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Panel 4.2: Explorations in Ethics

Ritual Communities of Interpretation in Confucian Role Ethics

This essay will explore the normatively grounding idea of morally imagined and ritually constituted communities of ethical interpretation that create intergenerational continuity and serve as a family-centric, embodied source of axiological truth. The core Confucian conceptual cluster of 'familial reverence' (*xiao* 孝), 'ritual practice' (*li* 禮), and 'optimal appropriateness' (*yi* 義) will be presented in several textual contexts and developed as a viable contemporary approach to thinking through complex ethical and political predicaments. The hermeneutically dynamic process of imagining a ritual community of interpretation reveals a family-centric and relationally configured way of embodying ethically guiding ideals of 'optimal appropriateness' without appealing to *a priori* moral truths or rationally transcendent versions of ideal theory familiar to so much of Enlightenment inspired ethical and political discourse. Having a way of talking across cultural frameworks with a truly global ethical perspective (*tianxia* 天下) will allow us as participants in a ritually-constituted ethical-political theory to simultaneously be moral realists and embrace cultural pluralism.