A GENEALOGICAL STUDY OF *DE*: POETICAL CORRESPONDENCE OF SKY, EARTH, AND HUMANKIND IN THE EARLY CHINESE VIRTUOUS RULE OF BENEFACTION

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De 德 is a central idea in early Chinese moral and political teachings. There is little doubt that *dezhi* 德治, which is usually translated as the rule of virtue, represents the highest ideal of the Confucian moral and political order. However, the meanings of the word *de* are much more complex than in the common translation "virtue." As Roger Ames points out, the ambiguity of *de* is adequately illustrated in Frederick Mote's multiple rendering of the word in his translation of Hsiao Kung-chuan's (Xiao Gongquan 蕭公權) *A History of Chinese Political Thought.* In addition to the common conception of *de* as "virtue," which relates closely to such renditions as "ethical nature," "moral excellence," *"virtus"* (in the sense of a thing's intrinsic and distinctive nature), and "moral force," Mote has also translated *de* as "spiritual power," "Power," "power imparted from the Tao," and "the powers native to beings and things." Notably, Ames himself has contributed an important supplement to Mote's list: "the sense of 'favor' or 'bounty' extended outwards, and further the gratitude that it evokes."[1] Regretfully, obscurities and controversies about the significations of *de* have continued to conceal its genuine meanings and the true foundation of early Confucian moral and political order based on the ideal of *dezhi.*

Through a genealogical study of *de*[2] this treatise aims to clarify the linguistic source and structure of *de* and to establish the early Chinese moral and political order based on *dezhi* as the rule of benefaction. Identifying the basic meanings of *de* as "spiritual endowment" and "grateful offering," I will reveal the foundation of this rule of benefaction as the senses of empathy and reciprocity originating in the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

This study is divided into two major parts. The first part carries out a philological examination of the scripts of *de* that demonstrates its two basic meanings as "heavenly grace" and "sacrificial offering." By reexamining the *mana* thesis, I will clarify further the source of the heavenly endowment and spiritual power of *de* as the sympathetic correspondence (*gantong* 感通) of the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang.* In the second part, I will lay bare the philosophical significations of the early Chinese virtuous rule of benefaction as I work out concretely its three levels of enactment. My investigation will establish a distinctively Chinese understanding of the human person that is based not on the philosophy of *entitlement* but on the poetical way of *embodiment.*[3] Drawing upon the supreme importance of sympathetic

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correspondence, I will first establish *de* as a principle of *genus,* which informs the propagation of humankind in empathetic and reciprocal harmony with the cyclical rhythms of sky and earth. In my view, the foundation of the early Chinese rule of benefaction consists in the culturing of such empathy and reciprocity; it has little to do with exclusive heavenly entitlement. The primary function of a political leader was not to uphold the assigned spiritual power with commanding authority, but to safeguard and promote its proper dissemination. As a distinctive site of embodiment, an ideal human person was one who was responsible for facilitating the continuous circulation of heavenly grace among all kinds of beings. I will demonstrate further that such sagacious personalities were the archetype of early Chinese and Confucian moral virtues.

I. The Original Meanings of De*: A Preliminary Examination*

Identifying one primary meaning of *de* as "gift, grace, and grant," I will demonstrate the central signification of *de* as the heavenly endowment essential for the life of all human and natural beings. The propagation of such heavenly grace involves three levels of reciprocal relations in the early Chinese moral and political order, which correspond to three layers of the meaning of *de* itself. First, *de* signifies the gift of being, the endowment of spiritual power sponsoring the myriad kinds of lives between sky and earth. Second, it designates the spiritual power that heaven and dead ancestors confer upon the sovereign in the form of "boon and benediction." Third, it refers to the beneficence of the sovereign toward his subordinate noblemen and the common people, and in particular to his kind bequests for qualified subjects: lands, titles of nobility, and other ornamental and honorific gifts. In the light of this interpretation, the sense of moral virtue is only a *derivative* meaning of *de.* In the early Chinese mind, moral virtues and qualities were rooted in the sagacious personalities who were able to preserve and propagate *appropriately* heavenly and ancestral benedictions. In the rest of this part, I will substantiate the original meanings of *de* summarized above through a philological examination, and endorse this interpretation with textual evidence from the early Chinese classics and bronze vessel inscriptions. After that, I will reassess the controversial *mana* thesis and reveal the origin of the spiritual power of *de* as the sympathetic correspondence of the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang.*

Heavenly Benediction and Sacrificial Offering: Philological Evidence for the Early Meanings of De

There are two basic sources for investigating the original meanings of *de*: (1) the classical annotations in the *Shuowen* and other philological texts, and (2) the images and morphology of the character as shown in bronze vessel inscriptions and presumably oracle bone scripts. Unfortunately, the outcome of classical and modern scholarship on *de* is both inconclusive and unconvincing. This murky situation has resulted from three major difficulties: (1) the compound meanings of ancient Chinese characters (such as *sheng* 升, *deng* 登, *de* 得, and *jin* 進) used in the classical definitions of *de,*

(2) some special ancient Chinese usages that are rarely recognized today, and (3) the gap between the ancient and modern understandings of the significations of certain ritual ceremonies. In my view, one of the biggest obstacles in the previous scholarship is the presumption of "virtue and moral excellence" as the *primary* meaning of *de*—an insistence that has turned out to be least productive. Indeed, only when we amend this conventional gaffe and recognize the primary meaning of *de* as "grant and benediction" can we hope to pull the loose ends together and bring out a coherent interpretation.

With the meaning of "grant and benediction" in mind, let us start with the definition of *de* in the *Shuowen* as *sheng* 升. According to Duan Yucai's annotation, *sheng* is synonymous with *deng* 登. Duan further identifies the meaning of *deng* here as *de* 得 (to obtain). Though the relation between *de* 德 and *de* 得 may well be genuine, Duan's overall argument relies on the vernacular of the Qi 齊 people and appears rather circumstantial and unpersuasive.[4] On the other hand, most researchers have taken *sheng* and *deng* to mean "to arise, to raise and elevate." Thus, it has become puzzling how this sense of "arising and elevating" may have anything to do with the common conception of *de* as "moral virtue" at all.

In my humble opinion, the key here is to identify the meaning of *deng* in this context as *jin* 進, which signifies an act of offering. Accordingly, Xu Shen's definition of *de* boils down to "the offering of sacrificial goods for beseeching divine and ancestral blessing." As Liu Xingrong explains, the oracle-bone script of *deng*  depicts a state in which two hands hold up a food vessel (*dou* 豆), while the two feet point upward.[5] Let us recall that *dou* in ancient Chinese usage often indicates a sacrificial vessel (such as in the character for ritual, *li* 禮). Thus, the image of *deng* depicts a human person who is holding up a vessel with a sacrificial offering as he reverently walks up to an altar. For example, the chapter "Monthly Orders" of the *Liji* has it that at the beginning of each summer the peasants would "contribute" their wheat harvest (*nong nai* deng *mai* 農乃登麥), which the son of heaven would offer in turn in the ancestral temple. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 glosses the word *deng* here as *jin* 進, that is, to offer and present.[6]

Given Xu Shen's definition of *de* as "to offer and present," it is questionable how this sense of "sacrificial offering" was transposed into "heavenly benediction," which I have identified as the primary meaning of *de.* Apparently, sacrificial offerings are what human beings present to the gods and dead ancestors. Blessing and benediction, in contrast, are what gods and dead ancestors grant to human beings in return. These two senses are thus opposed to each other. How can the word *de* contain such opposite meanings at the same time? Here we need to make out a special ancient Chinese usage, according to which opposite meanings are often combined in one word. Qian Zhongshu introduces this early usage by comparing it to the German word *Aufheben,* whose double meanings—"to put an end to" *(ein Ende machen)* and "to preserve and sustain" *(erhalten)*—have induced Hegel's high praise. Qian illustrates such usage in early Chinese texts by explicating a long list of words such as *yi* 易 (to change, not to change), *luan* 亂 (to order, to disturb), *fei* 廢 (to abandon, to establish), *yi* 衣 (to cover, to manifest), and so on.[7] In my view, this usage of double

meanings reflects a primordial function of language that is oriented not toward technical distinctions but toward poetical articulation. Remarkably, the ancient Chinese ritual ceremonies of ancestral worship enacted a moment of poetical entrancement during which sky and earth, the human and the divine, achieved a harmonious conjunction. It was an occasion for the sympathetic communication of the cosmic *yin* and *yang* forces, during which the conceptual distinctions between self and other, the earthly and heavenly, were blurred and transcended. It is in this context that we may understand how the sincere and affluent offerings to the gods were "correspondent" or even "equivalent" to divine blessing and benediction. This may be why even the English words "blessing" and "benediction" also carry the double senses of "prayer and devotion" and "what is bestowed for promoting happiness" at the same time.

But how do these senses of sacrificial offering and divine blessing agree with the morphology of the character in the early Chinese writings? Rong Geng's *Collection of Bronze Vessel Inscriptions* contains thirty-five images of *de,* which can be divided into three groups as represented by the standard characters 德 (), 悳 (), and 值 ().[8] In sum, there are four major components in these inscriptions: (1) the radical 彳, which carries the basic meaning of "a street, a path," or "to walk along, to move"; (2) the image of a heart, (心, ); (3) the image of an eye, (目, ); and (4) a trident structure or a vertical line (屮, 十, or 丨) on the top of the eye image. Apparently, the central components of the character that are present in all its variant inscriptions are the eye image and the trident structure or the line above. Most scholars are quick to identify the combination of the eye image and the line above as the character *zhi* 直 (straightforward, forthright, upright). But the deduction of the meaning of *de* from that of *zhi* has turned out to be rather circuitous. For example, He Xin argues that the basic meaning of *de* is "to look straight ahead in walking." As those who look straight ahead are often looking for something, *de* thus carries the same meaning as *de* 得, namely to acquire, to get. Moreover, because the basic meaning of *de* is to look straight ahead as one walks, all forthright and upright moral qualities and acts can be designated as virtuous actions (*dexing* 德行).[9] Though He's argument is representative of mainstream scholarly opinion, its rationale calls for serious qualification. Granted, the synonymous nature of *de* 德 and *de* 得 may be well grounded. But it is not clear why everyone who looks *ahead* must be looking *for* something and why everyone who looks for something must be *getting* it. On the other hand, despite plausible relations between one's upright heart and virtuous actions,[10] it remains dubious how the *single* quality of forthrightness or uprightness can be the foundation of a wide range of virtues such as benevolence, wisdom, decorum, and courage.

As I see it, the morphology of the character *de* indicates again the meaning of divine and ancestral blessing in the form of "spiritual powers" granted in sacrificial ceremonies. Due to the hasty identification of *zhi* (直) as the essential component of *de,* the previous scholarship has neglected the spiritual significance of the eye image (目).

Drawing upon a wide range of sources in ancient Chinese classics and folklore, Xiao Bing demonstrates that the eye images on ancient Chinese ritual instruments

had the important function of dispelling evil spirits and sanctioning good fortune.[11] Remarkably, there was a special kind of Western Zhou bronze vessels called "Yellow Eyes" (*huangmuyi* 黃目彝), which were known for the presence of staring-eye images plated with gold on their exterior surfaces. According to the *Liji,* the instruments of Yellow Eyes were one of the most distinguished vessels of the Zhou dynasty, symbolizing its benevolent leadership (*zhouyi huangmu* 周以黃目).[12] Remarkably, the eye images did not belong exclusively to the so-called Yellow Eyes instruments, but were widely present in a variety of bronze vessels, sculptures, and masks from the time of the Shang and even Xia dynasties.[13]

The primary function of bronze vessels was to make offerings to gods and dead ancestors. Presumably, the original scripts of *de* signify the rays of light projected from the eyes of the totem animals representing the benediction of gods and dead ancestors incarnated in the animal images carved on the bronze vessels.[14] Thus, it would make more sense to identify the central component in *de* as *xing* 省 (to see, to witness) instead of *zhi* 直.[15] That is to say, the part on the top of the eye image is the same as the trident structure (屮, ) in the character *xing*  , which portrays the projection and propagation of the life forces from the eye. This trident structure is shorthanded as a cross or a vertical line in most of the scripts present.[16] Accordingly, the "heart" component beneath the eye image indicates the cordial reception and preservation of the spiritual power from the eye. Remarkably, at least in one bronze vessel inscription, the heart component beneath the eye image is replaced with the image of a hand, indicating apparently the sense of "receiving and acquiring."[17] This line of interpretation agrees well with Xu Shen's definition of a variant form of *de* 悳 in the *Shuowen*: "to receive the grant from others and to hold it in one's self."[18] In addition, we can take the radical 彳 in the script of *de* to signify the movement or enactment of the spiritual power endowed in ritual ceremonies.

In conclusion, the morphology of *de* reveals its original meaning as the enactment of divine blessing in the form of spiritual power from the eye image. As this divine benediction was first endowed in the sacrificial ceremonies of ancestral worship, *de* also acquired the sense of "sacrificial offering," a meaning that was endorsed by Xu Shen's authoritative annotation. Furthermore, the common understanding of *de* as moral virtue must be taken as "secondary." As I will demonstrate in the second part, moral virtues such as benevolence and reverence are derived from the moral qualities of noble personalities who are able to "properly" disseminate spiritual endowment for the well-being of the people and honor the heavenly blessing with grateful sacrificial offerings in return.

De *in Bronze Vessel Inscriptions*

My examination of the classical definition of *de* and its morphology has revealed the double aspects of its basic meanings: (1) divine and ancestral benediction and (2) sacrificial offering. As it is still controversial whether *de* appeared in oracle bone scripts, I will leave this problem for future studies. We can identify clearly the script *de* on the bronze vessels of the Zhou dynasty, during which the notion of *de* exercised prominent influence on moral and political regulation. In this section, hence, I

will investigate the earliest uses of *de* in the Zhou bronze vessel inscriptions so as to confirm its two basic meanings as heavenly benediction and sacrificial offering.

In addition to the ambiguity of *de,* there is at least one more difficulty in deciphering the uses of *de* in the bronze vessel inscriptions. When taken out of their contexts, the recurrent phrases in bronze vessel inscriptions like *mingde* 明德 (the spiritual/glorious *de*), *yuande* 元德 (the primordial *de*), *yide* 懿德 (the gracious *de*), *jingde* 敬德 (to respect *de*), and *bingde* 秉德 (to hold and preserve *de*) are open to both the conventional explanation based on "virtue" and the present interpretation based on "heavenly blessing" and "sacrificial offering." However, it is often very hard to determine the contextual meanings of these phrases, considering the esoteric and controversial nature of many bronze vessel inscriptions. In view of this difficulty, I will not commit myself to a comprehensive examination of the meanings of *de* in bronze vessel inscriptions. Instead, my goal is to bring out some of the most conspicuous evidence to confirm the significations of blessing and sacrificial offering in the early uses of *de.* It is hoped that with these two senses confirmed, I will pave a way to clarify the meanings of *de* in various bronze vessel inscriptions for future studies.

Let me begin with some examples of the use of *de* as heavenly and ancestral blessing. An inscription on the Houzihu 厚子壺 records an occasion on which the provincial governor Houzi honored a royal ordination (*ming* 命) (from the son of heaven) by having a bronze pot manufactured, which was intended to "inherit and receive the opulent blessing" (*chengshou chunde* 承受純德) and to be used to pray for a boundless (benediction) that would last for billions of years.[19] I have translated the phrase *chunde* as "opulent blessing." As Xu Zhongshu points out, the characters 純 *(chun)* and 屯 *(zhun)* are interchangeable in bronze vessel inscriptions. They indicate the senses of "great, opulent, perfect, pure" as they are typically used together with words for blessing and sanction such as *gu* 嘏, *you* 右/佑, *lu* 魯, *xi* 熙, and *de*.[20] Thus, the translation of *de as* "blessing" matches perfectly with the context of this inscription.

Drawing upon the uses of *de* in a range of bronze vessel inscriptions and early classics, Lian Shaoming argues that *de* constitutes the gist of heavenly calling or injunction (*ming* 命).[21] I believe Lian's argument insightful. In my view, it is apposite to interpret *de* in the sense of heavenly injunction as a unique form of heavenly benediction that is distinguished by *spiritual* sanction in contrast with other forms of good fortune marked by *material* affluence. The supreme form of such a *spiritual* endowment of *de* consisted in the divine sanction for protecting the people (either in one's state or under heaven as a whole) on behalf of the heavenly father. For example, a line in the *Shiqiangpan* 史牆盤 extols the benevolent leadership of King Wen, for whom the ancestral god "vouchsafed gracious blessing" (*jiangyide* 降懿德). So sanctified, "King Wen prostrated to take the gift of sky and earth, for certainly he deserved to receive the myriad states."[22] As Xu Zhongshu points out, the character *jiang* 降 in bronze vessel inscriptions refers typically to both good and bad fortunes sent by heaven.[23] It is thus clear that *de* in this context signifies good fortune—the spiritual

power granted by the heavenly sanction of King Wen as the leader of the myriad states between sky and earth.

Though I have illustrated the senses of "blessing and benediction" in only two cases, the interpretation of *de* as divine and ancestral blessing is applicable to a great number of inscriptions. Moreover, it is apposite to note the continuation of this primary sense of *de* in many early texts. For example, a chapter in the *Guoyu* 國語 recounts the sagacious regulation of spiritual activities in ancient times, owing to which the people became loyal and trustworthy so that the gods were able to grant their benediction (*shen shiyi nengyou mingde* 神是以能有明德). Wei Zhao 韋昭 glosses the phrase *mingde* 明德 here as to "grant blessing and benediction (*jiangfuxiang* 降福祥), not to make misfortune and disaster."[24] This annotation is indeed well established as it is confirmed by the following lines: "as the people pursued different occupations other than spiritual activities, they were able to revere the gods without profanity. As a result, the gods granted fine livelihoods, while the people rewarded the gods with offerings. Misfortune and disaster would not come. There would be no lack of useful livelihoods they entreat for."[25]

With the meaning of divine blessing confirmed, I turn now to the sense of sacrificial offering. We can find a most obvious instance for the use of *de* as sacrificial offering in the poem "Jizui" 既醉 in the *Shijing*. The poem starts with a line appealing for a great and long-lasting benediction for the sovereign after feeding the spiritual surrogate (*gongshi* 公尸) with wine and food offerings (*jizuiyijiu* 既醉以酒, *jibaoyide* 既飽以德).[26] Here, the word *de* refers clearly to that with which one fed (*bao* 飽) the spiritual surrogate. Apparently, "food offering" can be the only reasonable interpretation in this context. In essence, the Western Zhou sacrificial ceremonies involved the beseeching of godly and ancestral blessing through food and wine offerings. Wang Shenxing argues that the essential meaning of *de* in the Western Zhou inscriptions and texts was *xiao* 孝—nourishment for living parents and sacrificial offerings for dead ancestors.[27] Indeed, *proper* food offerings were crucial for godly and ancestral blessings. According to the "Liqi" chapter of the *Liji,* when the sovereign gives *proper* food sacrifices according to the ritual, his people will live in harmony and appreciation, and the gods and ghosts will enjoy his festival offerings (*guishen xiangde* 鬼神饗德). On the contrary, it is against ritual for the sovereign to offer fish and tortoise when residing in the mountains or to offer deer and swine when residing beside the water—these offerings the gods and ghosts would not enjoy (*guishen fuxiang* 鬼神弗饗).[28]

We can trace the use of this understanding of "sacrificial offering" to a number of bronze vessel inscriptions. In the inscription for the Jinjiangding 晉姜鼎, *de* is used in parallel with *xiang* 亯 (to cater, to provide with food) to express the supplicant's devotion of making food offerings for her dead husband (*yongxiang yongde* 用亯用德) and her beseeching of boundless blessing for their sons and grandsons.[29] Perhaps one of the earliest instances of this type of sacrificial offering is recorded by the famous Dayuding 大盂鼎, whose manufacture is dated 1003 B.C. The inscription records a set of regal instructions for virtuous administration: "make sacrificial offerings

reverently (*jingyongde* 敬雝德), take in counsels unremittingly day and night, cater to those who journey to assist at the ritual sacrifices, and show awe for the heavenly majesty."[30] I take the character *yong* 雝 here as identical with *yong* 雍/饔, which means to feast and provide with food.[31] Remarkably, making proper sacrificial offerings to heavenly and ancestral gods was one of the top priorities for a virtuous governor, whose spiritual power relied on a heavenly consecration that could only be maintained through regular sacrificial offerings. That is why the governor was also required to offer feasts to guests and kinfolk who came to make contributions for the clan sacrifice. It should be noted that this exemplary royal instruction revealed a spirit of benefaction in early Chinese rule that took its signal not from the prevailing "authority" of the sovereign but from his homage to the heavenly majesty, from his hospitality to kinfolk, and from the humility he displayed in accepting good advice from the worthy.[32]

De *and* Mana*: A Reassessment*

With the clarification of the two basic meanings of *de* as spiritual endowment and sacrificial offering, I will now reassess the provocative interpretation that has identified the earliest meaning of *de* as a *mana*-like potency (or magical power of attraction)—a thesis that has been stated by many scholars such as Peter Boodberg, Marcel Granet, Arthur Waley, Alan Watts, Ellen Chen, and John Patterson.[33] On the other hand, having reviewed early Chinese texts and scripts supporting the *mana* thesis, Donald J. Munro claims that "one can reject any attempts to explain *te [de]* as a *mana*-like power that refer to its 'magic attraction.'"[34] In my humble opinion, the previous scholarship on *de* and *mana* has been compromised by at least one questionable interpretative scheme: the presumption of *one* universal solution to the meaning of *de* in a single text such as the *Laozi* or in the earliest Chinese texts and scripts in general—be it virtue, *mana*/magic power, or natural/physical force. Such a solution ignores the possibility that a single text attributed to Laozi or Confucius may well have contained a number of different usages and meanings of *de* simultaneously, which may include virtue, spiritual power, *mana* influence, benefaction, sacrificial offering, to grant, to favor, to be grateful, et cetera. The commitment to such a simplified rendering of *de* has also led some scholars to apply the sense of *mana*-like power and its function in some inappropriate contexts.[35]

Considering the multifaceted significations of *de* in its various usages in the early texts, it may indeed be difficult to establish a firm and unequivocal sense of *mana*/magical power on the basis of any single piece of text or script. However, we do not have to reject the plausible resonance between *de* and *mana* just because of such a lack of *direct* textual evidence. Though not highlighted in any individual instance of usage, the implication of *mana*-like potency may well have been incorporated into the root meanings of *de.* My analyses above have revealed already a sense of the "spiritual power" indicated by the "eye image" in the original morphology of *de.* Such spiritual power refers to heavenly and ancestral sanction in the form of the gift of being. Apparently, all we need now is an in-depth explication of how such spiritual endowment is comparable with *mana*-like potency.

However, before such a comparison, we must caution against some prevalent modern prejudices in the interpretation of the word *mana* itself. For example, when R. H. Codrington presents his authoritative definition of *mana* as the universal primitive belief "in a supernatural power or influence"—a belief in a force altogether distinct from *physical* power[36]—he is apparently presuming a nineteenth-century scientific conception of nature as a *mechanical* apparatus whose movement is determined by inexorable physical laws. It is on the basis of this mechanical view of nature that *mana* power, which is often evoked through "psychological" means such as ritual, sacrifice, prayer, and personal charisma to influence human and natural events, is regarded as "*super*natural." Moreover, the presumed "universality" of the belief among various "primitive" peoples in the influence of *mana* may well have stemmed from a Western prejudice against all those people who do not share the same modern conception of nature as a rigid and unconscious machine. As a matter of fact, the significance of the so-called *mana* influence may vary greatly in the spiritual practices of diverse ancient and indigenous traditions. Even the meanings of the word *mana* itself contain many ambiguities that do not always agree with the definition by Codrington and other authorities.[37]

I do not have the space here to criticize the mechanical conception of nature and elaborate how the persistence of the bipolar physical/psychological division implicates a sense of Logocentrism and imperialism in modern interpretations of traditional cultures and societies.[38] Nor can I evaluate here the "validity" of the archaic beliefs according to which nature represents an animated web of forces that can be affected and maneuvered by human appeals and invocations.[39] In a nutshell, despite all the superstitious elements in primitive magical practices that should be dismissed in the light of expanded human knowledge today, the rejection of these particular beliefs does not have to nullify the *authenticity* of the indigenous experience of nature as sentient, animated, and responsive. To say the very least, in order to bring out the authentic spiritual implications involved in such catchwords as *mana* and *de,* it is imperative to recognize the poetical and possessive dream forces that were crucial for bridging the gaps between the physical and the psychological, the living and the dead, the fictional and the real, and the human and natural worlds in various native and ancient communities.[40]

The ancient Chinese designated the sympathetic correspondence between humankind and the animated life forces of nature as *gantong* 感通*,* which means "to open oneself to and to be affected by nature and human beings in the surrounding world."[41] Affirming the analogy between the Chinese word *xing* 性 (nature, potency) and the concept of *mana,* Li Zongtong spells out an ancient Chinese belief in the vital process of *gan* or *gantong* that was responsible for the birth (*sheng* 生) of the ancestral kings of ancient tribes.[42] Li argues that the generative forces of nature *(sheng)* constitute the base of three characters whose morphologies represent the totemic nature of early Chinese society: *xing* 姓 (family name), *xing* 性 (nature, potency), and *jing* 旌 (a flag with symbols and images of the totem animal). While the validity of Li's inferences on the totemic origin of early Chinese family names and societies may deserve further examination, his clarification of the relationship

between *gantong, mana*-like influence, and the generative forces of nature is suggestive. In the light of Li's studies, we can take the most original meaning of *de* as the potency for life originating in the intercourse *(gantong)* of *yin* and *yang* forces (*qi* 氣) harbored in the blood of dead ancestors and the landscape of particular historical communities.[43]

There are numerous instances in early Chinese texts in which *de* has the meaning of "life-granting potency." The "Jici II" 繫辭下 chapter of the *Zhouyi* recognizes Life or the spiritual potency of Life as "the greatest endowment of sky and earth" (*tiandi zhi dade yue sheng* 天地之大德曰生). Another line in the same chapter commends the ancient sage-king Pao Xi, who created the eight hexagrams that symbolize the manifold natural and human phenomena arising out of the intercourse of *yin* and *yang* forces with a view to communicating with the spiritual power *(de)* of the divine (*tong shenming zhi de* 通神明之德).[44] *The Collection of Nine Commentaries* annotates *de* in this context as "the interaction and communication of *yin* and *yang* forces" (*yinyang jiaotong* 陰陽交通).[45] In the ancient Chinese mind, the intercourse of *yin* and *yang* forces was responsible for the birth of all beings between sky and earth. Thus, originating in the harmonious interaction of *yin* and *yang,* the spiritual power of *de* refers to the life-granting potency for both human and natural beings. Han Fei, for example, compares the potency of *de* to the root of a tree, by virtue of which a person is able to establish his life.[46] Likewise, the *Zhuangzi* describes *de* as the potency that is essential for the life of all beings (*wu deyi sheng, weizhi de* 物得以生，謂之德).[47]

Though all beings are endowed with the potency of life, there can be great differences among individual beings in their appropriation and conservation of such a spiritual gift. This may help to answer the ambiguity of the word *de,* which can denote both the potency of life and an individual being's "ability" to preserve and foster such a spiritual endowment. Compared with other beings like animals, plants, and stones, human beings have distinguished themselves through their heart and conscience,[48] with their greater capacity for empathetic communication that is the great principle of cosmic generation. It is in this sense that humankind is the gift of sky and earth.[49] Primarily, the founding ancestors of a historical people were acclaimed for their ability to induce a lyrical way of communal life in harmony with the rhythmic courses of heaven. Indeed, the foundation of the early Chinese ideal of *dezhi*—the virtuous rule of benefaction—consists precisely in the enactment of such senses of empathy and reciprocity that would safeguard the continuous circulation of cosmic vibrancy through the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

II. Empathy and Embodiment: The Harmonious Circulation of Cosmic Vibrancy in the Virtuous Rule of Benefaction

With the clarification of the basic meaning of *dezhi* as the virtuous rule of benefaction, I will bring out now the supreme importance of empathy and embodiment for the early Chinese cosmic and political order in its three levels of enactment. These three levels of political and cosmic order include: (1) heavenly sanction and

benediction for the great ancestors of various tribal clans, (2) ancestral blessing for the sovereigns and royal families in power, and (3) royal ratification and protection for the officials and the people through the endowment of fiefs, honorific gifts, and benevolent care in general.[50] The foundation of this political and cosmic order consists in the reciprocal transactions of grant and gratitude. It was thus crucial to return the heavenly grace with rites of gratitude featuring the earthly and material production of herbs, grain, animals, and various other precious items such as metal, jade, and silk. These contributions were also conveyed through the ladders of the three levels mentioned above: first from the common people to the officials and the nobility, and then to the king, who was responsible for making sacrificial offerings in turn for the departed ancestors and heaven. Apparently, with the operation of this reciprocal transaction of grant and gratitude, we may already recognize a correspondence between the spiritual and material realms of beings in the circulation of cosmic vibrancy.

In sum, my study will bear out three theses on the significations of *de* and the early Chinese political and cosmic order. First, as a principle of *genus, de* stands for the grounding spiritual power that nurtures the growth of human communities in harmony with the cyclical rhythm of cosmic forces. Second, the virtuous rule of benefaction represents a distinctive dimension of early Chinese government, whose leadership does not turn on exclusive heavenly sanction but on the cohesive power of communal attachment and collaboration. Last but not least, the heart of the virtuous rule of benefaction is the sagacious personalities who are able to propagate the heavenly gift of being as they promote empathy and reciprocity among all beings. The moral ideal of early Chinese humanity, therefore, does not entail a philosophy of entitlement, but a poetical way of embodiment. Accordingly, we should take such majestic personalities as the archetype of early Chinese and Confucian moral virtues.

De *as a Principle of Genus: Harmonious Propagation of the Heavenly Gift of Being*

In the ancient Chinese mind, all beings between sky and earth arise out of the intercourse of *yin* and *yang,* which is named as the movement of *dao* in the Later Zhou classics.[51] While *dao* designates the silent and mysterious origin of all things, *de* describes the "spiritual endowment" that nurtures the different kinds of life forms. Now the substance of this spiritual endowment consists in the harmonious interaction of the cosmic forces (*qi* 氣) of *yin* and *yang* sponsoring the generation and growth of all beings. Remarkably, the ancient Chinese conceived the primary order of such vigorous forces of nature as the five orders/phases (*wuxing* 五行), which were embodied in the five elements of nature (i.e., wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) and which set the foundation for various human communities. According to the accounts from a range of Later Zhou sources, we are able to identify an ancient tradition according to which the five greatest ancestral kings (*wudi* 五帝) were endowed with the five kinds of spiritual powers (*wude* 五德) corresponding to the five phases of cosmic forces.[52]

Thus, the spiritual endowment for an ancestral king involved a particular phase of the five orders, which were informed by such natural endowments as his blood

lineage and the landscape of his abode. These natural endowments would also determine the particular kind (*lei* 類) of people who descended from this ancestry, because an ancestor was the root of his kind (*leizhiben* 類之本) and his distinctive spiritual acquirements would be the model for his descendants.[53] For example, Huangdi 黃帝 and Yandi 炎帝 were the ancestral kings of two clans distinguished by their family names, Ji 姬 and Jiang 姜. According to a historical account in the *Guoyu* ("Jinyu" 晉語 4:10), the family names of Ji and Jiang were derived from the Ji and Jiang Rivers, which engendered and nurtured the peoples of Huang and Yan, respectively. As these two peoples were formed out of different natural acquirements and family names, their spiritual gifts were also different (*yide* 異德), which prompted them to engage each other with military forces. In general, peoples with different family names had different spiritual gifts, and those with different spiritual gifts *(de)* were regarded as different kinds (*yide ze yilei* 異德則異類).[54]

It is thus clear that *de* stands for the principal of *genus* (*lei* 類). It refers to the spiritual and natural endowments that establish particular "kinds" of people with common natural acquirements and ancestral lineages. For example, the poem "Huangyi" 皇矣 lauds the glorious spiritual gift *(de)* of King Ji 王季 of Zhou: "as his spiritual gift was glorious and of the same kind as his ancestor (*keming kelei* 克明克類), he was able to be the leader and sovereign of the great state Zhou."[55] Remarkably, when Roger Ames interprets *de* as a *"principium individuationis,"* he acknowledges also that *de* is a principle of integration as well.[56] This apparent tension between the collective and the particular in Ames' interpretation can easily be resolved if we recognize *de* as the *intermediate* between the "universal" and the "individual"—as the particular "kind" of being. *De,* therefore, stands for the genetic power of communal lineage that nurtures the development of all individual beings.

My interpretation of *de* as a principle of *genus* agrees well with Ellen Chen's definition of *de* in the *Dao De Jing* as "the specific inborn nature in each thing." According to Chen, *de* is "the nature each thing has received from *tao* so that it becomes the kind of thing it is."[57] Chen is careful enough to distinguish *de* as "the specific natures of things" from the Western concept of "form." Because, for the Daoist, *de* "is an organic concept, it is a life category, it pertains primarily to the power of life, growth, and change in nature."[58] Be that as it may, I believe Chen's dismissal of the *spiritual* dimension of *de* to be needless and misguided. While Chen is right that Arthur Waley's interpretation of *de* as the "magical power of the ruler" is too narrow to be applicable to the *Dao De Jing,*[59] there is good evidence that for the early Chinese, the *natural* and *spiritual* (magical) dimensions of *de,* which are proposed by Chen and Waley respectively, may well be correspondent with each other.

Granted, many modern scholars have habitually presumed a Christian paradigm of *supernatural* Godhead and a mechanical conception of Nature in ancient Chinese spiritual and ritual practices. In so doing, they have continued to overlook the coalescence of the natural and spiritual dimensions in the ancient Chinese worldview according to which the cyclical cosmic movements carry profound spiritual implications. In order to overcome this modern prejudice, it is apposite to highlight an alternative understanding that does not confuse the deity of ancestors with a form of "super-

natural" powers controlling and directing *all* human and natural affairs. Rather, the "divinity" of ancestral gods consists primarily in their capacity to *communicate* with the surrounding *natural* world. David Abram has demonstrated convincingly that for many indigenous cultures the spirits of dead persons do not enter an immaterial and supernatural realm. Rather, the decomposition of dead bodies into soil, worms, and dust signifies "the gradual reintegration of one's ancestors and elders into the living landscape, from which all, too, are born." Therefore, for the peoples in early and indigenous societies, the "invisible atmosphere [is it not a counterpart of the Chinese concept of *qi*?] that animates the visible world . . . retains within itself the spirit or breath of the dead person until the time when that breath will enter and animate another visible body—a bird, or a deer, or a field of wild grain." Accordingly, the practice of ancestral worship should be regarded ultimately as another mode of "attentiveness to nonhuman nature," to the various animating forces and sentient entities in the encompassing cosmos.[60] In the light of Abram's account, it would be sensible to deduce that the filial piety of early Chinese hinges not upon the "supernatural" authority of ancestral gods but upon their salient capacity to communicate with the cryptic forces of nature itself. Accordingly, the purpose of prayers and sacrifices is to respond to and invoke the various animated forces in nature that are of the same kind as the ancestral and clan spirits.

Notably, one of the root meanings of *de* is precisely the animated forces of nature—the primordial heavenly endowments originating in the intercourse of *yin* and *yang*.[61] The primal categories of such spiritual endowments consisted in the five kinds of cosmic energy incarnated in the five elements and four seasons.[62] Xiong Zhong defines the meaning of *de* as the "animated forces (*wangqi* 旺氣) of the four seasons."[63] According to the *Liji,* the arrival of each season was marked by the prevalence of the specific kind of spiritual power correlating with one of the five phases of the cosmic paradigm. Because of the influence of its typical cosmic forces, there is a correlation between every seasonal (and monthly) movement and the particular element, number, flavor, smell, musical tone, direction of wind, animal behavior, celestial pattern, and sanction of one of the five ancestral kings. At the same time, it is mandatory for the son of heaven to adjust and harmonize all human activities (such as sacrificial, ritual, agricultural, artisanal, and military activities) with the kind of spiritual power prevailing in the season.[64]

For example, three days before the beginning of spring, the chief minister should announce to the son of heaven the arrival date of spring and the kind of prevailing spiritual power that would consist in wood (*shengde zaimu* 盛德在木). After fasting for three days, the son of heaven should lead his officials to welcome the coming of the spring in the eastern suburb. After that, he should order his minister to bestow the spiritual endowment (*bude* 布德) upon his people in the form of seasonal orders, festival celebrations, and material bequests. As the spiritual power of spring was meant to promote the birth and growth of plants and animals, the son of heaven should also lead the rite of furrowing, then pray for the harvest of grain and broadcast the appropriate instructions for various agricultural, sacrificial, and administrative activities. Among the most important edicts were the bans against felling trees,

toppling bird nests, killing fledglings and cubs, hunting infant beasts and eggs, and all military exploits. It is not hyperbole to say that judicious correspondence with the spiritual forces of nature was *the* top priority of a sagacious political leadership. The belief was that misfortunes would befall if the particular set of orders for the summer, fall, or winter were implemented mistakenly in the spring.[65]

Accordingly, the central responsibility of a virtuous governor was to sustain the harmonious correspondence between human activity and cosmic rhythm,[66] and in particular to set up an accurate calendar and to instruct his people in the celestial order and seasonal changes in a timely fashion. The proclamation and enactment of the *exact* starting dates of the spring and autumn, for example, would persuade all the people to adjust their lives and productive activities in accord with the cyclical movement of the heavens and warrant favorable agricultural production and the welfare of the people.[67] There were at least two ways in which the welfare of the people was important for a virtuous governor. First, it demonstrated his benevolent rule in accord with the gracious way of heaven. Second, provided with adequate agricultural production from the people, the sovereign was able to make sufficient offerings to the ancestral and heavenly gods and pray for continuous consecration.

Remarkably, the spirit of virtuous rule of benefaction consisted in a harmonious circulation of cosmic vibrancy between heaven and humankind that would ensure the gradual and gracious propagation of potency for life to the common people. Therefore, the ideal sage-king was a "selfless" guardian and transmitter of heavenly grace: a benevolent leader who regulated human activity in accord with the gracious courses of sky and earth without selfish inclinations. In a conversation with his disciple Zixia, Confucius states the bottom line for partaking of the ways of sky and earth as the three kinds of "selflessness:" the sky shelters all without partiality, the earth bears all without partiality, and the sun and the moon illuminate all without partiality. Accordingly, it was by virtue of their selfless work that ancient sage-kings were able to convey the gracious endowments of sky and earth to the common people and realize their virtuous leadership.[68] The "Jingjie" chapter of the *Liji* records a lesson by Confucius in the same vein: "the son of heaven partakes of the ways of sky and earth as his virtuous practice of benefaction compares with the gracious endowments of sky and earth (*depei tiandi* 德配天地). As he brings benefits to all beings, the light of his benefaction goes along with that of the sun and the moon, illuminating all within the four seas without leaving out any tiny beings."[69]

Indeed, the essence of *dezhi* is the rule of benefaction, which is oriented to sheltering and nurturing all people in the world so that the harmonious circulation of cosmic vibrancy can carry on without chaotic disruption and selfish misappropriation. Accordingly, the charisma of the sovereign had little to do with the privileged sanction of an omnipotent Godhead. Rather, the true signification of "divinity" lay in the continuous propagation of cosmic forces that were responsible for all lives in the world. It is also in this sense that we should comprehend the early Chinese understanding of humanity, which is informed not by the philosophy of entitlement but by the selfless embodiment of the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

Authority versus Affinity: Reciprocal Transactions of Grant and Gratitude in the Rule of Ritual

The ideal of a selfless propagator of the heavenly gift of being is the archetype of early Chinese sagacious personality that informs both Daoist and Confucian teachings. For example, chapter 38 of the *Laozi* says that "the superior benefactor does not have the selfish intention to claim himself as a benefactor, and that is why his benefaction will always continue (*shangde bude, shiyi youde* 上德不德，是以有德)." A selfless human benefactor, despite the lack of egoistic intentions, is not free from the purposeful action of providing grants and promoting lives in the world. In contrast, the supreme way of heaven will let all beings arise and pass away on their own without any purposeful interference. It is thus only when the most natural way of heaven has been lost that the way of the selfless benefactor will prevail (*shidao erhou de* 失道而後德). Chapter 41 continues to expound the way of the superior benefactor, whose bosom is comparable to an empty valley as he has held nothing for himself when he gives away his benefaction (*shangde ruogu* 上德若谷). Accordingly, such a benefactor will only establish his feats of benefaction in a furtive manner—without any trace of calculated management and egotistic inclination (*jiande ruotou* 建德若偷).[70] For Confucians, on the other hand, as most human beings are untamed in their selfish desires and inclinations, they have to be regulated first and foremost by the rule of ritual and decorum. And yet, the way of selfless benefaction as praised by the Daoists remains as the highest ideal for the Confucian cultivation of moral character. Hence, a line in the *Liji* refers to the primeval age when the way of the superior benefactor who harbored no desires for reward was highly honored (*taishang guide* 太上貴德). It was only in the subsequent ages that the principle of reciprocity with regard to grants and gratitude became the prevalent moral undertaking.[71]

Apparently, such selfless benefactors personify the ideal of *wuwei* 無為 (non-action). As Roger Ames rightly explicates, *wuwei* does not belong to Daoist thinking alone but is "an appropriate description of the ideal of the Confucian ruler: one who reigns but does not rule."[72] Now the clarification of this selfless dimension of the early Chinese may help to correct a tendency in recent scholarship to construe the Confucian moral and political order as a fixed hierarchy of power based on the supreme authority of the monarch.[73] Granted, there were certainly ritual institutions that were meant to inaugurate the legitimate authority of the sovereign. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the endorsement of the monarch's authority was an expedient means to facilitate the gradual dissemination of heavenly endowments. It was far from the central, let alone the only, maxim of early Chinese and Confucian political teachings. Indeed, the ideal Confucian governor is a selfless guardian and transmitter of cosmic vibrancy without egoistic misappropriation. In this sense, he must be a "leader" who does not claim any "authority" at all.

In my view, one central theme of the early Chinese moral and political order consists precisely in the intricate interplay of nothingness and being, silence *(wuwei)* and action *(youwei),* indifference and hierarchy, deliverance and desire, affinity and authority, selfless withdrawal and powerful control, the way of heaven and the way of the human. In this section, I will take the cue from this central theme as I work out

the second level of *de*'s import, which involves the dissemination of heavenly grace for the sovereign and his grateful offerings in return. In so doing, I will also demonstrate concretely a critical dimension of early Chinese political philosophy that is not based on exclusive authority and power, but on the cohesive communal attachment evoked and consolidated in the enactment of ritual ceremonies.

Let me begin with a perennial lesson in early Chinese moral and political discourse that instructs sagacious governors to prioritize the virtuous practice of beneficence over divine authority and military prowess. Wangsun Man 王孫滿, a high minister for King Ding 定 of the Zhou dynasty, brought out this teaching nicely when he identified the foundation of kingship as the virtuous practice of beneficence, not as the weight and scale of the sacrificial *ding* vessels, which were the supreme symbol of divine sanction (*zaide buzai ding* 在德不在鼎). Wangsun's statement was provoked by an inquiry of the Chu sovereign, Zhuang 莊, who was parading his military forces on the outskirts of the Zhou capital after his expedition against some barbarian troops nearby. Zhuang's questions on the weight and scale of *ding* divulged his ambition to implement the nine sacrificial *ding* vessels *(jiuding)* that symbolized the regal authority of the Zhou king. Drawing upon the lessons from the successes and failures of representative sovereigns in the previous dynasties, Wangsun reminded the Chu sovereign of the true meaning of heavenly sanction as symbolized by the *ding* vessels:

> [W]hen the heavenly blessing was glorified and disseminated through the virtuous practice of benefaction, even though the *ding* vessels were small, the foundation of the throne would be grave and stable. On the contrary, when the heavenly blessing was obstructed and obscured by the impertinent deportment of the ruler, even though the *ding* vessels were big, the foundation of the throne would be light and unstable.[74]

Practically, it was undeniable that both beneficence and regal authority—which was often enforced in the form of law and punishment (*xing* 刑)—might prove necessary for the effective regulation of a state. Han Fei compares the use of punishment *(xing)* and award *(de)* as a monarch's two handles to manipulate his subordinate officials.[75] In contrast to this legalist theory, which intends to promote the authority and egoistic interests of the monarch with the combined use of reward and punishment, the conventional wisdom of sagacious leadership was oriented toward the harmonious flourishing of all lives in the world through the selfless practice of benefaction. Therefore, the primary principle of a successful government in early China was always to *prioritize* the propagation of benefaction over the enforcement of law and punishment, namely to apply first the gentle method of endowment and education and to leave punitive military force only as the last resort.[76] For instance, when King Mu 穆 of the Western Zhou intended to assault the remote Quanrong 犬戎 people, who disregarded his demand for a sacrificial contribution, Duke Ji endeavored to thwart Mu's initiative by invoking the political teachings of the former Zhou kings: "to glorify heavenly endowment through beneficent grants but not to parade military forces" (*yaode buguanbing* 耀德不觀兵).[77] Admittedly, sovereigns in the Zhou dynas-

ties were not always virtuous and disciplined enough to follow such a benevolent practice with selfless devotion. Yet, the priority of benefaction over penalty remained as a paradigmatic political philosophy underlined by Confucius and his followers.[78]

Having recourse to the theory of *yin* and *yang,* the Han Confucian Dong Zhongshu brought the meanings and proper usage of benefaction and punishment to a greater transparency. According to Dong, the way of benefaction was associated with the *yang* forces responsible for generating lives. The way of punishment was associated with the *yin* forces accountable for destroying lives. Now the *yang* forces dwelled constantly in the prime of the summer, as they were engaged in generating, nurturing, and promoting all kinds of lives. The *yin* forces dwelled constantly in the depth of the winter, as they were held up at the position that was vacant and disused. Thus, the cosmic courses of seasonal alteration revealed already that heaven preferred the use of benefaction (*yang* forces) to punishment (*yin* forces). Therefore, when a sovereign administered his affairs in accord with the will of heaven, he would "employ the way of benefaction and education instead of the way of punishment."[79]

It is thus clear that the early Chinese moral and political teachings do not endorse an absolute and authoritative hierarchy that turns on divine sanction, prerogative power, or the metaphysical classification of humankind. Rather, the conventional wisdom of early Chinese government is oriented toward the gradual dissemination of the heavenly gift of being that is essential for the flourishing of all human and natural lives between sky and earth. Therefore, the institution of ranks and ladders (*dengji* 等級) as instructed by the rule of ritual and decorum (*li* 禮) involves primarily a gentle form of educational forces.[80] While scholars like Benjamin Schwartz are certainly right to highlight the sociopolitical as well as the ceremonial orders that are regulated by the rule of ritual, it seems utterly mistaken to identify the Confucian promotion of ritual instructions as a frank acceptance or even reinforcement of the established networks of power, hierarchy, and authority.[81] As a fact, the Confucian promotion of ritual was never intended to justify the right of the mighty. The true meaning of the Chinese word *li,* as Ku Hung-ming neatly points out, consists in the fine feeling or *good taste* of the gentleman, that is, the *sense of honor.*[82]

Therefore, the purpose of ritual instruction is to *domesticate* the authority of necessary social and political structures through the educational forces of refined sensibility and gentle persuasion. It is oriented toward moral transformation instead of political revolution, in view of the catastrophic chaos and human losses occasioned by violent revolutions, as well as the depressing reality that what such violent revolts produce are more often than not new authoritarians in power. By instilling a principle of honor and reciprocity—a civilized sense of grace and openness into an otherwise obdurate hierarchy, the order of *li* consolidates the appropriate social divisions necessary for developing harmonious transactions of grant and gratitude in the world. Indeed, the root of the word *li* involves the sense of "gift and ceremonial offering," which indicates an essential correspondence between *li* (ritual, gift) and *de* (benefaction) in their earliest meanings and functions.[83] Therefore, the rule of ritual is not a rule by authority and power, but a rule of benefaction.[84]

It is in the light of this principle of reciprocity that we should understand the function of ritual ceremonies that are essential for the propagation of heavenly grace *(de)* on the second level of early Chinese political and cosmic order: the conferment of spiritual power by the dead ancestors upon the sovereign and other living descendants in the form of "boon and benediction." Now, as a principle of *genus, de* refers to the heavenly gift of being and the particular phase of cosmic forces that were delivered to a historical community via its great ancestral heroes and gods. Initially, the propagation of such spiritual endowments took two basic routes: (1) the vertical lineage through the inheritance of the most eligible sons and grandsons of the ancestral king over time, and (2) the horizontal routes through which the spiritual endowments were disseminated for a range of distinguished kinfolk, tribes, and nations, who were ratified to settle in different fiefs of the kingdom.

Remarkably, the primary qualification for a nobleman's candidacy was none other than his capacity for the virtuous practice of benefaction *(de).* That was why the very ceremonial event for the investiture of the lords was named by the word *de.* For example, the Song prince Ziyu related a founding event of the practice of investiture when King Cheng 成 granted lands and honorific instruments to the appropriate noblemen, who were ratified to lead a range of states (*xuanjian mingde* 選建明德).[85] On an earlier occasion, the Lu prince Zhongzhong had accounted for the same event: "the son of heaven established a range of positions for the propagation of heavenly blessing and benediction (*jiande* 建德). He bestowed family names to the noble beneficiaries on the basis of their lineage of birth and spiritual endowments; he consecrated lands for them and conferred on them family titles accordingly."[86] Remarkably, both family names (*ming* 名) and family titles (*shi* 氏) of the feudal lords stood for the determinate *kinds* of spiritual forces *(de)* transmitted along with the blood lineage of the particular ancestors and animated forces embedded in different geographical locales. They marked the sanctifying power for various historical communities of people that carried on the dissemination of the original and common *genus* rooted in the earliest ancestral kings.

As I have elaborated above, what led all the individuals in a political order into a harmonious coalescence was not the intimidation of military and police power or heavenly punishment, but the cohesive force and *aesthetic* appeal of communal affinity evoked and consolidated in the sacrificial ceremonies. The heart of this communal affinity is *the consciousness of the same kind.* The consciousness of the same kind was evoked and enacted in the sacrificial rites for the consecration of and gratitude for the common ancestors. It provided an emotional common ground for the coalescence of a historical community bonded by their particular blood lineage and geographical location. Liang Qichao identifies this consciousness of the same kind (*tongleiyishi* 同類意識) as the most original meaning of *ren* 仁 (benevolence, humaneness), which has often been regarded as the consummate virtue in Confucian teachings.[87] I believe Liang's interpretation of *ren* to be well-founded. Indeed, Liang's exposition of *ren* as the consciousness of the same kind agrees nicely with Mou Zongsan's insightful rendering of *ren* as *gantong* 感通, as empathetic openness.[88] As a passage in the *Lüshi chunqiu* elucidates, such sympathetic affinity and communi-

cation were only possible for beings of the same kind (*ren hu qilei zheye* 仁乎其類者也).[89] According to Confucius, the very purpose of assorted ritual ceremonies was to evoke such consciousness so that a human person would be able to commune with *(ren)* gods and ghosts, forefathers, the deceased, the neighborhood, and guests, respectively.[90]

Apparently, the sympathetic communication with godly and human beings would typically involve the reciprocal transactions of grant and gratitude as regulated by the rule of ritual and decorum. With the decorous exchanges of opportune articles of bequests and grateful contributions, the two parties of the transaction established an affectionate bond that confirmed themselves as the same *kind* of people who were able to interact and communicate with each other in good faith. The acts and intentions of benefaction and gratitude *(de)* were the very *medium* through which the consciousness of the same kind was enacted and endorsed. As the president of regal ritual ceremonies, the sovereign was the paragon for fostering such affectional and reciprocal bonds formed on the basis of benevolence and gratitude. Indeed, the sagacity of an early Chinese leader should consist mainly in his capacity for *gantong*—his ability to commune with and bring all beings between sky and earth into a harmonious correspondence. As the son of heaven, the sovereign was to act out this moral paradigm *(de)* along two major routes: (1) his benevolent grants and sagacious instructions for subordinate officials and the common people, and (2) his timely and appropriate offering to heaven and the ancestral gods. This is indeed the moral paradigm for all individuals in the political order, who were instructed by the ritual of reciprocity to extend kind grants to their subordinates and to offer grateful contributions to their superiors. Accordingly, with opportune supports and instructions from their superiors, the peasants at the bottom of the political order would labor upon the earth and produce abundant harvests. By means of such earthly production, the peasants would be able to support his family and make grateful contributions to his landlord.

Here, it is important to note that the primary justification for the authority of a sovereign hinged *less* on the occasional "affluent" sacrificial offerings than on the benevolent ruling and well-being of the people in general, which were crucial for the genuine prosperity of the state and the perpetuation of offerings to heaven and the ancestral gods.[91] The Eastern Zhou statesman Ji Liang provided an exemplary exposition of this conventional wisdom in his advice to Duke Sui. According to Ji Liang, the supreme way of political order consisted in "devotion to the people and fidelity to the gods" (*zhongyuming er xinyushen* 忠於民而信於神). When Duke Sui alluded to his affluent sacrificial offerings in order to evidence his fidelity to the gods, Ji Liang drew upon an ancient maxim that identified the well-being of the people as the basic principle of the gods (*mingzhe, shen zhi zhu ye* 民者，神之主也): "That is why the foregoing sage-kings would first realize the well-being of the people and then make efforts to propitiate the gods."[92] Ji Liang's emphasis on the supreme importance of the common people was a truism iterated by a range of classical texts such as the *Shangshu* and *Mengzi*.[93] In the ancient Chinese mind, the peace and prosperity of the people was the *primary* blessing of heaven in its selfless way of

benefaction. Therefore, the true meaning of sacrifice to heaven and the ancestral gods was to "exhibit" the well-being of the people evidenced by the fat livestock and other profuse offerings they were able to produce. Only in a *secondary* sense was the substances of the offering themselves important as a form of catering to the gods.[94]

This emphasis on love and care for the common people confirms that the foundation of the early Chinese political order was not the *sacred* authority of the sovereign or the social hierarchy, but a communal attachment originating in the consciousness of the same kind. It can even be said that the political order established for the virtuous rule of benefaction was meant to realize a form of supreme equality (*zhiping* 至平). For early Chinese statesmen, true equality did not denote an "equal" distribution of honorable positions and remuneration for all individuals despite their different virtues, talents, and contributions. Rather, the supreme equality, as Xunzi spells out, was in the assigning of appropriate official positions and artisanal/agricultural jobs according to one's distinctive qualities of benevolence, kindness, wisdom, and capacity.[95] In this way, all individuals in the society would be *equal* to their proper social and political positions. Thus, so far as all fulfilled their functions for the harmonious circulation of cosmic vibrancy, they would not recognize the differences in their positions and remunerations as inequitable: "the one who received recompense from all over the world would not regard his income as too much; those who served as gatekeepers, receptionists, concierges, and watchmen would not regard theirs as too little."[96] In other words, titles of social and political position served only a *decorative* function to facilitate the cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice among different individuals with different moral and technical capacities. These titles did not carry absolute and categorical authority. The institution of ritual served rather a *heuristic* function. It was intended as an educational process through which all individuals would come to regulate their lives after the sagacious benefactor in accord with their own moral capacities so that the glorious propagation of the heavenly gift of being would become manifest in the prosperity of all peoples and their affluent productions and grateful contributions.

Poetical Personification of Cosmic Resonance: Recovering the Origin of Confucian Moral Virtues

The real foundation of the virtuous rule of benefaction was not only the exchange of the *physical* goods between individuals on the different levels of the political order. It was rather the reciprocity of *human affections* and *intentions* that fostered sincere rapport among all persons. The reciprocal exchanges of the benefactors' care and kindness and the beneficiaries' loyalty and reverence nurtured the good faith in the consciousness of the same kind. With the dissemination of such feelings of affinity, it was anticipated that all human beings would prosper within the grand circulation of grace and gratitude between sky and earth, that all sentient beings would be susceptible to such empathetic influences as they all originated in the same *kind* of cosmic forces at the beginning of the universe. Indeed, what was occasioned at the jubilant feasts of ritual ceremonies was the harmonious flourishing of human affections—the feelings of devotion and reverence that induced a sense of belonging to the commu-

nity of the same kind. This glorious enactment of heavenly blessing and human gratitude summoned all communal members to realize their destiny as the guardians and transmitters of the selfless way of heavenly grace and to settle themselves into their blissful vocation as the site of *embodiment* for the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

In my view, the supreme importance of empathy and reciprocity for the early Chinese moral and political order bears out a distinctive Chinese type of humanity that is not informed by the philosophy of entitlement, but personifies the poetical way of embodiment. In other words, the destiny of a moral person is not to realize a privileged and predetermined heavenly mandate, but to personify heavenly grace by propagating the spiritual potency of life for all beings. Therefore, we should regard such a majestic personality exuberant with spiritual power *(de)* as the archetype of early Chinese moral virtues. It is inadequate, for example, to categorize the Confucian teaching of *ren* under such an abstract quality or concept as "goodness" or "perfect virtue." Rather, we have to comprehend *ren* in its most original meaning as the consciousness of the same kind, as the empathetic openness *(gantong)* that is first exemplified by the sagacious personalities in their selfless care and protection for all beings between sky and earth. Drawing upon this sense of empathy and embodiment, Mengzi proposes moral self-cultivation for the achievement of *ren* as a process by which to extend one's care and compassion gradually to the whole world. The Song Confucian Cheng Hao, in the same vein, describes a benevolent *(ren)* person as one who takes all things in the world as one body that is none other than the self.

Admittedly, there is a growing tendency to categorize Confucian moral teachings under the framework of modern Western ethical theories and concepts such as Kantian ethics and virtue ethics. However, considering the multifaceted significations of *de* and the central importance of the early Chinese cosmology for the Confucian moral and political order, it would be more appropriate to comprehend the origin of Confucian moral virtues in the "proper" way of being and acting exemplified by the early Chinese sages as they safeguard and propagate the harmonious circulation of cosmic vibrancy between sky and earth. Mengzi ably reveals such a cosmic origin of Confucian moral cultivation when he highlights the fostering of "vital and overflowing life forces (*haoran zhiqi* 浩然之氣) for the self." According to Mengzi, such vital forces of life are the grandest and firmest among all forces. When nurtured properly with a sense of integrity and when obstructed by no selfish and petty intentions, such vital life forces will fill the whole cosmos.[97]

In what follows, I will work out the third level of cosmic circulation of life potency from the son of heaven to his officials and the common people as I account for the derivation of Confucian moral virtues from the archetypal personalities exuberant with the spiritual endowment of *de*. Drawing upon multifaceted meanings of the phrase *mingde* 明德 and its usage in early Chinese texts, I will illuminate further the dynamic interplay between moral and cosmic, physical and psychological, and material and spiritual dimensions in the enactment of early Chinese moral and political order pivoting on the beneficent circulation of heavenly endowments.

Let us recall first that *de* carries two basic meanings: (1) spiritual endowment of *mana*-like potency for life and (2) the moral capacities of an individual to properly preserve and propagate such spiritual endowment. I have demonstrated the meaning of *mana*-like potency in the early usage of *de,* which corresponds *in a qualified sense* to what Codrington has described as the "supernatural influence, the aid of unseen powers" that was "sought for by fasting, sacrifices, and prayers, in order to mount to the successive degrees of the society."[98] Now the *mana*-like influence loomed typically as a power that was beyond ordinary human control. Thus, there was always a danger that the association with such a power could be as devastating as it could be favorable. This is probably why, as Waley rightly points out, that *de* "can be bad as well as good" in its earliest usage.[99]

To put it more accurately, *de* may indicate both propitious and ominous qualities (*xiongde* 凶德).[100] Some of the early texts like the *Zuozhuan* identify such ominous qualities as stealing and evil intentions.[101] Apparently, stealing and evil intentions were regarded as ominous because to misappropriate spiritual endowment for selfish gratification would imperil the regular propagation of the heavenly grace.[102] Indeed, the primary qualification for a true sovereign or official was his moral capacity for sustaining the proper circulation of the *mana*-like potency through fair distribution of heavenly grace and appropriate regulation of his subordinate officials and the common people in general. If royal ratification served as a symbol of heavenly and kingly blessing, then the primary mission of the individual ratified was to live up to his vocation with reverence and benevolence in honor of the royal sanction. For example, according to the script of the Western Zhou bronze vessel Fan Sheng Gui 番生簋, a high official, Fan Sheng, pledged to emulate the supreme moral paragon of his ancestors, to shield the king's position, and to pursue reverently day and night so that he would not abuse the sanction of his honorific title (*bujiande* 不僭德): "I will use the judicious advice from all people around so that I would be able to pacify both the areas far from and nearby my capital city."[103]

In order to honor his heavenly vocation without abuse, a nobleman should fulfill a range of responsibilities.[104] It is reasonable to hypothesize that the earliest moral virtues were derived from the moral qualities and responsibilities that would enable a noble person to care for the proper dissemination of the spiritual endowment essential for the birth and growth of all beings. Therefore, it is fallacious to identify the foundation of early Chinese and Confucian moral virtue as a determinate set of principles or sentiments according to which a moral personality (*junzi* 君子) must rigidly conform.[105] Rather, the true source of inspiration for the moral actions of a Confucian personality must come from the magnificent life forces of the cosmos—the harmonious circulation of spiritual power between sky and earth. Therefore, while it certainly helps to compare some elements of Confucian moral teachings with the prevalent Western ethical theories such as deontological and virtue ethics, these ethical models should not be assigned more than a *heuristic* function. If we have to use the jargon "ethics" to designate the Confucian moral teachings, then they must be *an ethics of Life.* It is a way of moral instruction that aims to hearten moral personalities to live their lives to the fullest in accord with their

heavenly vocations. Such glorious personalities were indeed the archetype of all Confucian moral virtues.

The clarification of the genealogical origins of Confucian morals bears out again the dynamic interplay of moral and cosmic, spiritual and material, and psychological and physical dimensions in the cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice, as well as in the significations of the word *de* itself. It can be said that the way of empathy and embodiment as exemplified by eminent Confucian personalities is precisely oriented toward the harmonious communication and coalescence of such complementary dimensions. For example, one of the most original meanings of *de* is the *mana*-like life potency harbored in the animated forces of sacred breath *(qi)* that give life to all human and natural beings. Now the transmission of the *spiritual* power of life through heavenly and regal sanctions would also take such *material* forms as the grants of land, sacrificial vessels, and ritual instruments and ornaments. However, there was always a spiritual import implicated in the endowment of these material gifts, namely the consciousness of the same kind, which was evoked in ritual ceremonies and realized in such earnest affections as care, reverence, love, kindness, and gratitude.

Such interplay of the multifaceted significations can be evidenced by the early use of the word *de* itself. Here, it would be helpful to illustrate one notable phrase, *mingde* 明德, whose multifaceted connotations neatly epitomize the coalescence of the spiritual and material dimensions in the virtuous practice of benefaction. We can identity the primary meaning of the term as "heavenly blessing" or "spiritual endowment." On the other hand, *mingde* has also a verbal meaning: "to glorify the heavenly blessing." Remarkably, there are three major ways a governor is able to glorify the spiritual endowment from heaven and the ancestral gods: (1) the appropriate transmission and distribution of heavenly and ancestral blessings among subordinate officials without selfish misappropriation, (2) the diligent pursuit of administrative duty through care and protection of the people, and (3) timely and appropriate sacrificial offerings as grateful acknowledgment of heavenly and ancestral blessings. In fact, we can identify all three ways of realization in the multifaceted meanings of *mingde.*

Accordingly, on the one hand, the phrase *mingde* may indicate both heavenly and royal sanctions and their manifestation in honorific titles granted with ritual instruments and material recompense.[106] On the other hand, it may also imply all three ways of propagating heavenly blessing, while one of them may be more notable than the other two in certain contexts. For example, the poem "Huangyi" has a passage in which the ancestral god showed appreciation for King Wen's "sacrificial offering" (*yuhuai mingde*予懷明德): "no presentation of lavish musical performance and ritual ornaments; no offering of buckskin in the prime of the summer."[107] The *modesty* displayed in King Wen's sacrificial offering and ceremonial arrangement reflected that he had no intention to exalt himself by showing off lavish offerings in front of the gods, and that he was able to maintain a judicious way of government.[108] At the same time, King Wen's care and respect were also evidenced in the lack of buckskin in the summer offerings, because it was not appropriate to hunt and slaughter animals for

their hide in the prime of summer—the best season for the growth of all living things. It can be said that what the ancestral god truly appreciated was not merely the *material* offerings by King Wen, but also, or even more, what had been *evidenced* by such offerings: a careful and compassionate way of governing that would safeguard the peace and prosperity of all human and natural lives in the kingdom. Hence, in addition to the meaning of "sacrificial offering," the phrase *mingde* in this context may well have implicated the other senses of the term such as "the dissemination of heavenly grace" and "the well-being of the common people."

It is also important to distinguish the spiritual and material dimensions in the sacrificial offering itself. As shown by the poem "Huangyi," the most important element in the sacrificial rites was not the actual material gifts, but the judicious intention of the governor and the welfare of the people that was evidenced by the appropriate offerings. In other words, the heavenly and ancestral grant of life potency must be reciprocated with the prosperity of human and natural lives in the world. But, it is crucial for a governor to maintain an *honest* style of offering that reflected the actual outcome of his government. Accordingly, the sincere and reverent attitude of the offerer became the primary yardstick for his fidelity. One can even say that it was the sincere human intention and devotion that *animated* the material offerings with spiritual import—and that was what really counted (namely as the genuine meaning of *de* as offering) as the essence of sacrifice. According to Confucius, even the primitive people, despite their plain and simple offerings, were still able to extend their respect to the gods. This was so, as Zheng Xuan explicates, because they harbored a feeling of solemnity and reverence, and because what the gods really enjoy was the reverent and grateful human *intention,* not the *taste* of the offerings (*guishen xiangde buxiangwei* 鬼神饗德不饗味).[109]

It is thus clear that while the meanings of *de* often involve grants and grateful returns in the form of physical items, its most *authentic* connotation points to the spiritual endowment of a *mana*-like life potency that can only be transferred through genuine human *intentions* and *affections*. Accordingly, the main purpose of Confucian moral cultivation was to purify one's benevolent and reverent intention so as to attain the highest level of *sincerity* in one's state of mind. Sincerity (*cheng* 誠), as the *Zhongyong* articulates, is the "spiritual animation of the physical nature" (*xingzhide* 性之德). Therefore, the person of supreme moral personality with utmost sincerity was able to communicate with the divine and bring the physical nature of himself and others to the fullest completion. In so doing, he facilitated the generation and growth of all beings as he transmitted heavenly grace by functioning as an intermediary between sky and earth (*yu tiandi can* 與天地參).[110] Indeed, it is by virtue of such sincere human intentions that otherwise isolated individual beings are animated into open and sympathetic communication *(gantong)* with one another for a harmonious community: "With the intercourse of sky and earth, all beings emerge and evolve. With the sages affecting and influencing the hearts of the people, peace and harmony arrive in the world."[111]

I have demonstrated elsewhere that openness and sincerity of heart *(gantong)* is the root meaning of the central Confucian idea of *ren* (humaneness/benevolence).[112]

It may be argued that one of the most distinctive features of Confucius' teachings consists precisely in the shift of emphasis from the religious/necromantic aspects of ritual practices to the sincerity of *human* intention and affection—a cryptic movement from the way of heaven to the way of the human.[113] Accordingly, the most important criterion for early Confucian political leaders consisted in a *genuine* love and compassion that must be realized in their care for and devotion to the people.[114]

Apparently, this early ideal of benefiting the people agrees nicely with the basic meaning of *dezhi* as the rule of benefaction.[115] In conclusion, it is pertinent to underline that the *efficacy* of the rule of benefaction had to be evidenced by the propitious production of the common people in the form of bountiful harvests, which provided the source of nourishment for all human lives and for godly offerings and which was *pivotal* for the cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice. According to Arthur Waley, the word "to plant" (*zhi* 直) and *de* are cognate, "and in earliest script they share a common character."[116] No matter how dubious the source of Waley's assertion may be, it is without doubt that the planting of crops counted as the most important productive activity for the ancient Chinese. To the ancient Chinese mind, the germination of seeds and the growth of plants were not the *mechanical* process as defined by the language of modern science. Rather, the sprouting and growth of a plant involved a *spiritual* process of *gathering*: the seed would only geminate and grow properly when a range of elements such as the sunlight, water, the condition of the weather, and the nutrients from the earth all worked in accordance with one another. Moreover, the coordinated influences of these physical forces relied again on the *mana*-like spiritual endowment that underlay the harmonious interaction and communication *(gantong)* of the *yin* and *yang* forces embodied in the various elements above.[117] That is why the ancient Chinese regarded agricultural products such as the five kinds of cereals that counted as the main staple crops as benign bequests from the earth (*dide* 地德).[118] These spiritual bequests from the earth were regarded as a return for the *mana*-like spiritual influence that was first granted by heaven and then conferred by the sovereign and high officials upon the common people.

One of the primary duties of a political leader was the *timely* dissemination of such spiritual power essential for the growing of the crops. Thus, at the beginning of spring, the son of heaven was responsible for disseminating the heavenly blessing (*bude* 布德) in the form of royal bestowals so that the common people would be endowed with their due share of the spiritual potency for their agricultural production.[119] One of the major forms of validation for a benevolent leader and the efficacy of his spiritual endowment consisted precisely in the yearly harvests of the staple crops essential for the livelihood of the people and the grateful offerings for heavenly sanction. Apparently, the productivity of the crops relied on the harmonious interaction *(gantong)* of the maternal earth and the paternal sky, which represented the cosmic *yin* and *yang* forces *par excellence.* By facilitating this sympathetic interaction of sky and earth through judicious regulation of the people, a wise governor carried out his heavenly duty to safeguard the harvest of crops and the harmonious circulation of cosmic vibrancy between sky and earth.

It is by virtue of the harmonious dissemination of spiritual power *(de)* that there developed the great concord between human and natural beings that culminated in the enchanting ritual and musical ceremonies presided over by the son of heaven. The symphonic festival of music and dancing represented the blooming of the spiritual endowment (*yue zhe, dezhihua ye* 樂者，德之華也).[120] The crystalline and blissful music (*deyin* 德音) illumined the gracious personalities of wise leaders and glorified the majesty of the heavenly grace that was realized through the virtuous practice of benefaction. It evoked harmonious communication *(gantong)* among all human and natural beings and the poetical concordance of sky and earth, the human and the divine. By imbuing the reciprocal circulation of cosmic vibrancy with a cordial sense of belonging, the festival music and dance instigated the supreme consciousness of the same kind, which would bring all beings under heaven into a great family. It was within this grand flourishing of human affections and intentions under blissful music that all the ethnic and political distinctions of different individuals were sublimated. Here, we are able to make out finally the genuine grounding for the early Chinese virtuous rule of benefaction—the mindfulness that "the blessing and benediction for one family clan (i.e. the royal family) are one and the same as the blessing and benediction for the myriad family clans, and that the blessing and benediction for all family clans were one and the same as their virtuous personification for the beneficent way of heaven."[121]

Notes

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1 – See Hsiao 1979, passim, and the recapitulation of Mote's translation strategy in Hall and Ames 1987, pp. 216–217, and Ames 1989, p. 124.

2 – Here, I am using the word "genealogy" in a figurative sense as I propose to account for the plausible paths of descent of the different significations of the word *de* from its etymological/morphological origins (see "Genealogy" 1989 for a similar early usage in Beddoes 1793, p. 170). My genealogical study of *de* aims also to explore the genealogy of morals in early Chinese thought and map out the dynamic sources that had produced early Chinese noblemen as the archetype and origin of moral virtues. In addition, I am also borrowing the philosophical implications of the word "genealogy" as indicated by Nietzsche and Foucault (see, e.g., Foucault 1984). In a nutshell, my genealogical study does not presuppose a single generic meaning of *de* (be it virtue, *mana* potency, or benediction) as the foundation for a *linear* development of all other significations. Rather, by delving into its various early usages and linguistic origins and structures, I intend to illuminate the interplay of its different significations (even opposite significations) within the dynamic contexts of early

Chinese ritual and spiritual practices. In the same vein, my study of early Chinese morals is not oriented toward identifying a timeless Essence (such as a universal concept of Virtue) that dictates all moral theories and practices. Instead, by tracing the moral force of early Chines sages to the reciprocal circulation of cosmic vibrancy, I intend to explore a more original dimension of early Chinese moral and political order in the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

3 – Though I cannot give a critique of this philosophy of entitlement here, it may be pertinent to pinpoint its primary features: the predominance of Right/Law *[das Recht]* in the traditional Western conceptions of humanity, theocratic and philosophical theories of the great chain of Being that sanction *Homo sapiens* at the pinnacle of the ladder of creation, the Greek understanding of man as the "master" of nature, and the insistence on the metaphysical and ontological hierarchy that has continued to register the origin of justice in Being and the ground of Right in Might (which Derrida has criticized as Logocentrism). In contrast, the concepts of Right and Divine Law (as an absolute and universal ground for human order) were noticeably absent or at least marginal in the early Chinese understanding of humanity. As I will argue in what follows, the early Chinese understanding of the human self and political order was not based on the metaphysical hierarchy of Being. It consisted rather in the poetical embodiment of *dao.* As an abyssal ground, *dao* indicated a way of silence that did not decree any determinate and authoritative moral order or hierarchy; it simply let beings be. The early Chinese understanding of human person was informed by this way of silence and nothingness, which sustained the coming and going of all lives precisely by virtue of its non-being or non-action. For some initial discourse on this matter, see, e.g., Wang 2011, pp. 213–217, 224 ff., and Wang 2009, pp. 317–322 (cf. pp. 336–344).

4 – See Xu Shen 2006, *"de"* 德, p. 176, for Duan's argument. All translations of Chinese texts and scripts are mine unless noted otherwise.

5 – Liu Xinglong 2005, pp. 76–77.

6 – *Liji,* "Yueling" 月令. Likewise, a chapter in the *Zhouli Zhengyi* described the duty of the "goat warden" who was responsible for carving the animal during the sacrificial ceremony and for "taking up and offering" its head to the room for sacrificial rites (*dengqishou* 登其首) (see *Zhouli* 周禮, "Xiaguan" 夏官: "Yangren" 羊人).

7 – Qian Zhongshu 1986, vol. 1, pp. 1–8. In addition to Qian's list, we can also pick out a few such words with regard to ancient Chinese ritual ceremonies. For example, both the words *fu* 福 and *li* 釐 may indicate "sacrificial meat" and "divine blessing" as well. In bronze vessel inscriptions, the word *shou* 受 carries both the meanings of "to receive" and "to grant" (i.e., *shou* 授) divine blessings. See Xu Zhongshu 1998, p. 519.

8 – Rong 1985, pp. 110–111.

9 – He 1983, p. 98; see also Liu Xiang 1996, p. 95, and Guo 2000, p. 322.

10 – See Liu Xiang 1996, p. 95, and Guo 2000, p. 322.

11 – Xiao 2003, pp. 137–150.

12 – *Liji,* "Mingtangwei" 明堂位. See also "Jiaotesheng" 郊特牲 and *Zhouli Zhengyi* 周禮正義, "Chunguan" 春官: "Sizunyi" 司尊彝.

13 – See, e.g., Wu 1997.

14 – Remarkably, the sanctifying function of eyes can be found in many other ancient traditions. See, e.g., *Rig Veda* 1.50 (*Rig Veda* 1981, p. 190); Farbridge 2007, pp. 172–173, 110; Freedberg 1989, p. 85.

15 – See Guo 2002, pp. 67–68.

16 – See Si Weizhi 1983. See also Wen Yiduo 1993, in which Wen has an interesting interpretation that identifies the character *xing* 省 as a cognate with the oracle bone script  . Although Wen takes the oracle bone script as a variant of the character *xing,* many scholars today have identified this script as the original character for *de* (see Wen Shaofeng 1982). Wen Yiduo's study can thus be used to affirm the character *xing* as the root of the character *de* in the earliest scripts. It is also conducive to note the spiritual implications of the character *xing*. Liu Xingrong defines the basic meanings of *xing* as "to witness" and "to examine" in the oracle bone scripts and has presented a number of records according to which the king made personal visits to "look after" the crops, the farmlands, and the outpost towns (Liu Xinglong 2005, p. 206). The "Dazhuan" 大傳 chapter of the *Liji* elucidates that when the nobles of the lower ranks achieved great feats on the battlefield, they would obtain the honor of being "interviewed" by the monarch (*xingyu qijun* 省於其君). According to Zheng Xuan, to be interviewed here was to be looked after by the monarch so as to be free from big disasters.

17 – Shanghai Shuhua Chubanshe Bian 2008, "Shi song gui míngwen" 史頌簋銘文 (Inscriptions of Shisonggui), pp. 44–47.

18 – Xu Shen 2006, "悳," p. 502.

19 – Yu 2009, pp. 158–159.

20 – Xu Zhongshu 1998, pp. 542 ff.

21 – Lian 2009, p. 11.

22 – Xu Zhongshu 1984, pp. 195–197.

23 – Xu Zhongshu 1998, pp. 514–517.

24 – Xu Yuangao 2002, p. 514.

25 – Xu Yuangao 2002, p. 514. Likewise, the poem "Yuwuzheng" 雨無正 in the *Shijing* begins with a line that deplores the discontinuation of heaven's bene-

diction (*bujun qide* 不駿其德) and its imposition of the misfortune of famine, which caused the states around the world to fight against each other. Zhu Xi glossed the word *de* here as *hui* 惠, i.e., favor, grant, benefaction (Luo 1998, pp. 537–538). Apparently, the imposition of the misfortune of famine was a result of the discontinuation of heavenly favor and benediction. See also the second line of the *Yizhoushu* 逸周書, "Mingxunjie" 命訓解 chapter: "命司德正之以福禍" (Huang et al. 1995, p. 44).

26 – Luo 1998, pp. 738 ff.

27 – Wang Shenxing 1991, p. 72; see also Wang Changkun 2007, pp. 89–93.

28 – *Liji,* "Liqi" 禮器.

29 – Yu 2009, pp. 149–150.

30 – Yu 2009, pp. 118–119.

31 – See *Mengzi* 6B10 for an instance in which *yong* 饔 was used along with the word *xiang* 飧 [飨] (to cater, feast, to make offering) to describe the lack of ritual of offering gifts and feasts among different groups in a barbarian state. Zhu Xi glossed the phrase *yongxiang* 饔飧 [飨] as: "the ritual to cater the guests and visitors with food and drink" (Zhu 1983, p. 346).

32 – See also the inscription of *Zengboyihu* 曾伯陭壺, which states the producer's intention to use the vessel to feast guests and make offering for the ancestral gods (*yongxiao yongxiang* 用孝用亯) so that his sacrificial offering and contribution would be impeccable (*weide wuxia* 為德無叚) (Yu 2009, pp. 156–157).

33 – See Boodberg 1953, p. 324; Granet 1930, pp. 250–251; Waley 1958, pp. 31–32; Waley 1960, p. 346; Watts 1979, p. 9; Chen 1989, p. 195; Patterson 2000, p. 230.

34 – Munro 1969, p. 107. Here, Munro refers mainly to the "magic attraction" that propelled a person to emulate virtuous models as set by Heaven and the Confucian moral ruler, who was "like the northern polar star, which remains in its place while all the other stars revolve in homage about it" (*Analects* 2.1; see Fingarette 1972, p. 4, for an interpretation that stresses the magical aspect of the word *de* in this passage).

35 – For example, in *Analects* 2.1, cited by Munro above, the metaphor of the unmoving northern polar star may be intended only to illustrate that with the virtuous practice of beneficence *(de),* with selfless care and devotion to his people, a sagacious ruler would be free from giving *particular* instructions on *concrete* issues arising from different regions of the kingdom. Because with the principle of honor and benevolence set up properly by his moral paragon, his subordinate ministers, officials, and the common people in general would all take care of the various administrative and productive activities with a conscientious spirit. Thus, the world would come into order of its own accord. In my view, there seems to be nothing particularly "magical" about this art of

government. If one has to insist on a sense of magic in this context, then it must be the kind of "magic" that is analogous to the function of the "invisible hand" as proposed by Adam Smith's famous theory of the free market. However, modern economists have seldom applauded Smith for any magical influence, but only for his savvy insight into the science of economics.

36 – Codrington 1972, pp. 118–119, 103.

37 – See, e.g., Kessing 1984 and Codrington 1972.

38 – For an inspiring critique of Western conceptions of nature and physicality see, e.g., Scott 2002.

39 – See Abram 1996 for a stimulating narrative of human relations to nature in various indigenous peoples that resonate with contemporary phenomenological theories of human perception.

40 – See Abram, pp. 137–179 for the vital function of such dream forces in some indigenous cultures.

41 – The earliest instance in which the words *gan* and *tong* were used together is probably a line in "Jici I" 繫辭上, of the *Zhouyi*: "Yi (—the sagacious diviner) was mindless and inactive, being tranquil and motionless. When affected, he opened himself to (*ganersuitong* 感而遂通) things and events in the world." But the corresponding understanding of dynamic interaction and communication of cosmic forces, as illustrated by Li's example and exposition below, could well have been functioning in the early Chinese mind long before. For a more systematic account of the importance of *gantong* in early Chinese thinking and the demonstration of *gantong* as the root meaning of *ren* 仁, see Wang 2012.

42 – Li Zongtong 2010, pp. 30 ff.

43 – See also Patterson 2000.

44 – *Zhouyi* 1965, "Jici" 繫辭.

45 – Cited in Lin and Ming 1985, vol. 3, p. 1677.

46 – *Hanfeizi* 1965, "Jie lao" 解老.

47 – *Zhuangzi,* "Tiandi" 天地.

48 – Cf. *Liji,* "Liyun" 禮運 20: "人者，天地之心也."

49 – *Liji,* "Liyun" 禮運 20: "human beings are the gift of sky and earth (*gu renzhe, qi tiandi zhi de* 人者，其天地之德), they arise out of the interaction of *yin* and *yang,* the communication of the gods and ghosts, and the blooming animus (*xiuqi* 秀氣) of the five phases (*wuxing* 五行) of cosmic forces."

50 – For a more comprehensive exposition on the meanings of *de* as associated with the different ranks of human beings between sky and earth, see Wen Shaofeng 1982, pp. 43–44.

51 – See *Zhouyi,* "Jici": "Dao denotes the alternate procession of *yin* and *yang*."

52 – Ancient Chinese scholars long held the theories of *yin-yang,* five phases, and the five kinds of spiritual powers to be essential for the practices of astronomy and calendar making at the beginning of Chinese history. Now the real origins of these theories have been extremely controversial in modern scholarship. Many modern scholars, following the arguments by Liang Qichao and Gu Jiegang (see Liang 1989, Gu Jiegang 2000), have challenged the traditional views as they attribute the formulation or even the creation of these theories to such late figures as Zou Yan in the Warring States period or Dong Zhongshu in the Han dynasty. But careful evaluation of textual sources of the early Zhou dynasty and recent studies based on evidence from oracle bone scripts and archeological discoveries all tend to affirm the traditional views as they recognize the prevalent impacts of these theories in at least the beginning of the Western Zhou dynasty (see Lü Simian 2006; Zhao 2005, pp. 20–21; Allen et al. 1998; Wang and Fan 1998; Pang 1999; etc.). While I do not have space to clarify this thorny problem here, it is reasonable to suppose an early origin of the theory of five ancestral kings and the theory of five spiritual powers along with the theory of five orders. As a matter of fact, my clarification of the genealogical structure and development of the word *de* would provide important evidence for the early origin of these theories. Here, it suffices to point out Gu Jiegang's misinterpretation of a key passage in the *Shiji* with regard to Zouyan's theory of the *wude* 五德, which made Gu believe that it is Zouyan who created the theory of five spiritual powers (*wude zhuanyi shuo* 五德轉移說) (Gu Jiegang 2000, vol. 2, p. 443).

Gu's interpretation has had the predominant influence on modern scholarship on the theory of *wude*. However, the passage in the *Shiji,* which constituted a key item of evidence for Gu, stated very clearly that Zou "*cited* [the conventional theory] that since the beginning of the time when the sky and the earth were cut apart, the five spiritual powers revolved from one to another, so that there were appropriate orders of government accordingly. This has corresponded well with the significations by various oracles and omens" (稱引 天地剖判以來，五德轉移，治各有宜。而符應若茲) (*Shiji* 1965, "Mengzi Xun Qing liezhuan" 孟子荀卿列傳; emphasis added). Apparently, as reported by Sima Qian, Zouyan himself acknowledged that he was *citing* a conventional theory on the five spiritual powers. There is thus no solid evidence at all that the theory was *created* by Zouyan himself. On the contrary, it would be more reasonable to hypothesize that the concept or theory of five spiritual powers was already prominent in Zouyan's time—it reflected a conventional understanding of cosmological movements essential for the institution of ancient calendars (see Sima Qian's own independent discussion of the five spiritual powers at the end of the *Shiji,* "The Book of Calendar" 歷書). In all probability, what Zouyan had proposed was merely an innovative interpretation and application of the concept in connection with the necromantic art of

oracles and omens, which had made the theory more appealing to the rulers of the day.

53 – Fang 2008, "Lisanben" 禮三本.

54 – Xu Yuangao 2002, p. 337.

55 – *Shijing,* "Daya" 大雅, "Huangyi" 皇矣. Likewise, in the *Guoyu* 國語, the "Chuyu I" 楚語上chapter (1 : 17.8) commends the virtuous Yin sovereign Wuding 武丁, who stopped giving vocal orders to his officials because he feared his spiritual endowment (as embodied in his words and deeds) would not be of the same kind as that of his primal ancestors (*dezhi bulei* 德之不類) (Xu Yuangao 2002, p. 503).

56 – Ames 1989, p. 127: "*Te* is most often used to denote a particular aspect of the *tao,* but as a particular, it is also elastic, and can be extended even to the extent of embracing the whole."

57 – Chen 1973, p. 465.

58 – Ibid., p. 467.

59 – Ibid., pp. 459–460.

60 – Abram 1996, pp. 15–16, for the three quotes above; cf. pp. 225–260.

61 – See my discussion on *de* and *mana*-like potency above; cf. Patterson 2000, pp. 229–230 ff.

62 – See Rubin 1982 for an introduction on the theories of *yin-yang* and *wuxing* and their correlation with various natural phenomena such as seasonal changes. Note also the addition of another season (i.e. *changxia* 長夏 long summer/midsummer) so that there are virtually five seasons in correspondence with the five phases.

63 – Xiong Zhong 熊忠, *Yunhui* 韻會, cited in *Kangxi zidian, "De"* 德.

64 – *Liji,* "Yueling" 月令.

65 – *Liji,* "Yueling" 月令. See also *Guanzi,* "Sishi" 四時.

66 – For the importance of ecology in Confucian thinking, see Tucker and Berthrong 1998.

67 – For example, the first administrative duty of the ancient sage-king Shun—even before he sacrificed for the ancestral gods and various spiritual beings harbored in nature—was to observe and recognize the seven celestial bodies: the sun, the moon, and the five stars named after the five phases of cosmic order (i.e., wood, fire, earth, metal, water) (*Shangshu,* "Shundian" 舜典). The ancient Chinese took these seven celestial bodies as the seven governors (*qizheng* 七政), since their exemplary movements were believed to regulate the normal procession of climate and celestial order. As Ding Miansun elaborated, the observation and distinction of the movements of the seven governors was

meant to "authenticate the calendar and to instruct the people on the right timing for their activities, which will promote agriculture and husbandry and make the people well off" (Ding 1989, p. 29). Cf. Sivin 1966.

68 – *Liji,* "Kongzi xianju" 孔子閒居.

69 – *Liji,* "Jingjie" 經解. See also *Zhouyi,* "Qian" 乾, "Wenyan" 文言.

70 – My interpretation of this phrase is informed by an enlightening discussion in Qian Zhongshu 1986, vol. 5, pp. 1–2.

71 – *Liji,* "Quli" 曲禮: 其次務施報. See also the discussion of the transition from the rule of early Chinese sages (*tianxia weigong* 天下為公) to the rule of ritual in *Liji,* "Liyun" 禮運.

72 – Ames 1994, pp. 29 ff.

73 – See, e.g., Schwartz 1985, p. 68; Fingarette 1972, pp. 19 ff.

74 – *Zuozhuan,* "Xuangong the Third Year." See also the corresponding account for this incident in the *Shiji,* "Genealogy of the Chu State" (楚世家). It is pertinent to note here some provocative questions raised by Barry B. Blakeley against the reliability of the historical accounts for this incident. According to Blakeley,

> There can be no doubt that this story is a post-facto embroidering of historical fact. Particularly damaging is the fact that there is no solid independent evidence that there ever was a set of tripods (of whatever number) that symbolized rulership in ancient China. . . . The idea appears only in relatively late texts and smacks of being a Warring States period invention. . . . Thus, it is improbable that King Zhuang ever inquired about the tripods *[ding].*" (Blakeley 1999, p. 63; I thank a reviewer for *Philosophy East and West* for referring this source to me)

As an additional support, Blakeley refers to Gu Tiefu's disputation on the existence of the nine *ding* vessels *(jiuding)* and the authenticity of the incidence (Gu Tiefu 1988). I do not have space here to offer a comprehensive examination on the theory of *jiuding* that is challenged by Gu. After all, Gu's argument constitutes merely an "alternative" voice to the prevalent Chinese scholarly opinions on this issue. With regard to the questions raised by Blakeley and Gu, I believe they indeed deserve some careful examination. However, Blakeley's conclusion seems to involve hasty reasoning and serious logical fallacies, such as an appeal to ignorance and slippery slope. First, the alleged lack of firm evidence for the *ding* vessel as a symbol for regal/noble authority constitutes no sufficient reason for a downright rejection of this traditional theory (—the fallacy of appeal to ignorance). Precisely because the research on the early Zhou dynasty suffers from a *general* lack of *direct* evidence, the accounts by later historians are valuable as they might well have been based on reliable *oral* traditions, textual sources, and other physical evidence that are lost today. After all, Blakeley has presented no direct evidence to disprove the accounts of this incident in such otherwise authentic texts as the *Zuozhuan* and the

Shiji (e.g., that these accounts are inconsistent with narratives from other reliable sources or archaeological discoveries). Nor has he provided any solid independent evidence on how, when, for what purpose, and under whose authorship the alleged Warring States period "invention" of *ding* symbolism and the "post-facto embroidering of historical fact" took place. His judgment on this case sounds mostly speculative, if not arbitrary. Contrary to Blakeley's and Gu's assertions, there is abundant archaeological evidence that the number and scale of the *ding* vessels (which Blakeley mistakenly translates as "tripods," ignoring the great number of *ding* with four legs) were symbolic of the noble/regal status of an individual in the Zhou dynasty (see, e.g., Ma 2003, pp. 64–65; cf. Li 1980, pp. 9–10). Such archaeological evidence agrees well with the historical accounts in the Eastern Zhou and Han texts as they all tend to confirm the traditional theory on the function of the *ding* as a symbol for regal/noble authority.

75 – *Hanfeizi, "Er bing"* 二柄 (Two handles).

76 – *Shangshu,* "Kanggao" illustrates this principle well as it extols the majestic personality of King Wen, who was able to glorify heavenly grace through the virtuous practice of beneficence while being cautious and restrained in the use of punitive power (*mingde shenfa* 明德慎罰) (*Shangshu* 尚書, "Kanggao" 康誥).

77 – *Guoyu,* "Zhouyu" 周語 1.1.

78 – See, e.g., *Analects* 2.3; *Mengzi* 2A1.

79 – *Qian Han shu,* "Biography of Dong Zhongshu." See also Xu Fuguan 2004, p. 194.

80 – For example, *Guoyu* 17.1 records the instruction of Chu minister Shen Shushi who described the institution of ranks as a way to order the people with ritual and decorum (*ming dengji yi daozhi li* 明等級以導之禮) (Xu Yuangao 2002, "Chuyu shang" 楚語上). Likewise, the "Yueling" 月令 chapter of the *Liji* accounts for a regal command in late summer that instructed the women officials in charge of dyeing to pigment various sacrificial dress gowns and flags in strict conformity with the rule of ritual so as to distinguish the degree of everyone's rank and noble quality (*dengji zhidu* 等級之度). For an informative elaboration on the function of ranks and classes in ancient Chinese society, see Lü Simian 2007, pp. 265–295.

81 – See Schwartz 1985, p. 68.

82 – Ku 1921, p. 51.

83 – Yang 1992, pp. 330–335.

84 – See also Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames' proposal to regard the central hierarchical relationships in the early Confucian tradition as relationships between benefactors and beneficiaries (Rosemont and Ames 2010, pp. 49–51).

Let me accentuate that the foundation of these relationships was not a one-directional endowment of the benefactor for the beneficiary. It consisted rather in the principle of honor and reciprocity as regulated by the rule of ritual. For example, when the sovereign invested a lord with regal ratification, honorific ritual instruments, and a congruous fief, the lord was obliged under the code of honor to repay such royal benefaction with loyal services and the sacrificial offerings due as an expression of gratitude. Thus, the true cornerstone for all the relationships was the *principle of reciprocity*: a mindfulness of the *balance* between the service and submission of those located in the "subordinate" positions and the benefaction of those in the "superior" positions.

85 – *Zuozhuan,* "Dinggong the Fourth Year" (定公四年).

86 – *Zuozhuan,* "Yingong the Eighth Year" (隱公八年).

87 – Liang 1996, pp. 81–82.

88 – Mou 1997, p. 31.

89 – Lü Buwei 2002, vol. 21, "Ai Lei" 愛類.

90 – *Liji,* "Zhongni yanju" 仲尼燕居 3: 郊社之義，所以仁鬼神也；尝禘之禮，所以仁昭穆也；饋奠之禮，所以仁死喪也；射鄉之禮，所以仁鄉黨也；食飨之禮，所以仁賓客也.

91 – For example, this is exactly the lesson invoked by Gong Zhiqi 宮之奇 in his instruction for Duke Yu 虞, who intended to assist the powerful Duke Jin 晉 in attacking Yu's neighboring state, Guo 虢, in 655 B.C. In response to Gong's warning that the prevailing Jin army would assail and capture Yu after the defeat of Guo, Duke Yu argued that there should be no worry: "the gods are sure to endorse my headship as my sacrificial offerings are pure and affluent!" Resorting to a line in the classical text *Zhoushu* 周書, however, Gong spelled out the conventional wisdom that heaven had no predilection for any person as it would only support the virtuous, who were able to pass down and propagate the heavenly endowment properly with beneficence (*huangtian wuqing, weide shifu* 皇天無親，惟德是輔) ("Cai zhongzhi ming" 蔡仲之命 2). Without the virtuous practice of beneficence *(de),* "the people would not live in peace and harmony; the gods would not entertain the sacrificial offerings. So, the endorsement of gods hangs only on the virtuous practice of beneficence *(de).*" Thus, Gong demonstrated that there was no assurance that the gods' sanction would not be transferred from Duke Yu to Duke Jin. For if Duke Jin were to capture Yu and display godly blessing afterwards through his beneficence (*mingde* 明德) as he proffered fragrant offerings to the gods, how would the gods not accept him as a new head of Yu by throwing out his offerings (*Zuozhuan,* "Xigong the Fifth Year" [襄公五年]).

92 – *Zuozhuan,* "Huangong the Sixth Year" (桓公六年). See also the presentation of the same maxim in "Xigong the Nineteenth Year" (僖公十九年).

93 – *Mengzi* 1B4, 4A9, 5A5, 7B14. See also the *Shangshu*, "Taishi" 泰誓: "Heaven sees by way of my people; heaven listens by way of my people. When my people commit blunders, I should be the only one to take the blame."

94 – See Ji Liang's exhibition in *Zuozhuan,* "Huangong the Sixth Year" (桓公六年).

95 – *Xunzi,* "Rongru" 榮辱.

96 – Ibid.

97 – *Mengzi* 2A2.

98 – Codrington 1972, p. 103.

99 – Waley 1958, p. 31.

100 – See, e.g., the *Shangshu,* "Wuyi" 無逸. It is interesting to note here that a variant of the character *de* 悳 was used sometimes as an equivalent of the character *e* 惡 (evil, bad) in the Southern and Northern Dynasties. See Qiu 2000, pp. 204–205. I thank one reviewer for *Philosophy East and West* for pointing out this connection to me.

101 – *Zuozhuan,* "Wengong the Eighth Year" (文公八年).

102 – For example, with such ominous "virtues" as undue exploitation of the common people or indulgence in alcohol (*jiude* 酒德) (see, e.g., the discussion in the *Shangshu,* "Wuyi" 無逸), the spiritual endowment of life potency would not be properly disseminated. As a result, the common people would not be able to receive the opportune instructions and regulations for prosperous lives and productive activities. With the well-being of the people and their productive activities put in danger, the sovereign himself would gradually run out of resources to sustain grateful offerings for heaven and his ancestors. In time, the ominous outcome would arrive when heaven and the ancestral gods discontinued their blessing for the state and the people as they inflicted a range of disasters such as earthquakes and inclement weather.

103 – Yu Xingwu 2009, pp. 181–182.

104 – The major moral responsibilities may include: (1) conformity to the number and scale of sacrificial vessels and other ritual arrangements as stipulated by the royal institution; (2) timely and appropriate sacrifices for the ancestral temple with *modest* offerings; (3) assistance for the sacrificial offerings by the sovereign/superior governor with an appropriate contribution; (4) care and beneficence for the common people: timely instruction/education for their productive activities with moderate taxation.

105 – Cf. Nietzsche's argument that "moral designations were everywhere first applied to *human beings* and only later, derivatively, to actions" (Nietzsche 2000, sec. 260, p. 395).

106 – See some insightful elaboration in Zhang 2005.

107 – *Shijing,* "Huangyi" 皇矣: "不大聲以色，不長夏以革."

108 – The importance of maintaining a modest scale of a sacrificial ceremony and offering equal to one's honorific title cannot be overstated. Warnings and criticisms against the abuse of the spiritual endowment with the use of lavish sacrificial vessels or establishments were widespread in early Classical texts. See, e.g., Confucius' harsh criticism of the improper music and dancing arrangements in the court of the ministers of Lu in *Analects* 3.1 and 3.2. A former high official Zang Aibo gave the same kind of advice to the Duke of Lu as he stressed the importance of maintaining a *modest* way of sacrificial offering and regular ritual ornament (*fu de jian er youdu* 夫德儉而有度) (*Zuozhuan,* "Huangong the Second Year" 桓公二年). The concerns of the Confucian statesmen were that the lavish use of ritual instruments would arouse selfish desires and indulgence in excessive gratification. With such egoistic inclinations fomented, officials would be tempted to fulfill their selfish desires through increasing exploitation of the people and negligence of their duties to their ancestral temples and to their superior administrators. As Zang Aibo elaborates, the failure of a state stemmed from the nonconformity of its officials. The collapse of an official's spiritual sanction and moral quality were due to the indulgence in lavish ritual ornaments (*Zuozhuan,* "Huangong the Second Year" 桓公二年).

109 – Zheng Xuan's comment for the following line in the *Liji,* "Liyun" 禮運: "夫禮之初，始諸飲食，其燔黍捭豚，汙尊而抔飲，蕢桴而土鼓，猶若可以致其敬於鬼神."

110 – *Liji,* "Zhongyong" 中庸.

111 – *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, "Xian" 咸.

112 – See Wang 2012.

113 – See some relevant discussion in the last section of Wang 2012; cf. Wang 2009, pp. 342–344.

114 – Drawing upon a wide range of textual sources, Roger Ames establishes that there was a common ideal in early Chinese governance of benefiting the people, an ideal that was "absorbed into the Confucian doctrine at its inception to become the foundation of its political philosophy" (Ames 1994, pp. 158 ff.).

115 – It can be said that the rule of benefaction, with its emphasis on the sincerity and openness of human intentions, functioned as a common ideal for early Confucianism. For this is what Confucius had described as the common destination that allowed a variety of routes (*Zhouyi zhengyi,* "Jici II" 繫辭下, 5: *Tianxia tonggui er shutu* 天下同歸而殊塗). See relevant elaboration in Wang 2011, pp. 213–216.

116 – Waley 1958, p. 31.

117 – Note that the process of planting and cultivating was regarded as an animated process of spiritual incarnation in various indigenous cultures and traditions.

See, e.g., Frazer's interesting discussion on the personification of the corn spirit in various European traditions, in Frazer 1994, II.18, 20. See also the discussion of the spiritual lives of trees on pp. 771–774.

118 – See a passage in the *Huainanzi,* "Chuzhenxun" 俶真訓, which describes the primal age under the sage's rule during which the people were fed by the spiritual gifts of the earth (*shiyu dide* 食於地德). The commentator glosses the meanings of the phrase *dide* 地德 as the five kinds of staple crops (*wugu* 五穀) (Liu 1989, p. 49).

119 – *Liji,* "Yueling" 月令.

120 – *Liji,* "Yueji" 樂記.

121 – See Wang 1959, pp. 476–477.

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