because Confucius' teaching is anchored in the ordinary life, he has been so effective and has deservedly been

honored as an "exemplary teacher for all ages" (*wanshi shibiao* 萬世師表). The deification of human worth surely inspires individual persons to strive toward and to support each other in realizing this worth.

Let us return to the concrete example of the mother handing the best bowl of food to her son who takes it to Grandma at dinner time. How is *qing* of love/honoring expressed with ritual propriety? As far as I can tell, there are at least six features meriting discussion (J. Li 2021). First is the idea of Grandma being dignified *subjunctively* (Seligman et al. 2008). Accordingly, a fundamental purpose of ritual propriety is to enable humans to deal with the nature of human life fundamentally as unpredictable, chaotic, and fractured by creating a realm that is not real but easily imaginable and enterable in which to experience the positive, dependable, and consistent. In the example, Grandma is served with the best food first. But in reality, she is no different from anyone else. However, she is elevated to a higher realm, thus being "deified." Although subjunctive, it feels real.

The second feature of ritual propriety is mutuality as requisite. Ritual propriety exists not for the individual alone, but for strengthening and enriching particular relationships with others. In fact, ritual propriety would not be needed if relationality and mutuality were absent. In the example, Grandma cares for her grandson with tender love and often self-sacrifices (e.g., cooking for and cleaning the child). Their deep relationship makes it only natural for the grandson to reciprocate love to Grandma with the best food. Moreover, relationality does not merely include Grandma and the child, but also the mother, who was raised by Grandma in the first place. In performing ritual propriety, the mother models and guides the child while Grandma accepts the ritual propriety-food.

The third ritual propriety feature is the format that structures the performative act. This means that although ritual propriety involves verbal expression, it is less central than the actual doing, namely, practice. The format is key to conveying and recognizing the meaning of a particular ritual propriety performance in the culture. Such structured performance ensures the delivery of the message. Going back to the example, the mother fills the bowl with the best food in front of everyone. She then hands the bowl to the child, who brings it to

Grandma. By doing so, the actual food is no longer important, thus losing its materiality. Instead, the food here becomes symbolic of love and respect for Grandma. The depth of the meaning is achieved through demonstration.

The fourth feature is channeled expression of *qing*, not as raw emotional expression. *Qing* here involves mostly "self-conscious" emotions. Such emotions are socially generated and often other-oriented where the self is centrally implicated, such as honor, pride, gratitude, respect, and humility on the positive side versus negative shame, guilt, embarrassment, or contempt. Given that the goal is to cultivate and strengthen relationships, positive self-conscious emotions are involved most. In the dinner example, the channeled expression of *qing* may be diagrammed as GM↔M↔GS↔GM. Grandma (GM) nurtured the mother (M). When young, GM gave M much more. As M grew up and learned how to express *qing* with ritual propriety, she reciprocated care and love back to GM (e.g., filial piety) similarly. M then had grandson (GS) and did the same to raise and nurture him. As GS was raised and taught ritual propriety, he, too, began to reciprocate care and love back to M. Finally, as in the dinner example reveals, GS was guided to express *qing* through ritual propriety to GM as she also co-parented GS. And the process would continue for the rest of their lives. This ritual propriety-based expression of *qing* indeed shows love and respect effectively to GM as the boy readily acknowledged.

The fifth feature may be characterized as "aesthetic exaltation" in expressing *qing* via ritual propriety. Returning to the dinner example, it is clear that the food to Grandma is presented in a style, typically with the child holding the bowl with both hands and presenting it to Grandma, bowing. Bowing is a common bodily gesture for East Asian people to express respect for others, especially authority (e.g., parents, grandparents, teachers, and organizational leaders) or guests (e.g., at an important event/ceremony). Ritual propriety here enables all to experience "beatitudes," elevating the ordinary to the sacred. The love and respect that the family extends to Grandma feels indeed as dignifying.

The final feature of ritualized *qing* is to support people's moral/virtuous self-cultivation toward the highest Confucian virtue of humane-

ness (*ren* 仁). According to Wei-ming Tu (1979), consummate humaneness is the most humane, sincere, and genuine human quality for which everyone could strive. Consummate humaneness is not a single behavior or feeling but a constellation of all humaneness, sincerity, and warm-heartedness that are manifest in the person's character (Ames 2011). Consummate humaneness includes, but is not limited to, parental love and dedication to their children, children's filial feelings, understanding, and acts toward parents and grandparents, sibling love and care, compassion toward others, and so forth. Ritualized *qing* can generate the ripple effect on self-cultivation toward consummate humaneness. In the family, Grandma gave her unconditional love and dedication to the mother. The mother then gave the same love and care to her own son. Since childhood, he has been taught and guided to practice filial piety to his parents and grandparents. By this practice, the son develops filial feelings toward the family adults. As the child grows older, he gains deeper understanding of filial piety, eventually internalizing related feelings, behavior, and understanding. Every step of the way, the child moves closer to consummate humaneness. The child's siblings develop similarly. In the Confucian persuasion, once acquiring such basic goodness at home, the child is likely to extend his developing consummate humaneness outside home, to his peers, teachers, and other community members.

G. *Qing* as Aestheticized (*Meixuehua* 美學化)

The final transformation of *qing* I explore is the aesthetic transformation (*meixuehua* 美學化). I use "aesthetic" here to mean that *qing* is expressed, felt, and received in a way that is not our raw emotional response but graced with the idea of beautification. For example, if one feels sadness, one sheds tears. This is a direct physiological expression of the feeling state of sadness. However, if instead of crying, one plays a song to convey one's sad feeling, it is embellished in the form of music. By doing so, one's sad feeling is no longer merely physiological. Not only does one feel one's own embellished sadness, but those to whom one plays the music may likewise receive the transformed feeling. The psychological impact of such a transformation on the self and others is different,

which I would say is a process of affective elevation that Confucians promote. Note that this example does not necessarily involve ritual propriety. Just using music to express one's sadness substantiates the aesthetic transformation I have in mind.

Despite limited discussion on this topic, aestheticized *qing* across East Asia is prevalent and highly visible. I already hinted some aesthetic aspects in the section on ritualized *qing*. There are many aesthetic forms (such as poetry, music, gesture, speech, and clothing). I highlight two ways in which *qing* is aestheticized: Gift-giving and poetry.

H. Everyday Gift-Giving Filled with Aestheticized *Qing*

Gift-giving in East Asia is an everyday routine, but it is also a delicate act. To begin with, the term *gift* in Chinese is *liwu* 禮物, literally ritual object that has been used over several millennia. The significance of gift-giving is intimately connected to ritual propriety. In comparison, *gift* in Western languages is just something a person gives to another without any hint to the idea of ritual (J. Li 2021). In the gift-giving process, the gift-giver has an occasion or desires some relationship with another. The aestheticized *qing* is expressed from the beginning in one's selecting or making a gift for the other with care and respect.[10] The heart and mind that go into the gift and its presentation convey *qing* with aesthetics via ritual propriety. As a result, the relationship between the gift-giver and gift-receiver is deepened, and both parties' virtues elevated.[11]

I. Writing and Reciting Poetry to Express *Qing*

Poetry has been playing a profound role in Chinese people's lives. All poetry is about human feelings, such as love, care, hope, longing, admiration, aspiration, eulogy, lament, sorrow, loss. . . . One of the oldest books in Chinese civilization is the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), a collection of folk songs and ballads, poems for ritual ceremonies of

[10] This is similar to Western cultures' Christmas gift-giving (i.e., selecting, wrapping, and presenting the gift).

[11] See J. Li (2021) for a fuller analysis on gift-giving via ritual propriety.

aristocracy, and poems for religious events at state temples (Shijing n.d.). The *Book of Songs* is one of the Five Classics that every student had to study for the Civil Service Examination from about the seventh century to 1905 (about 1300 years) when the dynastic system ended. Writing poetry was a required skill if one hoped to succeed in the Examination. Thus, civil (but also many military) officials were actually called scholar-officials. They wrote poems at most governmental levels. Rulers were also tutored, since childhood, in poetry writing and recitation (as well as achieving an appreciable level of calligraphic art). In the 661 years between Tang and Song dynasties (618–1279 CE) alone, there were over 200,000 poems (not to mention those lost) written by about 13,000 poets. For educational purposes, scholars compiled selections of poems from Tang and Song eras, the most well-known are *Three Hundred Tang Poems* (*Tang shi sanbaishou* 唐詩三百首) by Sun Zhu 孫洙 (eighteenth century) and *Three Hundred Song Poems* (*Song ci sanbaishou* 宋詞三百首) by Zhu Xiaocang 朱孝臧 (nineteenth century) (see Zhu 2009). Most current elementary students learn by heart many poems, and it is quite common for Chinese people to recite poems regardless of their level of education.

As an example, I give one poem *Longing at Quiet Night* (*Jingyesi* 靜夜思) by Li Bai (701–762 CE) that is memorized and recited across China by children and adults:

> Before my bed a pool of light,
> Is it hoarfrost upon the ground?
> Eyes raised, I see the moon so bright,
> Head bent, in homesickness I'm drowned.[12]

Many poems like this express the deep *qing* toward people's families and homes.

The bright round moon for Chinese and other East Asians stands not only for home but also for family reunion and togetherness. When people part from their families and friends, they feel sorrow just like anyone else. But the way Chinese people express such sorrow

[12] 床前明月光; 疑是地上霜; 舉頭望明月; 低頭思故鄉. See Sun (2021, 50-51).

is often through poetry. On the mid-autumn day where the moon is the roundest a la lunar calendar, people write and recite poems, from national to local and family festivity. I remember that despite poverty, my parents would bake mooncakes and nuts and serve them with tea on a stable set in the courtyard. When all gathered, my parents would start reciting poems from Tang and Song eras written for the occasion, inviting children to join. My siblings and I learned many poems during the annual Mid-Autumn Festival and at the same time learned how to express our family *qing* through poetry.

I recall watching an interview a few years back featuring the renowned contemporary writer Yu Qiuyu 余秋雨, where he discussed the essence of the festival with a TV anchor. Yu said that during the night, when a farmer, a housewife, a construction worker gazes at the moon and feel *qing* toward their families/home, they all become poets themselves. Yu further noted that this holiday is the only poetry-centered holiday that he knows in the world. I concur.

VI. Empirical Research on *Qing* 情

As stated at the beginning of this paper, there is little empirical research that directly addresses Confucian *qing* in light of the four transformations as outlined above. Nonetheless, one could cull from various studies some relevant research findings. In general, East Asians tend to value and experience lower arousals of both positive and negative emotions than their European American and European counterparts (Tsai 2017; Tsai et al. 2007; Tsai et al. 2019). Research further shows that these two cultural groups tend to experience different types of emotion, particularly socially engaging (e.g., friendliness, closeness, and shame) versus disengaging emotions (e.g., pride and anger) at different frequencies and to different extent (Kitayama et al. 2006; De Leersnyder et al. 2021). Moreover, Western and East Asian people process emotional components (Frijda 1986; Mesquita, 2003) of a given emotion differently (e.g., shame-induced fury or humility), such as how one encodes the antecedence, acts, and copes with it and the relational other (Boiger et al. 2022; De Leersnyder et al. 2021; Kirchner et al. 2018).

Taken together, this line of research supports the idea that emotional lives of East Asians and Western people reflect their cultural models of the interdependent and independent self, respectively.

A separate strand of empirical research comes from discourse analysis, that is, pragmatics (how to use language to achieve one's goals) on Chinese communication that sheds some light on Confucian ritualized *qing* and ritual propriety practice. The research demonstrates conclusively Chinese people routinely engage in "humbling oneself and giving honor to others" as espoused in the *Record of Ritual* (Liji n.d.). Discourse analysis uses the term *self-denigration maxim* to refer to such social-affective interactions. In his seminal paper, Yueguo Gu (1990) states:

> When self pays a visit to other, his visiting is described by self as *baifang* 拜访, or *baijian* 拜见, or *baiwang* 拜望, or *baiye* 拜谒. The morpheme *bai* 拜... literally means "to prostrate oneself at the foot of other." The four verbs can be glossed... as "to prostrate oneself to visit." If self's visiting is a return visit, he *huibai* 回拜 (to return a prostration). Similarly, self's reading other's writing is *baidu* 拜读 (i.e. to prostrate self to read other's writing), and for self to say goodbye to other is *baibie* 拜别 (i.e. to prostrate self to take leave of other).... When self requests the pleasure of other's company, on the other hand, the former begs the latter to *shangguang* 赏光 (to bestow light), and the latter's presence is *guanglin* 光临 (light arrives). If self requests other to read his writing, he begs the latter to *cijiao* 赐教 (condescend to teach), or *fuzheng* 斧正 (to use an axe to correct the blunders). (247)

Although some of these linguistic forms have been used less in modern times, many persist to date. Putting ourselves in the shoes of the speaker, it is not hard to feel the humbling affect in oneself. As the recipient, hearing such ritualized affect intended to honor oneself, one would likely feel respected and grateful to the self-denigrating person, but at the same time marveling at the person's virtue (that the person would take the care to honor oneself).

Within the family and extended kin, ritualized *qing* is expressed all the time. In this ethos, one never addresses older generations by their names (such behavior is very rude, therefore countering the purposes of

ritualized *qing*). Each family and kin relationship has a specific address term by generation, gender, and age. That the family and kin relational system rests on the principle of "honoring the older generations and the aged" (*zunlao* 尊老) is well-known across East Asia (Fung and Thu 2019; Gu 1990; Li and Fischer 2007). But here I would just like to highlight ritualized *qing* among nonkin as documented by discourse analysis.

The following exchange frequently occurs when two strangers A and B just meet:

A. 請問您貴姓? (May I know your honorable surname?)
B. 免貴姓余. (Sparing "honorable," my surname is Yu)

Clearly, by initiating the question, A elevates B (the underlined part). But this type of exchange is not done flatly, but instead with interpersonal warmth conveying respect and sincerity (smile and other bodily gestures, i.e., ritualized *qing*). While asking the question, A is likely to bow toward B or to extend his/her hand to shake that of the other. Upon hearing the question, B feels honored and reciprocates with "sparing 'honorable'" (the underlined part), which is B's own ritualized *qing* to acknowledge that of A, but at the same time, lower/equalize the self to A.

Furthermore, there is prevalent use of kin terms to address nonkin (Wu 1999). For example, Chinese often use two prefixes *lao* 老 (old)[13] and *da* 大 (eldest, elder, grand, or simply a deferential marker for seniors) plus a role term or sometimes surname (depending on a variety of other factors) to address strangers: *lao nainai* 老奶奶 (old grandma), *lao yeye* 老爺爺 (old grandpa), *dage* 大哥(elder brother), and *dajie* 大姐 (elder sister) among nonkin. Oftentimes, people use both lao and da, such as *laodaye* 老大爺 (old grand grandpa). In contemporary life, there are also generalized terms of deference (*zunjing* 尊敬) that are widely used such as *shifu* 師傅 (master, e.g., a cook in a restaurant or a shoe repair person) and *laoshi* 老師 (teacher). Notice lao, a highly generalized address term to address anyone that is vaguely related to teaching or a profession (You 2014). Some finer distinctions notwithstanding, it appears that when in

[13] Calling someone old may be highly insulting in the West. But *lao* in an address term does not have a trace of insult, but quite the opposite, respect.

doubt, one ought to address nonkin with a term that honors the other, rather than equalizing, or for heaven's sake, denigrating the other when one encounters a stranger.

The final line of empirical research on Confucian family *qing* to be featured here is children's response to parental *enqing* 恩情, which is filial piety or filial reverence (*xiao* 孝). As noted previously, filial piety is a fundamental value across East Asia that contains not just thinking and act, but also affect. As a tripartite psychological domain, filial piety has been studied extensively, most by East Asian social psychologists. This research was pioneered by a group of psychologists in Taiwan, led by Kuo-shu Yang (Yang 1988; Yang et al. 1989). They collected substantial data from school students and general public and found four key components of filial piety: (1) Respect and care for one's parents (*zunqin kenqin* 尊親懇親) in daily life. (2) Yield self to observe parents' will (*yiji shunqin* 抑己順親) that emphasizes honoring parents' will/hopes even when they do not concur with one's own. (3) Support parents in old age and offer sacrifices to them after their passing (*fengyang jinian* 奉養祭念) to ensure parents' comfort. "Sacrificing to deceased parents" is a spiritual memorializing tradition for millennia as noted earlier. (4) Protect and honor parents' reputation (*huqin rongqin* 護親榮親) to ensure their communal moral standing.

These results document overwhelming positive affect of filial piety. The ancient but continuously used term to capture the nature of filial piety affect is attentive respect and tender-heartedness toward parents (*jingai shuangqin* 敬愛雙親). As is clear, if tender-heartedness is the key in filial piety affect, fighting/arguing to win a point, intransigent endorsing of truth, criticizing, bickering with parents all serve to harm tender-heartedness. Thus, much of the so-called "yield self to observe parents' will" is to deliver tender-heartedness to parents rather than blind succumbing oneself to parents' demands.

Further research by Kuang-hui Yeh (2003) illuminates more the state of filial piety among contemporary people in Taiwan. He proposed a dual model: reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. Reciprocal filial piety is the type based on the philosophy espoused by classical Confucians. This form of filial piety emphasizes mutual intimacy, empathy, tender-heartedness, and care extended according

to the closeness of family. Parental tender and unconditional love fosters children's deep attentive respect, love, and reciprocated care for parents. However, authoritarian filial piety is more formalized, emphasizing duty and obedience that may not necessarily rest on affect. People can debate about the accuracy and appropriateness of the Western term *authoritarian* that is used to capture Yeh's second filial piety form. Perhaps the term "duty-based" makes more sense. In general, filial piety is expected of any child at any age regardless of whether the child feels like it. Put differently, filial piety is a moral duty in Confucian-heritage cultures as delineated by Confucian philosophy as well as by contemporary scholars (Hwang 1999). Yeh's subsequent research in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China indeed received support for his dual model (Yeh and Bedford 2003; 2004; Yeh et al. 2013). Whereas the reciprocal form is more endorsed among contemporary Chinese, "authoritarian" filial piety is not absent but coexists with the reciprocal kind. Their persistent cooccurrence suggests that these two sides are intertwined in East Asians' filial piety-related psychological functioning.

Moreover, Kyu-taik Sung (2001) criticized contemporary simplistic portrayal of Confucian filial piety that tends to reduce it to obedience to older generations and care for one's parents. He conducted a comprehensive review of research across East Asia and proposed a multidimensional model of filial piety in 14 forms of respect, the filial *qing* children show to their elders in daily living:

(1) Care respect: expressed by care and services for an elder's mind and body, (e.g., providing personal care, nourishment. . .), making them feel happy and comfortable.
(2) Victual respect: directed towards respecting prerogatives held by elders with regard to the liking and consumption of foods and drinks.
(3) Gift respect: such as money. . . and other materials of symbolic value.
(4) Presentational respect: appearance which conveys a sense of respect (e.g., dressing not extravagantly but plainly/neatly and maintaining a polite and deferent posture).
(5) Linguistic respect: using honorific language when the young interact with elders.

(6) Spatial respect: giving elders a seat or place of honor (e.g., at dinner table).
(7) Celebrative respect: celebrating birthdays or events in honor of elders.
(8) Public respect: voluntary and public services for elders at large (e.g., enacting laws protecting elders' rights, status, and security, etc.).
(9) Acquiescent respect: exhibiting obedient behaviors which reflect deference and reverence toward elders (e.g., listening to their advice and directives, not talking back).
(10) Consultative respect: consulting elders on personal and family matters.
(11) Salutatory respect: greeting elders to show respect (e.g., bowing and bending the body forward).
(12) Precedential respect: allowing elders to have precedence over beneficial things (e.g., services to elders first, etc.).
(13) Funeral respect: mourning for and burying deceased parents with respect by holding a funeral ceremony, wearing special attire, and wailing and weeping, etc.
(14) Ancestor respect: family members typically arrange carefully prepared foods and drinks on a table for sacrifice, make bows to the tablet or the picture of their ancestor, and maintain ancestors' graves. (20–21)

As Yang's research in Taiwan, these *qing*-laden forms of filial piety correspond quite well to the fundamental meaning and forms since ancient times. Sung noted some changes in modern times such as less obedience but more courtesy and kindness, more mutual communication, and so forth. However, despite these changes, "elder respect remains a central value and feelings of respect and obligation do remain to bind generations together" (22) in East Asia.

These empirical research findings reveal the meaning and processes of Confucian *qing* in some ways, but as a whole, there is scarce research on *qing* in light of the four transformations I have outlined. Much research can be conducted along these new theoretical lines. For example, how is *qing* conceptualized and experienced among East Asians? Researchers could ask people to describe typical scenarios to obtain prototypes of each type of *qing*. Furthermore, many empirical

methods can be used to study how *qing* is related to children's moral and virtue development, what role *qing* plays in important relationships, how *qing* is ritualized in the process of people's actual experience, and how *qing* is aestheticized in particular relationships and processes. Such research would lead to new insights into how Confucian *qing* functions in contemporary East Asian lives.

VII. Concluding Note

As a species sharing a common evolutionary history, the biology of human emotion is similar. However, how to feel and how we lead our affective lives vary from culture to culture. Confucian *qing* is not a matter of our sheer bodily responses but highly cultivated, expressed, felt, and acted upon experiences. This cultural cultivation entails at least four transformations of raw emotions: Philosophized, moralized, ritualized, and aestheticized. These transformations are not isolated but interrelated with each other and reflect the Confucian cultural ethos as developed over the course of history. Together, they form a fundamental way to view the world and act in it toward the envisioned goal of mutual care and moral elevation in human relationality. To East Asians, this affective life with *qing* is worth pursuing, achieving, and furthering.

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