

does not. Shenzi¹¹ could see the advantages of holding back, but not the advantages of taking the lead. Laozi could see the advantages of humbling oneself, but not the advantages of raising one's station. Mozi could see the advantages of uniformity, but not those of diversity. Songzi¹² could see the advantages of having few desires, but not those of having many. If everyone holds back and no one takes the lead, then there will be no gate to advancement for the people. If everyone humbles himself and no one tries to improve his station, then the distinctions between eminent and humble will become meaningless. If there is only uniformity and no diversity, then the commands of government can never be carried out. If there is only a lessening of desires and never an increase, then there will be no way to educate and transform the people.¹³ This is what the *Documents* means when it says: "Do not go by what you like, but follow the way of the king; do not go by what you hate, but follow the king's road."¹⁴

¹¹Shen Dao, a Daoist-Legalist thinker who, according to the "Tianxia" chapter of *Zhuangzi*, preached a doctrine of passivity.

¹²Song Jian, a philosopher who, according to the same source, taught a life of frugality and few desires.

¹³Because they will not be attracted by the hope of reward.

¹⁴From the "Hongfan" (Great Plan).



A DISCUSSION OF RITES

(Section 19)

What is the origin of ritual? I reply: man is born with desires. If his desires are not satisfied for him, he cannot but seek some means to satisfy them himself. If there are no limits and degrees to his seeking, then he will inevitably fall to wrangling with other men. From wrangling comes disorder and from disorder comes exhaustion. The ancient kings hated such disorder, and therefore they established ritual principles in order to curb it, to train men's desires and to provide for their satisfaction. They saw to it that desires did not overextend the means for their satisfaction, and material goods did not fall short of what was desired. Thus both desires and goods were looked after and satisfied. This is the origin of rites.

Rites are a means of satisfaction. Grain-fed and grass-fed animals, millet and wheat, properly blended with the five flavors—these are what satisfy the mouth. The odors of pepper, orchid, and other sweet-smelling plants—these are what satisfy the nose. The beauties of carving and inlay, embroidery and pattern—these are what satisfy the eye. Bells and drums, strings and woodwinds—these are what satisfy the ear. Spacious rooms and secluded halls, soft mats, couches, benches, armrests and

cushions—these are what satisfy the body. Therefore I say that rites are a means of providing satisfaction.

The gentleman, having provided a means for the satisfaction of desires, is also careful about the distinctions to be observed. What do I mean by distinctions? Eminent and humble have their respective stations, elder and younger their degrees, and rich and poor, important and unimportant, their different places in society. Thus the Son of Heaven has his great carriage spread with soft mats to satisfy his body. By his side are placed fragrant herbs to satisfy his nose, and before him the carved carriage decorations to satisfy his eye. The sound of carriage bells and the Wu and Xiang music when he is proceeding slowly, the Shao and Hu music when he is proceeding rapidly, give satisfaction to his ear. Nine dragon banners fly to satisfy his desire for a symbol of trust. Paintings of a recumbent rhinoceros and a solitary tiger, horse girths of water-dragon pattern, fine woven spreads, and dragon-head ornaments satisfy his desire for awesome spectacle. And the horses which draw his great carriage must be of the utmost reliability¹ and highly trained before he will consent to ride. In this way he satisfies his desire for safety.

[As for the king's officials] let them understand clearly that to advance in the face of death and to value honor is the way to satisfy their desire for life; to spend and to supply what goods are needed is the way to satisfy their desire for wealth; to conduct themselves with respect and humility is the way to satisfy their desire for safety; and to obey ritual principles and good order in all things is the way to satisfy their emotions. He who seeks only to preserve his life at all cost will surely suffer death. He who strives only for profit at all cost will surely suffer loss. He who thinks that safety lies in indolence and idleness alone will surely

¹Reading *xin* instead of *bei* in accordance with the parallel text in *Shiji* 23.

face danger. He who thinks that happiness lies only in gratifying the emotions will surely face destruction.

Therefore, if a man concentrates upon fulfilling ritual principles, then he may satisfy both his human desires and the demands of ritual; but if he concentrates only upon fulfilling his desires, then he will end by satisfying neither. The Confucians make it possible for a man to satisfy both; the Mohists cause him to satisfy neither. This is the difference between the Confucians and the Mohists.

Rites have three bases. Heaven and earth are the basis of life, the ancestors are the basis of the family, and rulers and teachers are the basis of order. If there were no Heaven and earth, how could man be born? If there were no ancestors, how would the family come into being? If there were no rulers and teachers, how would order be brought about? If even one of these were lacking, there would be no safety for man. Therefore rites serve Heaven above and earth below, honor the ancestors, and exalt rulers and teachers. These are the three bases of rites.

The king honors the founder of his family as an equal of Heaven, the feudal lords would not dare to dismantle the mortuary temples of their ancestors, and the high ministers and officials maintain constant family sacrifices. In this way they distinguish and pay honor to the beginners of their family. To honor the beginning is the basis of virtue.

The Son of Heaven alone performs the suburban sacrifice to Heaven; altars of the soil may not be established by anyone lower than a feudal lord; but sacrifices such as the *tan* may be carried out by the officials and high ministers as well.² In this way rites distinguish and make clear that the exalted should

²Reading *tan* instead of *dao* and translating in accordance with the interpretation of Liu Shipei. But the passage is far from clear.

serve the exalted and the humble serve the humble, that great corresponds to great and small to small.

He who rules the world sacrifices to seven³ generations of ancestors; he who rules a state sacrifices to five generations; he who rules a territory of five chariots⁴ sacrifices to three generations; he who rules a territory of three chariots sacrifices to two generations.⁵ He who eats by the labor of his hands is not permitted to set up an ancestral temple. In this way the rites distinguish and make clear that the merit accumulated by the ancestors over the generations is great. Where the merit is great, it will dispense widespread blessing; where the merit is meager, the blessing will be limited.

In the triennial great sacrificial feast, one places the water goblet in the highest place, lays out raw fish on the offering table, and offers unflavored soup, thus showing honor to the unadorned basis of food and drink. At the seasonal sacrificial feast, one places the water goblet in the highest place but fills it with wine and sweet spirits; one offers first glutinous and nonglutinous millet, and then gives the spirit representative⁶ rice and common millet; while at the monthly sacrifice, one proffers first the plain soup, and then gives the spirit representative his fill of all kinds of delicacies. These last two ceremonies honor the basis

³Reading "seven" instead of "ten" in accordance with the parallel passages in *Shiji* 23, *Dadai lijì* 1, and *Guliang zhuan*, Duke Xi 15th year.

⁴In early times an area 10 *li* square was said to have made up a unit called a *cheng* which was responsible for supplying one war chariot. Hence this is a territory 50 *li* square.

⁵As is made clear in the *Guliang* passage cited in n. 3 above, these four categories correspond to the four large divisions of the aristocracy: the Son of Heaven, the feudal lords, the high ministers (*dafu*), and the officials or men of breeding (*shì*).

⁶The impersonator of the dead who sits at the sacrificial feast and eats the food on behalf of the ancestors.

and at the same time bring men close to the practical uses of food. To honor the basis is called good order; to become familiar with practical usage is called good reason. When these two aspects have been combined and completed with the proper forms, and all finds rest in a single unifying principle—this is called the highest flourishing of rites.

Hence, the placing of the goblet filled with water in the highest place, the laying out of raw fish on the offering table, the presentation of the unflavored soup—all these acts have the same significance [i.e., they indicate respect for the basic materials of the meal]. The fact that the impersonator of the spirits does not finish the cup of wine handed to him by the server, that at the completion of the mourning rites he does not taste the food laid out on the offering table, that after receiving food from the three servers, he takes no more to eat—all these have the same meaning [i.e., that the ceremonies are completed]. In the wedding ceremony, before the father of the groom has given the groom a cup of wine and sent him to fetch the bride; in the sacrifice at the ancestral temple, when the impersonator of the dead has not yet entered the hall; when someone has just died and the corpse has not yet been dressed—all these are similar moments [i.e., moments before the ceremonies proper begin]. The spreading of a plain white cloth in the imperial carriage, the donning of the hempen cap at the suburban sacrifice, and the wearing of an only partly tied hempen sash during the mourning rites—all these have the same significance [i.e., they are symbols of unadorned simplicity]. And it is for the same reason that, at the three-years' mourning for a parent, the lamentation is without rhythm or fixed pattern; and, at the singing of the Pure Temple song,⁷ only one man sings and

⁷One of the "Hymns of Zhou" in the *Book of Odes*, Mao text no. 266.

three harmonize with him, only one bell is played, with the leather rattle above it, and the zithers have red strings and holes in the bottom to give them a dull tone.⁸

All rites begin in simplicity, are brought to fulfillment in elegant form, and end in joy. When rites are performed in the highest manner, then both the emotions and the forms embodying them are fully realized; in the next best manner, the emotional content and the forms prevail by turns; in the poorest manner, everything reverts to emotion and finds unity in that alone.

Through rites Heaven and earth join in harmony, the sun and moon shine, the four seasons proceed in order, the stars and constellations march, the rivers flow, and all things flourish; men's likes and dislikes are regulated and their joys and hates made appropriate. Those below are obedient, those above are enlightened; all things change but do not become disordered; only he who turns his back upon rites will be destroyed. Are they not wonderful indeed? When they are properly established and brought to the peak of perfection, no one in the world can add to or detract from them. Through them the root and the branch are put in proper order; beginning and end are justified; the most elegant forms embody all distinctions; the most penetrating insight explains all things. In the world those who obey the dictates of ritual will achieve order; those who turn against them will suffer disorder. Those who obey them will win safety; those who turn against them will court danger. Those who obey them will be preserved; those who turn against them will be lost. This is something that the petty man cannot comprehend.

The meaning of ritual is deep indeed. He who tries to enter it with the kind of perception that distinguishes hard and white,

⁸This paragraph is a mass of technical terms, many of them of doubtful meaning. I have followed Kanaya's emendations and interpretation throughout.

same and different, will drown there.⁹ The meaning of ritual is great indeed. He who tries to enter it with the uncouth and inane theories of the system-makers will perish there. The meaning of ritual is lofty indeed. He who tries to enter with the violent and arrogant ways of those who despise common customs and consider themselves to be above other men will meet his downfall there.

If the plumb line is properly stretched, then there can be no doubt about crooked and straight; if the scales are properly hung, there can be no doubt about heavy and light; if the T square and compass are properly adjusted, there can be no doubt about square and round; and if the gentleman is well versed in ritual, then he cannot be fooled by deceit and artifice. The line is the acme of straightness, the scale is the acme of fairness, the T square and compass are the acme of squareness and roundness, and rites are the highest achievement of the Way of man. Therefore, those who do not follow and find satisfaction in rites may be called people without direction, but those who do follow and find satisfaction in them are called men of direction.

He who dwells in ritual and can ponder it well may be said to know how to think; he who dwells in ritual and does not change his ways may be said to be steadfast. He who knows how to think and to be steadfast, and in addition has a true love for ritual—he is a sage. Heaven is the acme of loftiness, earth the acme of depth, the boundless the acme of breadth, and the sage the acme of the Way. Therefore the scholar studies how to become a sage; he does not study merely to become one of the people without direction.

Ritual uses material goods for its performance, follows the distinctions of eminent and humble in creating its forms, varies its

⁹A reference to the Logicians.

quantities in accordance with differences of station, and varies its degree of lavishness in accordance with what is appropriate. When form and meaning are emphasized and emotional content and practical use slighted, rites are in their most florid state. When form and meaning are slighted and emphasis placed upon emotion and practical use, rites are in their leanest state. When form and meaning, and emotion and practical use, are treated as the inside and outside or the front and back of a single reality and are both looked after, then rites have reached the middle state. Therefore the gentleman understands how to make rites florid and how to make them lean, but he chooses to abide in the middle state, and no matter whether he walks or runs, hurries or hastens, he never abandons it. It is his constant world and dwelling. He who abides in it is a gentleman and a man of breeding; he who abandons it is a commoner. He who dwells in it, who wanders widely and masters all its corners and gradations, is a sage. His bounty is the accumulation of ritual; his greatness is the breadth of ritual; his loftiness is the flourishing of ritual; his enlightenment is the mastery of ritual. This is what the *Odes* means when it says:

Their rites and ceremonies are entirely according to rule,
Their laughter and talk are entirely appropriate.¹⁰

Rites are strictest in their ordering of birth and death. Birth is the beginning of man, death his end. When both beginning and end are good, man's way is complete. Therefore the gentleman is reverent in his treatment of the beginning and careful in his treatment of the end, regarding both with the same gravity. This is the way of the gentleman and the highest flowering of

¹⁰"Lesser Odes," *Chuci*, Mao text no. 209.

ritual principle. To be generous in the treatment of the living but skimpy in the treatment of the dead is to show reverence for a being who has consciousness and contempt for one who has lost it. This is the way of an evil man and an offense against the heart. The gentleman would be ashamed to treat even a lowly slave in a way that offends the heart; how much more ashamed would he be to treat those whom he honors and loves in such a way! The rites of the dead can be performed only once for each individual, and never again. They are the last occasion upon which the subject may fully express respect for his ruler, the son express respect for his parents.

To fail to treat the living with sincere generosity and reverent formality is the way of a rustic; to fail to bury the dead with sincere generosity and reverent formality is the way of a miser. The gentleman despises rusticity and is ashamed of miserliness. Hence the inner and outer coffins of the Son of Heaven consist of seven¹¹ layers; those of the feudal lords consist of five layers; those of the high ministers, three layers; and those of the officials, two layers. In addition, there are various rules governing the amount and quality of grave clothes and food offerings for each rank, and the type of coffin decorations and ornaments appropriate for each station, whereby reverence is expressed in outward form. In this way life and death, beginning and end, are treated the same and men's longings are satisfied. This is the way of the former kings and the highest expression of the duty of a loyal subject and a filial son.

At the funeral of the Son of Heaven, notification is sent throughout the area within the four seas and the feudal lords are called together. At the funeral of one of the feudal lords, notification is sent to allied states and their high ministers are called

¹¹Reading "seven" instead of "ten."

together. At the funeral of a high minister, notification is sent throughout his own state and the eminent officials are called together. At the funeral of an official, notification is sent throughout his district and his friends are called together. At the funeral of a commoner, his family and close neighbors are gathered together and notification is sent throughout his community. At the funeral of an executed criminal, however, his family and neighbors do not gather together, but only his wife and children. His inner and outer coffin is only three inches thick, with only three sets of grave clothes, and no decorations for the coffin. The funeral procession may not venture out by day, but must go in the evening, as though to bury someone who has died by the roadside, and the members of the family wear ordinary clothes when they go to the burial. On returning from the burial, they perform no ritual lamentations, wear no mourning garments, and observe none of the mourning periods commonly observed for near or distant kin, but each returns to his regular activities and goes about his business as before. To bury a person in this way and fail to conduct any mourning for him indicates the highest degree of disgrace.¹²

Rites are strictest in dealing with auspicious and inauspicious occasions, making certain that they do not impinge upon each other. When the silk floss is held up to the dead man's nose to make certain that he is no longer breathing, then the loyal subject or the filial son realizes that his lord or parent is very sick indeed, and yet he cannot bring himself to order the articles needed for the laying in the coffin or the dressing of the corpse. Weeping and trembling, he still cannot stop hoping that the

¹²Xunzi's description of the burial of the disgraced criminal closely parallels what Mozi advocated as the burial practices of the ancient kings and the ideal for all men. See *Mozi*, sec. 25, "Moderation in Funerals: Part III."

dead will somehow come back to life; he has not yet ceased to treat the dead man as living. Only when he has resigned himself to the fact that the person is really dead can he go about making preparations for the funeral. Therefore, even in the best appointed household, two days will elapse before the dead can be laid in the coffin, and three days before the family will don mourning clothes. Only then will notification of the death be sent out to those far away, and those in charge of the funeral begin to gather the necessary articles. The period during which the dead lies in state in the coffin should not exceed seventy days, nor be less than fifty. Why? Because in this period of time those who must come from distant places will have time to arrive, all necessary articles can be procured, and all affairs attended to. This is the way of greatest loyalty, the height of propriety, and the finest of forms. After this, divination shall be made in the morning¹³ to determine the day of burial, and in the evening to determine the place of burial, and then the burial shall be conducted. At such a time, what man could bear to do what duty forbids, or could fail to carry out what duty demands? Hence the three months of preparation for burial symbolizes that one wishes to provide for the dead as one would for the living, and to give the dead the proper accoutrements. It is not that one detains the dead and keeps him from his grave simply in order to satisfy the longings of the living. It is a token of the highest honor and thoughtfulness.

It is the custom in all mourning rites to keep changing and adorning the appearance of the dead person, to keep moving him farther and farther away, and as time passes, to return gradually to one's regular way of life. It is the way with the dead that, if they are not adorned, they become ugly, and if they become

¹³Reading *rizhao* instead of *yuezhao*, in accordance with the suggestion of Liu Shipei.

ugly, then one will feel no grief for them. Similarly, if they are kept too close by, one becomes contemptuous of their presence; when one becomes contemptuous of them, one begins to loathe them, and if one begins to loathe them, one will grow careless¹⁴ of them and cease to treat them with reverence. If suddenly a man's honored parent dies, and yet in burying him he fails to show either grief or reverence, then he is no better than a beast. The gentleman is ashamed to have such a thing happen, and therefore he adorns the dead in order to disguise their ugliness, moves them gradually farther away in order to maintain the proper reverence, and in time returns to his regular way of life in order to look after the wants of the living.

Rites trim what is too long and stretch out what is too short, eliminate surplus and repair deficiency, extend the forms of love and reverence, and step by step bring to fulfillment the beauties of proper conduct. Beauty and ugliness, music and weeping, joy and sorrow are opposites, and yet rites make use of them all, bringing forth and employing each in its turn. Beauty, music, and joy serve to induce an attitude of tranquility and are employed on auspicious occasions. Ugliness, weeping, and sorrow induce an attitude of inquietude and are employed on inauspicious occasions. But though beauty is utilized, it should never reach the point of sensuousness or seductiveness, and though ugliness is utilized, it should never go as far as starvation or self-injury. Though music and joy are utilized, they should never become lascivious and abandoned, and though weeping and sorrow are utilized, they should never become frantic or injurious to health. If this is done, then rites have achieved the middle state.

Changes of feeling and manner should be sufficient to indicate whether the occasion is an auspicious or an inauspicious

¹⁴Reading *dai* instead of *wang* in accordance with the suggestion of Kubo Ai.

one, and to exemplify the proper degree of eminence or humbleness, of nearness or distance of kinship, but that is all. Anything that goes beyond this is wrong, and no matter how difficult it may be to perform, the gentleman will despise it. Thus, in a period of mourning, for the mourner to measure the quantity of his food before eating, to measure the size of his waist before tying his sash, and to strive deliberately for a distraught and emaciated appearance is the way of evil men. It does not represent the proper form of ritual principle nor the proper emotions of a filial son, but is done only for the sake of effect.

Smiles and a beaming face, sorrow and a downcast look—these are expressions of the emotions of joy or sorrow which come with auspicious or inauspicious occasions, and they appear naturally in the countenance. Songs and laughter, weeping and lamentation—these too are expressions of the emotions of joy or sorrow which come with auspicious or inauspicious occasions, and they appear naturally in the sound of the voice. The partaking of grass-fed and grain-fed animals, rice and millet, wine and sweet spirits, fish and meat, as well as of thick and thin gruel, beans and bean sprouts, water and water in which rice has been washed—these are expressions of the emotions of joy or sorrow which come with auspicious or inauspicious occasions, and are expressed naturally in one's food and drink. The wearing of ceremonial caps, embroidered robes, and patterned silks, or of fasting clothes and mourning clothes and sashes, straw sandals, and hempen robes—these are expressions of the emotions of joy or sorrow which come with auspicious or inauspicious occasions, and are expressed naturally in one's manner of dress. The use of spacious rooms and secluded halls, soft mats, couches and benches, armrests and cushions, or of huts of thatch and lean-tos, mats of twig and pillows of earth—these are expressions of the emotions of joy or sorrow which come with

auspicious or inauspicious occasions, and are expressed naturally in one's choice of a dwelling.¹⁵

The beginnings of these two emotions are present in man from the first. If he can trim or stretch them, broaden or narrow them, add to or take from them, express them completely and properly, fully and beautifully, seeing to it that root and branch, beginning and end are in their proper place, so that he may serve as a model to ten thousand generations, then he has achieved true ritual. But only a gentleman of thorough moral training and practice is capable of understanding how to do this.

[Therefore¹⁶ it is said that human nature is the basis and raw material, and conscious activity is responsible for what is adorned, ordered, and flourishing. If there were no human nature, there would be nothing for conscious activity to work upon, and if there were no conscious activity, then human nature would have no way to beautify itself. Only when nature and conscious activity combine does a true sage emerge and perform the task of unifying the world. Hence it is said that when Heaven and earth combine, all things are born, when the yin and yang act upon each other, all changes are produced, and when nature and conscious activity join together, the world is well ordered. Heaven can give birth to creatures but it cannot order them; earth can bear man up but it cannot govern him. All creatures of the universe, all who belong to the species of man, must

¹⁵In translating the numerous technical terms in this passage, I have followed Kanaya throughout.

¹⁶This paragraph seems to have little to do with what goes before or after and almost certainly does not belong here. In wording and thought it is most closely allied to sec. 23, "Man's Nature Is Evil." Probably five or six of the bamboo slips upon which the text of that section was originally written dropped out and were mistakenly inserted here.

await the sage before they can attain their proper places. This is what the *Odes* means when it says:

He cherishes and mollifies all the spirits,
Even those of the River and the High Mountain.¹⁷]

In the funeral rites, one adorns the dead as though they were still living, and sends them to the grave with forms symbolic of life. They are treated as though dead, and yet as though still alive, as though gone, and yet as though still present. Beginning and end are thereby unified.

When a person has died, one first of all washes the hair and body, arranges them properly, and places food in the mouth, symbolizing that one treats the dead as though living. (If the hair is not washed, it is combed with a wet comb in three strokes; if the body is not bathed, it is wiped with a wet cloth in three strokes). The ears are closed with wads of silk floss, raw rice is placed in the mouth, and the mouth is stopped with a dried cowry shell. These are acts which are the opposite of what one would do for a living person. One dresses the corpse in underwear and three layers of outer garments and inserts the tablet of office in the sash, but adds no sash buckle; one adds a face cover and eye shield and arranges the hair, but does not put on any hat or hat pin. One writes the name of the deceased on a piece of cloth and fixes it to a wooden tablet, so that the coffin will not be lacking a name. As for the articles placed in the coffin, the hats have bands but no strings to tie them to the head; the jars and wine flagons are empty and have nothing in them; there are mats but no couches or armrests. The carving on the wooden articles

¹⁷"Hymns of Zhou," *Shimai*, Mao text no. 273.

and the moulding of the pottery are left unfinished, the rush and bamboo articles are such as cannot be used; the reeds and pipes are complete but cannot be sounded; the lutes and zithers are strung but not tuned. A carriage is buried with the coffin but the horses are taken back home, indicating that the carriage will not be used.

Articles that had belonged to the dead when he was living are gathered together and taken to the grave with him, symbolizing that he has changed his dwelling. But only token articles are taken, not all that he used, and though they have their regular shape, they are rendered unusable. A carriage is driven to the grave and buried there, but it has no bells or leather fixtures, no bit or reins attached. All this is done to make clear that these things will not actually be used. The dead man is treated as though he had merely changed his dwelling, and yet it is made clear that he will never use these things. This is all done in order to emphasize the feelings of grief. Thus the articles used by the dead when he was living retain the form but not the function of the common article, and the spirit articles prepared especially for the dead man have the shape of real objects but cannot be used.

It is true of all rites that, when they deal with the living, their purpose is to ornament joy, when they deal with the dead, to ornament grief, when they pertain to sacrifices, to ornament reverence, and when they pertain to military affairs, to ornament majesty. This is true of the rites of all kings, an unchanging principle of antiquity and the present, though I do not know when the custom began.

The grave and grave mound in form imitate a house; the inner and outer coffin in form imitate the sideboards, top, and front and back boards of a carriage; the coffin covers and decorations and the cover of the funeral carriage in form imitate the curtains and hangings of a door or room; the wooden lining and framework of

the grave pit in form imitate railings and roof. The funeral rites have no other purpose than this: to make clear the principle of life and death, to send the dead man away with grief and reverence, and to lay him at last in the ground. At the interment one reverently lays his form away; at the sacrifices one reverently serves his spirit; and by means of inscriptions, eulogies, and genealogical records one reverently hands down his name to posterity. In serving the living, one ornaments the beginning; in sending off the dead, one ornaments the end. When beginning and end are fully attended to, then the duties of a filial son are complete and the way of the sage has reached its fulfillment. To deprive the dead for the sake of the living is niggardly; to deprive the living for the sake of the dead is delusion; and to kill the living and force them to accompany the dead is hideous. To bury the dead in the same general manner that one would send off the living, but to make certain that both living and dead, beginning and end are attended to in the most appropriate and fitting fashion—this is the rule of ritual principle and the teaching of the Confucian school.

What is the purpose of the three-year mourning period? I reply: it is a form which has been set up after consideration of the emotions involved; it is an adornment to the group and a means of distinguishing the duties owed to near or distant relatives, eminent or humble. It can neither be lengthened nor shortened. It is a method that can neither be circumvented nor changed. When a wound is deep, it takes many days to heal; where there is great pain, the recovery is slow. I have said that the three-year mourning period is a form set up after consideration of the emotions involved, because at such a time the pain of grief is most intense. The mourning garments and the cane of the mourner, the hut where he lives, the gruel he eats, the twig mat and pillow of earth he sleeps on—these are the adornments of the intense pain of his grief.

The three-year mourning period comes to an end with the twenty-fifth month. At that time the grief and pain have not yet come to an end, and one still thinks of the dead with longing, but ritual decrees that the mourning shall end at this point. Is it not because the attendance on the dead must sometime come to an end, and the moment has arrived to return to one's daily life?

All living creatures between heaven and earth which have blood and breath must possess consciousness, and nothing that possesses consciousness fails to love its own kind. If any of the animals or great birds happens to become separated from the herd or flock, though a month or a season may pass, it will invariably return to its old haunts, and when it passes its former home it will look about and cry, hesitate and drag its feet before it can bear to pass on. Even among tiny creatures the swallows and sparrows will cry with sorrow for a little while before they fly on. Among creatures of blood and breath, none has greater understanding than man; therefore man ought to love his parents until the day he dies.

Should we set our standard by the way of stupid and evil-minded men? But they have forgotten by evening the parent who died this morning, and if we are to permit such ways, then we will become worse than the very birds and beasts. How could we live in the same community with such men and hope to escape disorder? Should we then set our standard by the way of cultured and morally trained gentlemen? But to them the twenty-five months of the three-year mourning period pass as swiftly as a running horse glimpsed through a crack in the wall. If we adopt their ways, the mourning period will never come to an end. Therefore the former kings and sages adopted a middle position in fixing their standard. They allowed time for all proper forms and reasonable duties to be carried out, and decreed that the mourning period should then end.

How is the mourning period divided up? For parents it is divided on the basis of the year.¹⁸ Why? Because in that time heaven and earth have completed their changes, the four seasons have run their course, and all things in the universe have made a new beginning. The former kings noted this and took it as a model. Why then does mourning extend into the third year? The former kings wished to increase the honor paid, and therefore they doubled the period and made it two years. Why do the mourning periods for some relatives last for only nine months or less? In order to show that they do not reach the completion of a year. Thus the three-year period expresses the highest degree of honor, while the three-month period of coarse garments or the five-month period of *xiaogong* garments expresses the lowest degree, and the year and the nine-month mourning periods fall in between. The former kings looked up and took their model from heaven, looked down and took their model from the earth, looked about and took their rules from mankind. Such rules represent the ultimate principle of community harmony and unity. Therefore, the three-year mourning period is the highest expression of the way of man and the mark of greatest honor, a custom followed by all the kings, an unchanging principle for ancient times and the present.¹⁹

¹⁸According to the description of mourning rites in *Liji* 37, a memorial sacrifice called *xiaoxiang* was performed at the end of one year of mourning, and a second called *daxiang* at the end of two years. Xunzi considers that the mourning period comes to an end with the second, i.e., in the 25th month, though other early texts treat it as ending in the 27th month, when the so-called *tan* sacrifice is performed.

¹⁹Recently found archeological evidence indicates, however, that the three-year mourning period was not a custom of early Zhou times, but probably originated around the time of Confucius. The text of this passage on the three-year mourning period has been copied into the *Liji* or *Book of Rites* and comprises nearly all of sec. 38.

Why does the mourning for a ruler last for three years? The ruler is the lord of order and good government, the font of form and reason, the model of feeling and manner. If all men join together and pay him the highest honor, is this not fitting? The *Odes* says:

Just and gentle is the true prince,
Father and mother to his people.²⁰

This indicates that men have always looked up to their ruler as to a father or a mother. A father can beget a child, but he cannot suckle it. A mother can suckle it, but she cannot instruct and educate it. The ruler can not only feed his people, but can also educate them wisely. Is three years not in fact too short a time to mourn for him? One mourns three months for the wet nurse who suckled one, and nine months for the nursemaid who clothed one, yet the ruler does far more than this for his people. Is three years not in fact too short a time to mourn for him? With him there is order; without him there is chaos; for he is the arbiter of proper form. With him there is safety; without him there is danger; for he is the arbiter of proper feeling. Since these two faculties combine in him, three years is in fact too short a period to mourn for him, though it would be impractical to try to extend the period further.

What is the purpose of the three months of lying in state? It is to give gravity and importance to the occasion, to express honor and affection, before one finally moves the dead one, escorts him from his house, and takes him to his final resting place in the grave mound. The former kings were afraid that the process would lack a fitting form, and therefore they calculated

²⁰“Greater Odes,” *Jiongzhuo*, Mao text no. 251.

the proper time needed and allowed a sufficient number of days. Thus, for the Son of Heaven the period is seven months, for the feudal lords, five months, and for the high ministers and others, three months. In this way sufficient time is allowed for all necessary matters to be attended to and completed, for all forms to be carried out and all articles needed for the burial to be supplied. To allow such a period of time is in accordance with the Way.

The sacrificial rites originate in the emotions of remembrance and longing for the dead. Everyone is at times visited by sudden feelings of depression and melancholy longing. A loyal minister who has lost his lord or a filial son who has lost a parent, even when he is enjoying himself among congenial company, will be overcome by such feelings. If they come to him and he is greatly moved, but does nothing to give them expression, then his emotions of remembrance and longing will be frustrated and unfulfilled, and he will feel a sense of deficiency in his ritual behavior. Therefore, the former kings established certain forms to be observed on such occasions so that men could fulfill their duty to honor those who deserve honor and show affection for those who command affection. Hence the sacrificial rites originate in the emotions of remembrance and longing, express the highest degree of loyalty, love, and reverence, and embody what is finest in ritual conduct and formal bearing. Only a sage can fully understand them. The sage understands them, the gentleman finds comfort in carrying them out, the officials are careful to maintain them, and the common people accept them as custom. To the gentleman they are a part of the way of man; to the common people they are something pertaining to the spirits.

Bells, drums, sounding stones, string and wind instruments, the musical compositions entitled “Shao,” “Xia,” “Hu,” “Wu,” “Zhuo,” “Huan,” “Xiao,” and “Xiang”—these originate with the sudden changes of feeling of the gentleman and are the forms

expressive of joy. The mourning garments and cane, the mourning hut and gruel, the mat of twigs and pillow of earth—these originate with the sudden changes of feeling of the gentleman and are forms expressive of grief and pain. The rules governing military expeditions, the gradations of punishment, which assure that no crime shall go unpunished—these originate with the sudden changes of feeling of the gentleman and are forms expressive of loathing and hatred.

When conducting a sacrifice, one divines to determine the appropriate day, fasts and purifies oneself, sets out the tables and mats with the offerings, and speaks to the invocator as though the spirit of the dead were really going to partake of the sacrifice. One takes up each of the offerings and presents them as though the spirit were really going to taste them. The server does not hold up the wine cup, but the sacrificer himself presents the wine vessel, as though the spirit were really going to drink from it. When the guests leave, the sacrificer bows and escorts them to the door, returns, changes his clothes, goes to his seat, and weeps as though the spirit had really departed along with them. How full of grief it is, how reverent! One serves the dead as though they were living, the departed as though present, giving body to the bodiless and thus fulfilling the proper forms of ceremony.



A DISCUSSION OF MUSIC

(Section 20)

Music is joy,¹ an emotion which man cannot help but feel at times. Since man cannot help feeling joy, his joy must find an outlet in voice and an expression in movement. The outcries and movements, and the inner emotional changes which occasion them, must be given full expression in accordance with the way of man. Man must have his joy, and joy must have its expression, but if that expression is not guided by the principles of the Way, then it will inevitably become disordered. The former kings hated such disorder, and therefore they created the musical forms of the odes and hymns in order to guide it. In this way they made certain that the voice would fully express the feelings of joy without becoming wild and abandoned, that the form would be well ordered but not unduly restrictive, that

¹Xunzi's argument here and throughout the section is based upon the fact that the words *yue* (music) and *le* (joy) are written with the same character, a coincidence often exploited by early writers on music. By music, Xunzi means the entire musical performance, including singing, dancing, and musical accompaniment. Texts similar to this one on the nature of music, which agree closely with Xunzi's wording and views, are found in *Shiji* 24, "Treatise on Music," and *Liji*, sec. 19, "Record of Music."