荀子

Xunzi Excerpts

(English translation by Knoblock)

How did ritual principles arise? I say that men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure an apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion thins, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. They so fashioned their regulations that desires should not want for the things which satisfy them and goods would not be exhausted by the desires. In this way the tow of them, desires and goods, sustained each other over the course of time. This is the origin or ritual principles.

禮者，謹於治生死者也。生、人之始也，死、人之終也，終始俱善，人道畢矣。故君子敬始而慎終，終始如一，是君子之道，禮義之文也。夫厚其生而薄其死，是敬其有知，而慢其無知也，是姦人之道而倍叛之心也。君子以倍叛之心接臧穀，猶且羞之，而況以事其所隆親乎！

故死之為道也，一而不可得再復也，臣之所以致重其君，子之所以致重其親，於是盡矣。故事生不忠厚，不敬文，謂之野；送死不忠厚，不敬文，謂之瘠。君子賤野而羞瘠。

(chap.19禮論, 1 (1a))

Ritual is sedulous in giving order to matters of birth and death, for birth is he beginning of man and death his end. When both the beginning and end are good, the Way of Man is complete. Thus, the gentleman takes strict reverent care with beginnings and is conscientious about the end, so that end and beginning are as one. Such is the Way of the gentleman and the cultivated form of ritual and morality. To be generous on occasions of birth and niggardly at death is to be respectful of those having awareness, but disrespectful of those lacking awareness. This is to follow the way of degenerates and to have a heart that rebels against nature. A Gentleman, moreover, would be ashamed to deal with even a Cang or Huo with a rebellious heart, how much more then would he be ashamed so to serve those whom he exalts and loves!

Because there is only one opportunity to treat the dead in the proper way, and it can never be repeated, the minister’s demonstration of highest respect for his ruler and the son’s expression of the greatest honor for his parents must be fully conveyed on this last occasion. Hence, not to serve the living with honest generosity and with respectful forms should be called boorishness; failing to bury the dead with an honest generosity and respectful forms should be called miserliness. The gentleman despises boorishness and is ashamed of miserliness.

故天子棺槨七重，諸侯五重，大夫三重，士再重。然後皆有衣衾多少厚薄之數，皆有翣菨文章之等，以敬飾之，使生死終始若一；一足以為人願，是先王之道，忠臣孝子之極也。

天子之喪動四海，屬諸侯；諸侯之喪動通國，屬大夫；大夫之喪動一國，屬脩士；脩士之喪動一鄉，屬朋友；庶人之喪合族黨，動州里；刑餘罪人之喪，不得合族黨，獨屬妻子，棺槨三寸，衣衾三領，不得飾棺，不得晝行，以昏殣，凡緣而往埋之，反無哭泣之節，無衰麻之服，無親疏月數之等，各反其平，各復其始，已葬埋，若無喪者而止，夫是之謂至辱。

Accordingly, the inner and outer coffins of the Son of Heaven consisted of seven layers, those of the feudal lords of five layers, those of the grand officers of three layers, and those of knights of a double layer. Beyond this for each there was a correct number for the quantity and quality of clothing and offerings of food and a specific type of ornament and design appropriate to their rank, such as the flabellum for the coffin, proper respect being shown by the specific decorations. In this way, birth and death, end and beginning, are treated the same, and men’s yearnings are satisfied. Such was the way of the Ancient Kings, and the highest expression the loyalty of the minister and the piety of the filial son.

The funeral of the Son of Heaven affects all within the four seas and brings together the feudal lords. The funeral of a feudal lord affects the states with which he maintains relations and brings together his grand officers. The funeral of a grand officer affects a single country and brings together the senior knights. The funeral of a senior knight affects a single prefecture and brings together his friends. The funeral of an ordinary man unites his kin and neighbors and affects his district and community. The funeral of a castrated criminal does not involve uniting his family and neighbors, but brings together only his wife nd children. His inner and outer coffins are but three inches thick, with only three thicknesses of grave cloth covering his corpse and with no decorations permitted on the inner coffin. His procession is not permitted to proceed by day, but they must bury him under the cover of darkness. They wear everyday clothes, no gradations of proper lengths of mourning for near and distant relatives. Each returns to the ordinary course of his life and resumes his business as before. As soon as his body is interred in the earth, everything ends as though there had never been a funeral. Truly this the ultimate disgrace.

(chap.19禮論, 17 (4a/b))

喪禮者，以生者飾死者也，大象其生以送其死也。故事死如生，事亡如存，終始一也。始卒，沐浴、鬠體、飯唅，象生執也。不沐則濡櫛三律而止，不浴則濡巾三式而止。充耳而設瑱，飯以生稻，唅以槁骨，反生術矣。設褻衣，襲三稱，縉紳而無鉤帶矣。設掩面儇目，鬠而不冠笄矣。書其名，置於其重，則名不見而柩獨明矣。薦器：則冠有鍪而毋縰，罋廡虛而不實，有簟席而無床笫，木器不成斲，陶器不成物，薄器不成內，笙竽具而不和，琴瑟張而不均，輿藏而馬反，告不用也。具生器以適墓，象徙道也。略而不盡，貌而不功，趨輿而藏之，金革轡靷而不入，明不用也。象徙道，又明不用也，是皆所以重哀也。故生器文而不功，明器貌而不用。

In funeral rites, one uses objects of the living to adorn the dead and sends them to their grae in a fashion that resembles the way they lived. Thus one treats the dead like the living and one treats their absence just as one treated them when they were still present, so that end and beginning are as one. When a person has just died, his hair is washed, his body is bathed, his hair tied in a knot, his nails are trimmed, and food is put in his mouth, imitating what one did for him when he was still alive. If hair is not washed, then it is combed through exactly three times; if the body is not bathed, then it is wiped exactly three times with a wet towel. But filling the ears by putting in plugs, providing food by using raw rice, and closing the moth with a white cowry shell are practices contrary to what is done for the living. Arrange the underclothing, add three layers of outer robes, and insert the broad sash, but do not fasten the sash hook. Arrange the face covering, bind the eyes, and comb the hair, but do not put on a cap or hairpin. Write out the name of the deceased and place it directly on the tablet, then the name is not seen, but the name is clear only on the coffin. The ceremonial offerings include a cap with bands but no strings, earthen water and wine jugs that are empty and never filled, and there are bamboo mats but neither beds nor couches. The carvings on the wooden vessels are left incomplete. Earhtenwares are left as unfinished objects. Thin wares are too incomplete to be used. The reed pipes and reed organs are whole but are not tuned. The zithers and lutes are strung but not adjusted. The carriage is buried, but the horses are returned. All these practices are to indicate that these articles are not intended to be used. The articles of life are taken to the tomb to give the impression that only the abode has changed. A selection from his made, but the whole of them is not entombed; so the form is there, but no substance. A carriage is taken to the tomb and buried, but its metal and leather fittings, reins and harnesses, are not included, to make clear that it is not intended for use. Both giving the impression that only the abode has changed and making clear that funeral objects will never be used are means used to emphasize the feelings of grief at death. Thus, the articles of life have the proper form, but not the function; the hallowed articles have the appearance but not the use.

凡禮，事生，飾歡也；送死，飾哀也；祭祀，飾敬也；師旅，飾威也。是百王之所同，古今之所一也，未有知其所由來者也。故壙壟、其貌象室屋也；棺槨、其貌象版蓋斯象拂也；無帾絲歶縷翣，其貌以象菲帷幬尉也。抗折，其貌以象槾茨番閼也。故喪禮者，無他焉，明死生之義，送以哀敬，而終周藏也。故葬埋，敬藏其形也；祭祀，敬事其神也；其銘誄繫世，敬傳其名也。事生，飾始也；送死，飾終也；終始具，而孝子之事畢，聖人之道備矣。

As a general principle, ritual in treating birth provides ornamentation for expressions of joy, and in sending off the dead it provides ornamentation for expressions of grief. In presenting sacrificial offerings rituals embellish feelings of reverence, and in marshaling troops they embellish feelings of awe-inspiring majesty. In this, the Hundred Kings have agreed, and antiquity and today are one and the same, although we have no knowledge of how this came to be. From of old the grave chamber and the tumulus raised above it have resembled the form of a house. The inner and outer coffins have resembled the form of the side, top, front, and back boards of a carriage. The baldachin over the coffin with its decorations of sprouts and fish and the flabellum have resembled the form of rush-grass screens, curtains, and the netted coverings of hanging of a room. The wooden lining and protective framework of the tomb have resembled the form of rafters and beams of the roof and its obstructing fence. Thus, the purpose of the mourning rites is nothing other than to make clear the duties of the living to the dead, to send the dead off with grief and reverence, and to conclude by completing the burial. Hence, at the interment into the grave one reverently buries the bodily form, at the offering of sacrifices one reverently serves the spirits, and with the inscription, eulogy, and the genealogical record one reverently transmits his name to posterity. In treating birth, rites ornament the beginning; in sending off the dead they ornament the end. When both end and beginning have been fully attended to, then the service proper for a filial son is finished and the Way of the Sage is fulfilled.

(chap.19禮論, 23 (7a/b))

刻死而附生謂之墨，刻生而附死謂之惑，殺生而送死謂之賊。大象其生以送其死，使死生終始莫不稱宜而好善，是禮義之法式也，儒者是矣。To deprive the dead in order to add to what the living have is termed “having blackly impure principles”; to deprive the living to supplement offerings for the dead is termed “delusion”; and to execute the lving so that they can escort the dead is termed “predation”. To send off the dead in a fashion that generally imitates the way they lived; to cause nothing in death or in birth, in end or in beginning, to be unseemly or inappropriate; and in everything to be fond of the good – such is the model and paradigm of ritual and duty. The true Ru are thus.

(chap.19禮論,23(8))

天行有常，不为尧存，不为桀亡。应之以治则吉，应之以乱则凶。强本而节用，则天不能贫；养备而动时，则天不能病；修道而不贰，则天不能祸。故水旱不能使之饥，寒暑不能使之疾，祅怪不能使之凶。本荒而用侈，则天不能使之富；养略而动罕，则天不能使之全；倍道而妄行，则天不能使之吉。…

The course of Nature is constant: it does not survive because of the actions of a Yao; it does not perish because of the actions of a Jie. If you respond to the constancy of nature’s course with good government, there will be good fortune; if you respond to it with disorder, there will be misfortune. If you strengthen the basic undertakings and moderate expenditures, Nature cannot impoverish you. If your nourishment is complete and your movements accord with the season, then Nature cannot afflict you with illness. If you conform to the Way and are not of two minds, the Nature cannot bring about calamity. ….

(chap. 17 天論, 1 (1))

列星隨旋，日月遞炤，四時代御，陰陽大化，風雨博施，萬物各得其和以生，各得其養以成，不見其事，而見其功，夫是之謂神。皆知其所以成，莫知其無形，夫是之謂天功。唯聖人為不求知天。

The constellations follow their revolutions; the sun and moon alternately shine; the four seasons present themselves in succession; the Yin and Yang enlarge and transform; and the wind and rain spread out everywhere. Each of the myriad things must be in a harmonious relation with Nature in order to grow, and each must obtain from Nature the proper nurture in order to become complete. We do not perceive the process, but we perceive the result – this indeed is why we call it “divine”. All realize that Nature has brought completion, but none realize its formlessness – this indeed is why we call it “Nature”. Only the sage acts not seeking to know Nature.

(Chap. 17 天論,3 (2b))

雩而雨，何也？曰：無佗也，猶不雩而雨也。日月食而救之，天旱而雩，卜筮然後決大事，非以為得求也，以文之也。故君子以為文，而百姓以為神。以為文則吉，以為神則凶也。

If you pray for rain and there is rain, what of that? I say there is no special relationship – as when you do not pray for rain and there is rain. When the sun and moon are eclipsed, we attempt to save them; when Heaven sends drought, we pray for rain; and before we decide any important undertaking, we divine with bone and milfoil. We do these things not because we believe that such ceremonies will produce the results we seek, but because we want to embellish such occasions with ceremony. The gentleman considers such ceremonies as embellishments, but the Hundred Clans consider them supernatural. To consider them embellishment is fortunate; to consider them supernatural is unfortunate.

(Chap. 17 天論, 13 (8))

见善，修然必以自存也；见不善，愀然必以自省也。善在身，介然必以自好也；不善在身，灾然必以自恶也。故非我而当者，吾师也；是我而当者，吾友也；谄谀我者，吾贼也。故君子隆师而亲友，以致恶其贼。…

When a man sees good, being filled with delight, he is sure to preserve it within himself. When he sees what is not good, being filled with sorrowful apprehension, he is certain to search for it within himself. When he finds what is good within himself, with a sense of firm resolve he is to cherish its being here. When he sees what is not good within himself, filled with loathing, he must hate that it is there. As of old, those who consider me to be in the wrong and are correct in doing so are my teachers; those who consider me to in the right and are correct are my friends; but those who latter me an today after me are my malefactors Thus, the gentleman esteems his teachers, is intimate with his friends, that he might thereby utterly despise his malefactors. …

(Chap. 2 脩身, 4 (1))

治氣養心之術：血氣剛強，則柔之以調和；知慮漸深，則一之以易良；勇膽猛戾，則輔之以道順；齊給便利，則節之以動止；狹隘褊小，則廓之以廣大；卑溼重遲貪利，則抗之以高志；庸眾駑散，則劫之以師友；怠慢僄棄，則炤之以禍災；愚款端愨，則合之以禮樂，通之以思索。凡治氣養心之術，莫徑由禮，莫要得師，莫神一好。夫是之謂治氣養心之術也。

About the art of controlling vital breath and nourishing the mind: If the blood humor is too strong and robust, calm it with balance and harmony. If knowledge and foresight are too penetrating and deep, unify them with ease and sincerity. If the impulse to daring and bravery is too fierce and violent, stay it with guidance and instruction. If the quickness of the mind and the fluency of the tongue are too punctilious and sharp, moderate them in your activity and rest. What is so narrow and restricted that it has become mean and petty, broaden with liberality and magnanimity. What is base and low from greed for selfish gain lift up with a sense of high purpose. What is common and mediocre, worthless and undisciplined, overcome with the help of teachers and friends. What is negligent and self-indulgent, frivolous and heedless, warn against with omens and portents. What is simpleminded but sincere, upright and diligent, consolidate with ritual and music, make comprehensive with thought and inquiry. In summary, of all the methods of controlling the vital breath and nourishing the mind, none is more direct than proceeding according to ritual principles, none more essential than obtaining a good teacher, and none more intelligent than unifying one’s likes. Truly this procedure may properly be called “the method of controlling the vital breath and nourishing the mind”.

(chap. 2 脩身,4 (4))

君子行不贵苟难，说不贵苟察，名不贵苟传，唯其当之为贵。…

In matters of conduct the gentleman does not esteem indecorous, through difficult, feats; in his explanations he does not prize improper investigations; in matters of reputation he does not value unsuitable traditions. Rather, only what is fitting to the occasion does he esteem. …

(Chap. 3 不苟, 1 (1))

君子養心莫善於誠，致誠則無它事矣。唯仁之為守，唯義之為行。誠心守仁則形，形則神，神則能化矣。誠心行義則理，理則明，明則能變矣。變化代興，謂之天德。

For the gentleman to nurture his mind, nothing is more excellent than truthfulness. If a man has attained perfection of truthfulness, he will have no other concern than to uphold the principle of humanity and to behave with justice. If with truthfulness of mind he upholds the principle of humanity, it will be given form. Having been given form, it becomes intelligible. Having become intelligible it can produce transmutation. If with truthfulness of mind he behaves with justice, it will accord with natural order. According with natural order, it will become clear. Having become clear, it can produce transformation. To cause transmutation and transformation to flourish in succession is called the “Power of Nature”.

(Chap. 3 不苟, 9 (9a))