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A Sense of Awe: On the Differences between Confucian Thought and Christianity

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Abstract The fundamental importance of reverence is recognized by all major world cultures. Confucianism's account of "The three things of which the sage is in awe" is seen in Chinese culture through the value placed on reverence. "The three things of which the sage is in awe" both manifests itself as an approach to value and is also an expression of practical ethical guidance. The essential aspect of reverence is a sincere and ethical outlook; accordingly it is a part of virtue ethics. In this kind of virtue ethics, ethical practice accords with self-conscious conduct that is guided by a sense of reverence, and this forms the guiding thought of Confucianism. From a comparative cultural perspective, the Confucian sense of reverence founded upon ethical self-awareness and Christian sense of reverence founded on divine worship are different. However, both take reverence to be the root of culture, thus proving that reverence is an element that none of the world's major cultures can be without. In the early modern period, a sense of reverence was seen something enchanted and harmful to the rational progress of civilization. However, the contemporary reenchantment movements in some ways call up a return to such reverence.

Keywords reverence, Confucianism, Christianity, religion, virtue, reenchantment

1 Introduction

Within the field of comparative culture, and beginning with early Confucianism and continuing through to the present, Confucian commentators have

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consistently embraced an attitude of *wei* 畏 (awe) when interpreting the teachings and actions of key Confucian figures. The *Analects*' passage (16.8)—“The three things of which the cultivated person is in awe”—created an enduring framework through which Confucians were able to understand the classic texts. The passage also offers a starting point for understanding the original sensibilities of these texts. This sense of reverence was the basis for Confucianism's enduring identity and its practical guidance. Without this framework there would be no way to understand the distinctive features of Confucianism. In parallel with the Confucian tradition, understanding of the sacred edicts of Christianity also requires an appreciation for reverence and awe. However, there is a clear difference between these two phenomenon: in the areas of sage versus God, ethics versus religion, past versus future, and self-reflection versus divine redemption, there is a difference between an ethical self-governance and a divine enlightenment that denies self-mastery. By better understanding the Confucian classics, we can better understand the basis for the difference between the two cultures.

2 Reverence: An Approach to Value and a Source of Practical Guidance

The traditional concern with reverence in Confucian thought can be traced back to early Confucianism. Confucius offered the following original interpretation of it: “The consummate person holds in awe three things: *tianming* 天命 (fate), people of important position, and the words of the sages. Petty people do not know fate, they are unduly presumptuous with people in important positions and they ridicule for the words of the sages” (Yang 1980, p. 177). Interpreters of this passage generally emphasize the three things that the cultivated person holds in awe but, in fact, Confucius is using the comparison in virtue between the cultivated person and the petty person to explain why a sense of awe is needed. Several important principles, important for understanding the Confucian concern with awe and reverence, are established in this passage. Firstly, a sense of awe is an important criterion for distinguishing the refined or cultivated person, *junzi* 君子, from the petty person, *xiaoren* 小人. Secondly, the three aspects of awe—a feeling of awe at the sacred nature of what is commanded by the state of the world, awe at the authoritative figures of the world and awe at the words of the sages that established appropriate social foundations—are mutually entwined, and cannot be separated if the relationship between these three components is to be understood and Confucius saved from being assigned the status of a common man. Confucius advocated “awe for people of important positions and awe for the words of the sages” because those in important positions had accepted the

commands arising from the state of the world, while the sages interpreted those commands. Thus, it is clear that a reverence for fate is the key to all forms of reverence. Thirdly, the reason why petty people do not respect those in important positions and are dismissive of the words of the sages is because they have no sense of awe regarding what is commanded by the state of the world. This stance then affects their approach to influential people and the words of the sages: all involve the lack of a sense of reverence.

Confucius emphasized a sense of awe; in particular, he regarded fate as the origin of such awe. But what is the basis for such an interpretation? On investigation, we find the explanation derives from several factors.

Firstly, Confucius was painfully aware of the horror and terror of the Spring and Autumn Period, which resulted from “*tianxia wu dao* 天下无道 (The loss of Dao in the world)”. He personally witnessed the overturning of all order by those who possessed no sense of fear or respect, and without such fear there was no sense of unease at their own actions. The basic order inherent in people’s thinking was violated (hence the phrase “the petty person has no sense of awe”); people were willing to overturn political order (hence the phrase, “*pei chen zhi guo ming* 陪臣执国命 (Ministers ruling the country)” and were also without discipline when dealing with everyday affairs. The Dao in social and political life was lost when the attitude that marked social life was one of abandon.

Next, Confucius saw that that the reason why social order had proved impossible to safeguard could be expressed through three related elements. These were the order inherent in people’s lives and feelings, political order, and social order. These three were either maintained as one or collapsed as one. As a result, it was important that people should act with a sense of reverence and awe in their hearts; reverence for what is commanded by the state of the world, for those figures of authority who undertook the burden of what is so commanded and for those sages who interpreted what is commanded by the state of the world. If one of these three elements was missing, it would have a negative impact on the project of restoring order to the world.

Finally, Confucius had grasped a structural feature of human activity. Although human activity was restricted by factors external to interpersonal relationships, internal personal strength was the key to rational human activity. Accordingly, in order to ensure that people upheld order, it was necessary to get them to conquer their arrogance and prideful outlook. This in turn required that people be put in a situation where, internally, there was something they revered. That which people revere cannot be that which they can attain; rather, they revere what they find hard to comprehend and which leaves them feeling powerless. It is on account of this that Confucius emphasized that reverence for fate central to what was to be held in awe; this in turn generated reverence for (and the preservation of) social and political order (people in important positions are the representatives of such

order and commands); reverence was also the grounds for how people talked about the order in their individual lives (the pronouncements of the sages being the archetypal forms of such words).

The Confucian concern with reverence established by Confucius cannot be reductively rendered as merely three types of thing which the cultivated person feared. Confucius' approach involved significant cultural and social connotations. Without exaggeration, it is possible to say that Confucius' account of awe is related to the re-establishment of a productive social order or *Dao*. It is connected with an important sensibility, one that gives rise to the social order with structured human relationships (*ren* 仁 (benevolence)), the presence of justice (*yi* 义 (justice)), the respect for regulation (*li* 理 (propriety)), the capacity for good judgment (*zhi* 智 (wisdom)) and mechanisms promoting mutual trust (*xin* 信 (fidelity)). From the beginning of this Confucian tradition of reverence, it involved complex social objectives and the capacity to order people's mental lives. Given such an understanding, it is not feasible to gloss the character for "awe" referred to in the *Analects*' passage using the character's original meaning, as Han Scholar Xu Shen did in the *Shuowen Jiezi* character dictionary: "*Wei* means to *e* 恶 (detest) and the character is linked phonetically to the word for tiger; the tiger's claw is something to be feared" (Xu 1963, p. 189). According to this explanation, *wei* means simply a feeling of detestation or fear; indeed, Yang Bojun understands Confucius' discourse on "*wei*" from within this framework (Yang 1980, p. 262). The character "*wei*" can be understood to include three spheres of meaning. Firstly, there is fear: People fear something and as a result their arrogance is kept under control. Secondly, there is being frightened, which leads to avoidance: Fear causes someone to keep something at a distance. Thirdly, there is awe: Something is revered because it is held in esteem. The second interpretation is clearly not one emphasized by Confucius, while the first implies taking something seriously or looking out for it. It is the third interpretation alone that fits with the "*wei*" spoken of by Confucius. This was the guiding sensibility of the Confucian tradition of reverence that was created by Confucius. Thus, Confucius' three objects of reverence can be understood in the following way: Reverential human activity must respect what is commanded by the state of the world; the representatives of social and political processes (persons of authority) are revered; and the interpreters of the processes at the heart of human experience (the sages) are also revered. Among these three kinds of awe or reverence, reverence for fate is fundamental, reverence for people in important positions serves a mediating function, and reverence for the sages reflects their role as a point of contact. Reverence for people in important positions is a manifestation of respect for figures with great personal authority. Of course, this is not to say that Confucius was a conformist about obeying authority; his account of awe emphasized only that such figures should be

respected, not that they must be obeyed.

If one says that reverence for fate is a requirement for humanity's acceptance of its destiny or commitments, then reverence for figures of authority is a condition of maintaining social order. But how is the demand for respect for the words of the sages to be justified? The reason lies in their acceptance of fate and their assisting those in important positions, as well as providing interpretation of the more difficult aspects of cultural life. This is the reason why the later Song and Ming Neo-Confucians, when developing and arguing over Confucius' account of awe, placed great emphasis on the words of the sages. Hence, it is reasonable to claim that Confucius' interpretation of reverence established the basic framework for Confucian values and the basic direction of a practical ethical sensibility.

We now move from the Spring and Autumn Period to the Song and Ming Dynasties, to consider how Confucius' account of awe was received by the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians. During the early Song, Daoism and Buddhism were the subject of much attention. At the time, people lacked a respectful attitude towards the Confucian classics, and this severely affected the transmission of traditional Confucian thought about *Dao*, political life and the importance of study. During this period, the issue of how to reform people's disrespectful attitude to the Confucian classics and re-ignite a reverential attitude was a problem of paramount importance to Confucian scholars of the time. Only when this problem was solved could people's lives once more be situated within the framework of Confucian order; in this way, the people would be spared from the misleading Buddhist teachings that threatened to dissolve the moral order created by hierarchical personal relationships, and from the corrupt Daoist teachings that sought to prolong the human lifespan without regard for human responsibility. Thus, Song and Ming thinkers, who had "dabbled in Buddhist and Daoist thought for some years and now return to their Confucian roots", absorbed Daoist and Buddhist insights and argumentative skills, on the one hand, but also advocated profound ethical reflection and committed ethical practices. It was in this context that the Confucian concern with reverence once more came to the fore.

While Confucius merely highlighted the issue of reverence but did not explore its structure and function, The Song-Ming Neo-Confucians not only precisely fixed the meaning of *wei* 畏 as a kind of *jingwei* 敬畏 (reverence), they also incorporated this into an ontological framework. Further they both addressed the issue of reverence as an epistemological one, and also interpreted reverence as being at the core of an ethical vision. Finally, they also established reverence as a practical guidance for living. In short, the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians expanded the Confucian *sense* of reverence into a *system* of Confucian values and methods for good practice and action. They thereby infused Confucian spiritual sensibilities and its ethical framework with a strength that drew on the powers of

philosophy and psychology. The connotations of Confucian *wei* were deepened immensely in this progression from original Confucian awe to the reverence of the Neo-Confucians, and from the vagueness inherent in Confucius' stance towards awe, to the Neo-Confucians' precise understanding of and systematic discourse on reverence. Accordingly, the basic Confucian account of value, particularly the way in which this value was objectified and made explicit, acquired substantial theoretical explanation; and the element of Confucian ethical practice that rested on internal cultivation found a means of articulation.

3 Sincerity and Awe: Why the Need for Reverence?

The fact that Song and Ming Confucians reestablished reverence at the heart of Confucianism is closely connected with the state of Confucian intellectual thought at the time. Confucianism had experienced attacks from Daoism during the Han and Wei dynasties and suffered reversals at the hands of Buddhism during the Sui and Tang Periods; as a result, by the time of the Northern Song, the standing of Confucian thought was at an historical low in the arenas of both intellectual thought and national society more generally. Looking back historically, to when Classical Confucianism had faced challenges from Daoism and Mohist doctrine, Mencius had given expression to new sources of value and practical meaning. Mencius was able to seize the initiative and decisively attack Yang Zhu and the Mohists, and so reform the intellectual trends of the time, which were summed up by the phrase, "The doctrines that dominate the empire look either to Yang or to Mo".

The situation for the Song and Ming Confucians was, however, slightly different. In a context where the three teachings of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism had become integrated as a fragile form of political guidance, Confucianism was no longer able to use an aggressive political approach to recover its domain of influence and revitalize its practices. At the same time, people who had long since adjusted to the mindset of Buddhism were no longer familiar with the values and ethical practices of Confucianism; and Confucian thinkers were also astute enough to recognize the value of Daoism and Buddhist ideas. As a result, only by making great efforts in the area of philosophy could Song and Ming Confucians hope to wrest back the status and practical influence that had been lost.

Within this context, with Confucian values suffering from a lack of recognition, the basic task of Song and Ming Confucians was to offer new interpretations of the classic texts and also produce explanations of them which were geared for contemporary society. In order to regain this recognition, it was necessary to first create a sense of respect for the doctrines contained in the Confucian

classics. It was for this reason that creating a sense of reverence for the classic Confucian thinkers and for the textual doctrines became vital for reasserting the primacy of Confucian social theories and guiding ideas.

This rehabilitation involved a long and protracted evolution in thought. Already in the early part of the Northern Song period, Zhou Dunyi—who determined so much of the direction of Song and Ming Neo-Confucian thought—had made “*jing* 静 (equilibrium)”, the touchstone of a revival in Confucian values. He believed that the self-generating universe indicated by “*wuji er taiji* 无极而太极 (Without polarity and yet with ultimate polarity)”, ultimately gave rise to the person who “attained excellence and was of supreme sensitivity”: The sage who comprehended “the Dao of benevolence and justice was able to use benevolence to guide the myriad things of the world and use justice to correct the common people” (See Xiao 1983, pp. 19–20). More importantly, the supreme polarity, in alternating between movement and equilibrium in a manner described as “*miao he er ning* 妙合而凝 (subtle integrating and coalescing)”, causes “each of the myriad things to be in order and large and small to find their fixed measure”. The ethical connections identified by Confucian thought thus acquired the support of the philosophical stance indicated by the phrase, “Each finds its own pattern and order and so finds harmony” (Ibid., p. 20). Where people are concerned, the arising of desire and feeling can interfere with their grasp of the correct measures and Dao. Mindful of this, Zhou Dunyi suggested that things were “*ding* 定 (fixed)” by a *tianli* 天理 (cosmic order), that prioritizing equilibrium and taking a cautious stance towards activity would “eliminate human desire” and that “sincerity” constituted the highest means of human cultivation. Zhou Dunyi’s account had already incorporated Daoist doctrine into Confucian thought, and thereby secured for Confucianism theoretical and ontological support. However, there was a concern that, in regarding a kind of quietism as a prerequisite for attaining basic virtue in Confucian thought, Zhou Dunyi had neglected the recently established forms of practical ethical conduct; in particular, the emphasis on equilibrium downplayed the vitality and exuberance associated with a Confucian sense of awe and the active attainment of virtue. In emphasizing passive equilibrium it was not possible to emphasize the important ethical quality of subjective choice.

The Cheng brothers, Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, contributed to the re-creation of the Confucian sense of awe. They utilized a “personally experienced” “cosmic order” as the basis for a description of Confucian teachings and moral codes. The definition “Patterning and order is that which is *shi* 实 (substantial) and *ben* 本 (fundamental)” (Wang 2004, p. 1177), stressed that such ordering was the foundation of all things, including the basis for ethical human conduct. “Cosmic order” was not something that became apparent through inference, but was a reality constituted by both a structure and functionality. “Reality is a matter

or patterning or order and that means things and events; reality is constituted by things and events and that involves function and use; reality is patterning and order and that means consciousness and events. Everything that has a beginning must have an end” (Ibid., p. 1160). The ontological implications of cosmic order are clearly highlighted here, and the relationship between ontological reality and appearance, structure and function, cosmic order and human desire has been fixed. Accordingly, the Cheng Brothers were opposed to Zhou Dunyi’s attempts to explain Confucian ethical practice in terms of quietude or equilibrium. For them, “equilibrium” could easily cause the subject of ethical practice to forget the inner dimension and ground of ethical practice. “To speak only of the word “equilibrium”, this is merely forgetting” (Wang 2004, p. 189). Only when the character gloss “equilibrium” was replaced by “reverence” could people be made to maintain constantly a high level of vigilance in the ethical realm. On account of this, The Cheng Brothers remarked, “One who is learning must first become acquainted with benevolence. Benevolence involves being completely integrated with things and events. A sense of appropriateness, of ritual practice, wisdom and trust, these are all elements of benevolence. As for how to obtain such order, it is ensured through sincerity and reverence; it is not necessary to be cautious and keen on regulation nor is it necessary to live in poverty” (Ibid., pp. 16–17).

The Cheng brothers incorporated the ideals of sincerity (including an element of open-mindedness) and reverence into Confucian ethical cultivation, thereby elevating the goal of achieving excellence of character to a new level. “Sincerity” now had ontological overtures, with its origin lying in the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (The Doctrine of the Mean): “sincerity is the Dao of the cosmos, being sincere is the Dao of humans” (Zhu 1996, p. 777). The sincerity that constitutes the most complete form of Dao-making is a sincerity that accords with the order of the cosmos and the natural world; the sincerity inherent in the human Dao is a veneration of the cosmic order by *renxin* 人心 (human consciousness). There is an order in human consciousness, and this order is within the human heart. The order present in conscious life must be amplified by self-cultivation and an attitude of sincerity. This is what is meant by, “From the emperor to the common people, all are unified since the (common) root lies in self-cultivation” (Wang 2004, p. 1126). Self-cultivation is a pure-hearted means of ethical training: “Refined is one who studies the Dao; polished is one who cultivates himself” (Ibid., p. 1131). This kind of sincere attitude expresses a cultivated character, a “wholehearted focus”; it is the key to sustaining Confucian self-cultivation and to ensuring that any focus is not diluted; it is a form of cultivation that takes as its unwavering goal Confucian ethical cultivation. From this it can be known that “reverence” clearly implies ethical insight. Here, “sincerity” and “reverence” constitute the psychological foundation for a value system, one where no events are overlooked. Sincerity, or open-mindedness, is a prerequisite for the

psychology inherent in such an outlook, and respect means an attitude of reverence that has a role in guiding practical conduct; they are interrelated. They have similar functions and constitute the value system and practical ideals inherent in a Confucian way of life. Sincerity serves as the initial gateway into the Confucian world of value, while respect is a value that follows from sincerity, a condition for putting Confucian values into practice. In a Confucian world driven by the two values, they were the regulating “faith” that was expressed in the form of respect.

This close relationship between sincerity and reverence had an effect on those studying the Confucian classics: it forged a mindset that featured both internal and outward discipline and an acceptance of rejection; this was sufficient to prevent Daoism and Buddhism from tainting Confucian values. From the perspective of modern moral psychology, this reverential mentality bestowed on the subject certain cognitive characteristics and also a moral strength that demanded the recognition of others. This played a significant role in Confucianism’s rejection of Buddhist and Daoist teachings and practice. This was the personal psychological order at the heart of both Song-Ming Confucianism and also the reconstruction of contemporary Confucian values. Looking at Confucius’ identification of three objects of awe—what is commanded by the state of the natural world, figures of authority and standing and the sages—the Song-Ming Confucians focused on the most practical of these, the words of the sages. Fate can only be known through the words of the sages, and only when figures with social status abide by these words can they achieve great things. This is why the Cheng brothers emphasized “Each line of Confucius was a source of ordering; every line of Mencius was about bringing events to fruition” (Wang 2004, p. 76). “Each reading of the *Analects* or the *Mencius* leads to a familiar feeling... subjecting oneself fully to the words of the sages, it is not possible to catch them in a single phrase; one can but read these two books, committing oneself fully until the end of one’s days and in this way attaining much” (Ibid., p. 285). With the introduction of the concepts of sincerity and respect, the Cheng brothers managed to transform reverence for what is commanded by the state of the world, for great public figures and for the words of the sages into reverence for the words of the sages. The three original components of awe had become three aspects of sacred reverence. The task of interpreting the classics became the task of integrating different ethical methods. The reverence toward Confucius and Mencius was thus both a system of values and also a guarantee of correct and appropriate action. This reverence was highly influential in the integrating of Song-Ming Confucianism and contemporary Confucianism and in the choice of priorities and conduct.

Zhu Xi engaged more practically with interpretations of reverence, and many commentators have attempted to summarize his thought. Meng Peiyuan believes

that Zhu Xi's view of awe contains four elements.

The first element is “to be focused and not deviate” and also “to be single-minded” and not “slacken” (Li 1997, pp. 178–188). This view comes from the Cheng brothers' work, and expresses the extensive focusing of a vitality involving both body and mind, one founded upon a resolute sense of belief. Such faith is the product of fate (*tianming*) and is bestowed upon humanity; it is the substance of the conscious mind, human dispositions and tendencies and also includes the ultimate polarity (*taiji*).

Second, “Be cautious and restrained in mind and body” (Ibid., pp. 179–180); this is the so-called “engaging with events respectfully”. Zhu Xi did not decry sitting silently but in doing so one must nourish oneself through a sense of reverence, and when responding to things and events one must view them through the filter of reverence. Being cautious about one's person and not losing discipline is a natural way of the world; people can have a sense of reverence and so must be cautious and restrained in body and mind. Although this is true of all people, only when people overcome themselves can such a consciousness and the natural order in the world be united.

Thirdly, “orderly and solemn” (Ibid., p. 189) included “displaying emotions, expressing opinions” as well as purifying and fasting; this sense implied the expression of an inner sense of reverence through each word and action, particular when taking part in sacrifices and rituals.

Fourth is “reverence” also expressed as “reverence is just a character meaning awe” (Ibid., p. 188). This is a point little discussed by other Neo-Confucian thinkers, but Zhu Xi made clear its significance. Reverence (*jing*) and awe (*wei*) are interconnected, partly defining of each other. In explaining the many aspects of reverence, Zhu Xi enhanced the tools available to Confucians for ethical reflection. Independently of a comparison with the ethics of Kantian autonomy or Christian revelation, it is possible to see the decisive contribution made by reverence to the sacredness of the person. For Zhu Xi, reverence is ultimately founded in awe and serves to inspire us; it is not simply a respecting or following but is a state that accompanies an ethical sensibility that includes a sense of fear. This implies rich philosophical meaning and is not a simple description of a psychological state; the words of the sages contain sacred meaning that commands people's respect. Scholars like Meng Peiyuan readily gloss “reverence” in terms of a Chinese religion. This diminishes the gravity and seriousness with which Confucianism advocates that people respect morality. In Song-Ming Confucianism, talk of a sense of reverence is a way of emphasizing how individuals can accord with the philosophical and psychological foundations of virtuous living that defined Confucianism. This entails a sense of the religious but is not a religious discourse. It merely emphasizes the reason why people are willing and able to live virtuously. This is

the human and earthly focus for the Confucian explanation of reverence.

4 The Inspiration of Virtue

The above is an explanation not only of the constituents of Song-Ming Confucianism but also of the reverential attitude that contemporary Confucianism takes towards the classical Confucian texts. Following from this is the question of why later Confucianism insists on adopting such an attitude to the Confucian classics, and this question must be explained by reference to both elements within the classic Confucian texts and external factors.

In what follows, I describe three considerations that collectively constitute a reason for the reverence towards the classic texts shown by later Confucian thinkers. Firstly, ancient Chinese “society” was a profound inspiration for primitive Confucianism and gave to Confucianism an appreciation of the internal measure or standard used to determine when a “person” is fully a person. Under the influence of ancient society, early Confucianism also discovered the conditions under which social and political order were preserved. The second consideration addresses the great depth of meaning found in the classic texts. The Confucian classics encompassed several thousand years of intellectual and social experimentation. A single human social order emerged from the sieve of history and the conflicting schools of thought; this confirmed that the Confucian classics did in fact present a settled, unchanging order. Thirdly, the interconnected nature of the classics, informed by social evolution during the Zhou Period, meant that classical Confucian texts, and the earliest Confucian texts in particular, transcended individual social changes and had historical significance. The first consideration (the root of Confucianism being in ancient society) bestowed upon Confucianism a power external to the text which earned the respect of the people; the latter two considerations bestowed upon the language of the Confucian classics an authority that transcended the limitations of historical context. In combination, the three enabled the Confucian classics to achieve a blend of moral virtue and social governance, and to manifest the enormous latent power of the Confucian classics, which effected the integrating of the psychological order inherent in Chinese society and social and political order.

With regard to meaning, Confucian awe can be understood as a response to the virtue ethics promulgated in the classics, which produced a fundamental psychological stance. This is the response made by those who deal with and interpret the classics when addressing the apparent passivity attributed to the Confucian texts. Although dealing with texts that imply the transmission of a fixed heavenly mandate and also a restriction on the creativity of the great sages, without doubt what people are reading is not merely some ancient piece of

literature; for this ancient piece of literature contains profound guidance about how to be a person. From the establishment, by Confucius of a tradition of “awe” to the Song and Ming Confucians glossing of “awe” as reverence, the constant Confucian theme of a sense of awe or reverence is an internal ethical standard for becoming a person, refining one’s experiences and being diligent in practical matters. Reverence for the Confucians is not a simple ethical stance or piece of moral psychology; rather it is authentic ethical conduct that emerges once a person is drawn by the power of virtue.

When this kind of genuine ethical responsiveness was understood in terms of Confucius’ stress on awe, four elements emerge. Firstly, there is the salience of a sense of reverence. The network of connections that arise between being in awe of fate and the intimations of the world, being reverent towards great public figures and even enacting the words of the revered sages, show that from holding in awe the shadowy forces of fate, to revering great figures who appear distant from ourselves, to being able to relate to the words of the sages simply by having the desire to do so, ethical values and practice are not some obscure matters, but are rather behaviors that are close at hand, involving exhaustive self-reflection. Hence, generating a feeling of reverence is not some unobtainable ethical ideal; it is something straightforward that happens within one’s everyday life. Secondly, there is the interconnected and multifaceted nature of reverence. Clearly, while the Song and Ming Neo-Confucians identified reverence retrospectively, it cannot be assigned directly to the words of the ancient sages. The objects of reverence that Confucius denoted were extensions of fate; he was aware that awe was not a simple sense of fear that arose in human intercourse. It involved a mysterious force that was outside of the normal rules of social conduct. The reason why he denoted great public figures as objects of reverence was not on account of their high social standing and influence, but because of their vocation, accepting what was bestowed upon them by fate and maintaining order. Confucius’ identification the words of the sages with awe arose because he recognized abilities in the sages to integrate fate with the duties of great public figures. In the case of the Sage Kings like Yao, Shun and Yu, there was a high degree of harmonious integrating of the demands of fate, the responsibility of great public figures and the words of sages.

Thirdly, there is the object of reverence. Confucius’ reverence was not something directed at one’s idiosyncratic inner life, but rather was directed to forces external to oneself, which should be used to regulate one’s conduct. The reason why reverence was directed at “awesome” external forces was because such forces could serve a guiding function for one who felt a sense of awe towards them. Fourthly, reverence is decisive. The awe that Confucius was referring to was not a psychological state involving fear, but was something capable of transforming the life of one who experienced it, reforming their

attitudes and improving their conduct. A sense of reverence led people to esteem fate what is commanded by the state of the world, great public figures and the words of the sages and so maintain human and social order and avoid chaos. These four considerations show that Confucius, in highlighting the issue of awe, was in fact highlight the problem of harmonizing the external forces that draw people towards virtue with internal motivations. For Confucius, virtue was not something that simply arose from within; whether or not people yielded to the appeal of virtue was a matter of undergoing certain ethical experiences involving both internal responding and external adjustments.

The Song-Ming Neo-Confucians account of reverence and the aims of Confucius awe were in unison, but their specific directives featured many differences. Reverence can be understood as the admiration felt for virtuous conduct when confronted with the words of sages or their actions. When anyone reads the Confucian classics and is led to experience a sense of awe, they will, of their own accord, engage in ethical reflection and yield to the appeal of virtue. Song and Ming Neo-Confucians, in explaining reverence, focus on the words of the sages, and when fate and the works of great figures are taken as the objects of reverence, it is the sages that lie concealed behind them. Why does the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians' conception of awe have these characteristics? The answer is closely connected with the intellectual milieu of the Song and Ming periods.

In the ethical valuations of the Song and Ming Neo-Confucian thinkers, it was the order of the cosmos, or *tian*, which was regarded as being of most fundamental value. However, the order of *tian* was instantiated in the consciousness of men.

Looking at their treatment of the linear sequence of the program of self-cultivation outlined in the *Daxue (Sangang bamu)*, there are differences between those who emphasized the study of consciousness and those who emphasized studying order and patterning (*li*); however, from the project of Confucian virtue which involves the investigation of things, arriving at knowledge, rectifying the heart-mind, making intentions sincere, cultivating the body, ordering the household, governing the state and bringing peace to the empire, they held that knowledge of the order of the cosmos involved reflection on one's own consciousness or heart-mind. In this way, there was a direct link to ethical practice that cultivated individual character, and no need to locate one's submission to ethical motives and concerns outside of fate and great public figures; all that is needed is internally-directed application. Fittingly, sages performed a dual function in enabling people to find their place in an ethically-ordered world. Firstly, if one says that fate comes to fruition or is realized in the sage's being, then Confucius, Mencius and early Confucianism grasped such fate through the persons of the sage kings like Yao, Shun and Yu;

and the Song and Ming Confucian thinkers then gained insight into the propensity of things through the accounts of Confucius and Mencius. Secondly, since knowledge of the propensity of things is acquired through the words and deeds of the sages, and the words of the sages bear out this propensity and the cosmic order, then the great public figures do not need words in order to discharge their responsibility for social and political order, and when addressing the problem of re-establishing an ethical social order, there is no need to introduce a problem of political order. Thus the words of the sages became the only vehicle or forum for sustaining an unchanging virtue. As a result, the fact that the Song and Ming Confucian thinkers completely accepted the governance of early Confucianism should not come as a surprise. When the Song and Ming Confucians claim that every line of Confucius and Mencius contains insight into order, we can understand why Song and Ming thinkers treated the early Confucians as the sole fit objects of reverence. They identified fate and the great figures capacity to cultivate virtue with sages like Confucius and Mencius and beyond; in this way their arguments received various forms of support: it was possible to successfully exclude Buddhist doctrines from the framework of *tian* 天 (cosmos), *Dao, xing* 性 (nature) and *ming* 命 (destiny), thereby once more focusing people's gaze on Confucianism and particularly on the figures of sages such as Confucius and Mencius. At the same time, they established ultimate categories for ethical self-cultivation, regardless of whether it was the "Ethical practice based on the *Yijing*" approach of the *xinxue* 心学 (school of mind) or the accumulation of "Disparateness" of *lixue* 理学 (school of principles), both approaches lead to the ideal of virtuous sagely conduct. Further, after they had raised up the words of Confucius and Mencius as the sole objects of reverence, and so gave the people a clear model for ethical cultivation, one that would not lose its efficacy, they prompted Chinese people to return to the structured ethical human relations that were outlined by Confucius and Mencius, and so strengthen both support in the form of inner psychological strength. This was a method for cultivating one's inner temperament, a process that was founded on inner-directed effort, which could be used to solve all perturbations in human and social order. For the masses who indulged in Buddhism and had no apparent route to virtue, this had considerable appeal.

There were many complex issues behind the attractions of virtue, and this leads us to inquire into the appeal of such virtue. From the perspective of intellectual history, a system of thought that is capable of making a thoughtful and reflective refined person profoundly admire it is not explained by the moral quality of the system alone; this must be connected to the fact that the thought has the capacity to interact with and advance the society within which it arises. The inspiring qualities of virtue and its capacity to reform compliment each other. The former enables a system of thought or values that gain influence in a society,

and this lead to the Confucian classics being regarded by people as possessing verbal appeal; the latter means that a system of thought can induce subjective responsibility and so becomes embedded in social processes, giving it a solid base that is not erased by history.

This view is borne out by the two approaches to reverence—Confucius' original interpretation of awe and the Song and Ming thinkers' reconstruction of reverence. Confucius' discourse on awe was a philosophy that aimed to build order during a chaotic period—by laying out a moral psychology. His thinking was apparent: during a turbulent period, if human speech and action were not regulated by linking together the grasping of fate and the understanding of what governed people, authoritative figures who controlled the people but whom were not supported by the people, and ideas that influenced people but which did not distinguish sages from the common people, then it would not be possible to rouse peoples spirits and reestablish order. Confucius clearly understood awe as a social force that supported the rousing effects of virtue. He did not summarize awe in terms of the sages' words, and in this his interpretation was very different from the Song and Ming Confucians. However, the two motors of internal drive and external pressure were, in the final scheme, rooted in an internal identity and the implementation of action. "I desire to be benevolent and benevolence is here" (Yang 1980, p. 74); this phrase sums up this view.

The choices of the Song and Ming intellectual elite with regard to reestablishing Confucian discourse were extremely important. The integrative approach to Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism in Tang practices placed great pressure on the brilliant Confucian political ideas that had dominated the country. Song Ming Confucianism, driven by a great will to set up order, establish commands and revive the lost learning of Confucianism, while maintaining an attitude of reverence, was a way of thinking that encompassed the reestablishment of authoritative human and social order. Unlike Confucius, for the Song and Ming Confucians, the external stimulus to reverence was not a major part of their theory; the objects of reverence were directly established on a foundation of goodness and moral conscience, they were established by imitating the model words and actions of the sages. This kind of move to a forceful internal spirit was not fundamentally different from the original Confucius. But it expressed a state of mind where the ethical magnetism was more compelling, making people's willingness to practice virtue more intense. This was related to Song Ming thinkers' observation that Buddhism dissipated people's Confucian identity and values and upset social trends. It was thus no surprise that efforts made internally were expected to yield results in the outside world. After all, virtue was not merely a self-contained discipline that sought good character by making character the aim. If traditional Confucian accounts of reverence are understood as simple ethical self discipline, this would understate the lofty

aspirations inherent in the Confucian establishment of reverence as an ideal, one that orders human consciousness and harmonizes social order.

5 Two Kinds of Reverence

A concern with reverence is found not only in the realm of Confucianism; Christian thought also contains a discourse on reverence. However, comparatively speaking, these two kinds of reverence serve different purposes, whether that is understood in terms of the formation of values, the structure of the two discourses or the form of discussion and implementation.

The reverence found in Christianity can be defined and explained in terms of the relationship between man and God. According to Christian theology, people are stained with original sin. As a result, for people in the living world, a reckoning for their sins at the end of their lives is an unavoidable burden of human life. The Christian religion does not regard mere people in terms of reverence, nor even the sage. But Christianity also accepts that “moral character can be a matter of habit, enabling people to delight in and giving them the strength to do good ethical deeds.” Similarly, “Real moral character comes from correct choice. Moral character must take as its foundation a particular way of living (one that tends to bring glory to God and which realizes God’s plans for redemption); to summarize the matter: moral character must take the love of God as its mainstay. Such a focus creates a clear order for the life of the soul” (Peschke 2002a, p. 381). As a result of this, only when people treat God with a sense of awe can an ethical conscience be established, one that will lead them to good character. In cultivating character, an individual’s nature does not play a decisive role; rather the grace of God is the primary force. “Moral character is not primarily about human nature. In fact, human nature forms an obvious contrast with the ethical outlook that regards the ethical act of self-perfection as the ultimate standard. The moral character of Christianity takes God and Christ as the source of one’s strength and treats them as the ultimate aim of good character. The article of faith that it is Heaven that bestows ethical character on a person is also indicative of the source and aim of Christian moral character: the source is the spirit of God and its transforming power and the aim is the glory of the Heavenly father and the imitation of Christ” (Ibid., p. 382). According to such thought, which opposes man and God, moral character is not the result of self-mastery, but rather is the result of divine inspiration. It is true that Christianity’s moral character includes the human cultivation of virtue, enlightened ethical knowledge, ethically-significant feelings of love and the control of emotional impulses; however, this kind of ethical character is based on a transcendent moral character. Ethical virtue takes humanity and the objects of

creation as its object; transcendental morality takes God and the absolute perfection of God as its object. It was on this foundational linking of man with God that Christianity established a transcendental moral character that consisted in “Faith”, “Hope” and “Love”; it also established a transcendental moral character that involved pious virtue and reverence for God (Ibid., pp. 384–385).

From this, we can see that what is revered in Christianity is not fate—a force that is mysterious and yet which effectively governed people’s actions; nor are those influential figures who accept the burden of fate and undertake great tasks revered. The only object of Christian reverence is God. Thus the consequences of Christian reverence are fundamentally different from those found in Confucian reverence. Where people are moved to revere God’s transcendental virtue, and possess faith, this is because in the relationship between man and God, man faithfully offers himself to God: “The faithful preserves nothing of his possessions, nor anything of his independent will. He unconditionally obeys the divine will of God” (Peschke 2002b, p. 39). Similarly, the reason why people have hope is because such hope in God and their fear of him mutually accord, causing their lives instantiate piety. Regarding divine love, the reason why it transcends mere desire or passionate longing is because it finds its source directly in the basic nature of God.

The embodying of pious virtue, which has its root in the transcendental virtues, and also reverence for God’s virtue, are expressed as the duties and tasks of the reverential pious person, who acts because he has faith. This kind of reverence is different to the archetypal form that is reverence for God, which finds expression in the performance of religious obeisance. Firstly, people must revere the holy name of God; this kind of reverence is not merely the raising up of the holy name of God, it is also to avoid the danger that the name of God might be disparaged as a result of human action. Secondly, it is respect for people engaged in a divine vocation. Such people are the representatives of God on earth and should therefore be subject to respect. Respect for them is not merely respect for them as people with sacred vocations, it is also respect for their doing the work of God. To do otherwise would be an offense against God.

Next, we find respect for sacred places. Christianity believes that the participation of people in religious ceremony is influenced to a considerable degree by the environment. Accordingly, respect for churches, public places of worship and the resting places of the departed are all sites for the expression of respect for spirits. Finally, Respect for sacred objects also implies respect for God. All of the sacred objects used in Christian religious ceremony, because they are connected to God, must be respected by the religious faithful (Ibid., pp. 155–222).

From a reverence grounded in faith in God, to the reverential behavior found in religious obeisance, the reverence found in Christianity ultimately resides in

believers' reverence for a God responsible for creating this earth. The believer must obey the promptings of his conscience. Here, the conscience is not a manifestation of his human nature, but is a sign that he has received the gift of faith. Humanity's conscience comes from God and is not the result of some kind of internal training. With one's conscience as one's motivation, a person has the ability to negotiate everyday moral human relations—he loves his neighbor and possesses a character informed by righteousness. He appreciates the value and significance of life and accepts the trials presented by death and suffering. And he can also make correct decisions with regard to ethical issues of honor, truth and loyalty. He accepts the responsibilities associated with marriage. He does not shirk ethical responsibilities to the group, and from household duties, to commitments to nation and also in matters of church and society he courageously accepts his burden; moreover he does so while naturally adopting a spirit of respect (Ibid., p. 226). From this we can see that the awe inherent in Christianity is an amalgamation of the three areas of religious faith, institutionalized religion and religiousness in daily life, which permeate all areas of a person's life (spiritual, social and everyday living).

Comparing Confucian and Christian accounts, we find that both place great emphasis on the value of reverence. However, there are also two great differences. Firstly, Confucian reverence is grounded on the words of the sages, and so has the characteristic of being “backward looking”. Confucius, faced with a tradition of sagely figures, adopted the attitude of “I propagate but do not innovate; I trust in and delight in the way of the ancients” (*Analects* 7.1). The Song and Ming Confucians took the approach “taking the right and wrong of Confucius as right and wrong”; they also typically reflected the attitudes of that era. Christianity, however, emphasizes dealing with problems by looking to the future; the expectation of the creation of a heavenly paradise meant that Christian view was focused on an even more dazzling future. The other difference was that, although Confucianism held heaven and the natural world in awe, as something possessing religious qualities, it prized human relationships even more highly. The reverence for sages was the result of the sages discovering, articulating and undertaking the means and methods used to regulate conscious human life and social order. For Confucius to the Song and Ming Confucians, this was a consistent theme; but there is some difference with regard to the reverence manifest towards fate and great public figures. Although the Christian view was inclined towards people, it still placed God at its center; what Christians held in awe was not humankind, but God. Man's reverence for God was the foundation for human thought and action (Qin 1990, pp. 89–117).

When examining Confucian and Christian discourses on reverence, one finds some consistency. Namely, Confucius and the Song Ming thinkers' discourse on reverence was religious in nature. Without doubt, classical Confucianism and the

Song and Ming thinkers' discussion of fate and cosmic order cannot be completely understood within the context of human relations; it has a religious quality. However, as Kong Hansi points out, the reverence of Confucius and the Song Ming thinkers is ultimately focused on the relation between people. Thus we have no true reason to see the Confucian discourse on reverence as a religious discourse. Indeed, Confucian discussion of reverence has a "this-worldly" nature; it is clear that humanity is grounded in philosophy—a sense of reverence whose foundation is the basic moral consciousness that constitutes ethics. If Christian doctrines of awe are fully grounded in discourse about divine relations, then Confucianism is grounded in a way that is enriched by a discourse on reverence that draws on human relations.

In Christian discourse on reverence the sacred elements are fundamental; in fact these served to ensure that believers feel respect and so piously venerate religious laws and prohibitions. Christian reverence combined faith, control and form of life, thus creating an all-encompassing mode of thought and action. Confucian reverence was focused on the cultivation of moral character and thus did not utilize the oppressive power of God; rather it stimulated people's subjective awareness and gave to reverence the key task of integrating personal outlook and social order. Confucianism treated reverence with the utmost importance. In the case of the divine and the human, between divine virtue and human virtue and between respect and fear, faith and morality, it is possible to integrate both elements if the combination reflects the features of each. Divine virtue and human virtue both have the capacity to spur humans towards goodness. Confucian reverence inspired humanity's respect for human life and society from a human perspective; Christianity inspired humanity's respect for human life and society from a theological perspective. There are great differences in these two accounts of value, their systematic demands, and their methods of practice and discourse; but the guiding effects of reverence are the same: they keep people's minds orientated towards the good and act as a corrective for social order.

6 Reverence in a Contemporary Context

Both the Confucian discourse on reverence and the Christian one have, in the context of modernity, undergone structural transformations. The two views on reverence share a common feature: namely, both views are derived from an account of ordering human consciousness and society. Both strive to create a common route between religious faith and morality, on the one hand, and social life and public service, on the other. Further, both seek to unite the public and private realms; and, by means of a consciousness structured by a sense of reverence, to establish a philosophy focused on an inner personal order and a social order—which has a psychological basis. In this regard, a consciousness

structured by reverence is collectively expressed as a solemnity towards and faithful observance of the ultimate values and personalities that should be admired.

During a long evolution of thought, Confucianism established its own ethical and scholarly traditions, and what such a foundation relied upon was a Confucianism that, while changing with the times, treated the earlier sages with reverence. From the Han Period onwards, the interpretation of the Confucian classics became a social event and this demonstrated the reestablishment of the classics as a source of authority. Without the guidance and prompting of this reverence for the earlier sages, it is difficult to imagine that Confucianism could have endured for so long and had such a profound influence on Chinese culture. Through one thousand years of Confucianism, Confucians encountered frequent setbacks. The first was during the Wei and Jin Periods, then during the Song and Ming era and most recently in the modern era. During the Wei and Jin Periods, “obscurantism” flourished, and the major resources for guiding people’s thinking were the three mystical texts (the *Book of Changes*, the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*). During a time when it was uncertain whether Confucianism or Daoism held the upper hand, Confucianism eventually made use of Daoist discourse “The sage takes *wu* 无 (nothingness) as the foundation, and for this reason can talk consistently of *you* 有 (what there is)”, and utilized the concept of “Confucian teachings make for natural ordering” to reassert its position as the hegemonic force in society. In early Song-Ming Confucianism, the challenges of Buddhism and Daoist meant that the intellectual elite were mired in those two doctrines and were unfamiliar with Confucianism. The lives and practices of the masses were lead by ideas of withdrawing from the world and seeking longevity of life. Scholars in the Confucian tradition, after living through Buddhist conversions and “returning to the root in Confucianism after the time of being tainted by Buddhism and Daoist”, were finally able to employ ontological theories based on “without polarity and yet the supreme polarity” (*wuji er taiji*), and high-brow discourses such as Order (*li*) is one but its instantiations are many and “The moon is reflected in myriad rivers”, and also a new hermeneutics informed by a sense of reverence to reestablish the primacy of Confucian discourse. In modern times, the challenge of Western learning has overturned the major value claims of Confucianism, and a group of scholars had steadfastly promoted Confucian values and actively worked against Western ideas, taking the reestablishment of Confucian personal character as their core idea. They have sought to establish a “New Confucianism” that can respond to the challenges of modernity and so gain for Confucian a privileged place with contemporary discourse. Further, those scholars sympathetic to Confucian reverence have even sought to reestablish China as a country with a Confucian education system. This has been an unexpected fruit of Confucianism’s interaction with the contemporary world. In the three attempts to reinvent Confucianism and so establish widespread

influence, the reverential attitude of Confucians towards the classics clearly had the effect of underwriting attempts to establish the authority of Confucian discourse. Putting these three intellectual movements together and focusing on the close connection between reading the classics using an interpretive framework founded in everyday life and the benefit of rationalistic textual explanation, as well as focusing on the relationship between how a system of thought comes to have authority and the reverential attitude that an intellectual elite take towards that system, the key role played by the idea of a sense of reverence then appears striking.

Christianity also has devices that sustain its complete control over human and social order. Throughout the Middle Ages, Christianity tightly combined individual religious faith and political affairs. Firstly, it used strict personal faith to establish a constant human or moral order, thereby making people take their sense of awe toward God as the basis for their treatment of other people. Secondly, it established the privileged status of both religious authority and absolute power. However, most significant was what Christianity achieved through the establishment of a theological system, which systematized a theology based on a reverence for God and the maintaining of human and social order. As a result, Christianity was the engine that drove social and cultural progress during the Middle Ages. Although many are ambivalent about the role played by Christianity during the Middle Ages, since it both directed humanity's progress and yet also restricted free thought and action, there is universal agreement on one point. Christianity stimulated people's reverential attitude towards God, and this influence has continued though to today's more refined culture.

As a result, "Thinkers like Augustine recognized that the core of classical culture had been abandoned and so thought deeply about the suffering inherent in the world of men. Mindful of the travails of man on earth, he relentlessly sought ways to redirect him towards the City of God; what is there in this that is surprising?" (Fossier 2006, p. 14). It was Christianity that replaced classical civilization and became the outlook that revitalized Western culture.

On the other hand, it was the struggle between the conservatism of the churches and progressive forces that drove forth social change; Christianity became the blade that carved the face of the modern world. "The 10th Century Christian European world, from South to North and West to East, had already taken on the mosaic-like quality that survives to this day" (Ibid., p. 528). Christianity created the modern world, one founded on its own religious faith. To summarize, when one focuses on psychological mechanisms that have driven the West from the past unto the present, then the role played by a Christian sense of reverence is naturally deserving of the highest attention.

However, after modernity created its own cultural forces, the situation changed considerably. In the case of Confucianism, after Chinese society was subjected to

the discourses of the Enlightenment, the role of the Confucian tradition of reverence was reduced. People generally believed that Confucian concepts had caused traditional China's problems of adjusting to modernity. One result of this was that, the founder of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu declared, "Our final act of enlightenment is an ethical enlightenment", and subsequently led a movement to overthrow traditional Confucian ethical precepts. Chinese society's reverence for the Confucian sages was almost completely lost. Allied to this was the creation of a market economy which further pushed people towards an aggressive society, one dedicated to the pursuit of profit. During this time, those who clung to an attitude of reverence for the earlier sages pointed out the limits of the Enlightenment mentality, and urged others to look more wisely at the Confucian tradition. They transcended the conflict between traditional and contemporary thinking and so created the conditions under which people in modern times could accept Confucianism (for more on this, see Harvard 2005, pp. 1–116).

At the same time, the Christian idea of reverence also faced great challenges. According to both Weber's analysis and Simmel's thought, the Western tradition of being in awe of Christ experienced systematic rupture. According to Weber, the formation of the modern mentality was an unfolding process of rationality expelling superstition. Now that modernity has become a process of rationalization, religion in public life has been diminished. Weber thought, "Our era is one of rationalization and knowledge specialization—in short—an era where rationality expels superstition, the spirit of the time is one where the highest and most honored values are no longer found in public life; in some cases, they have entered the transcendental arena of spiritual life, and in some cases they have become manifest in a wide-reaching compassion in human relations" (quoted in Su 1988, p. 52). As a result, this era has seen the separation of science and religion, value and instrumental rationality, a morality of faith and a morality of responsibility, with religion and faith now confined to the realm of private life; meanwhile science, technology and responsibility have entered the public realm. In effect, Weber's theory has left religion in limbo, without the capacity to order the modern world. This has been a killer blow for Christianity, confronted as it is with the claim that only something which can function in both the public and private realms can be powerful and effective. People do not need to revere Christianity in their social lives in order to gain the fruits of living well. They thus have a reason to be aloof from god and Jesus Christ.

According to Simmel's thought, the modern world is the product of social divisions based on the division of labor. In contemporary society, where Human relations have evolved from simple traditions to religions, from religions to the law, from law to freedom and virtue, the function of religion in society has altered dramatically. The ability of Christianity to bring about social integration is crucially based on its ability to sustain people's sense of reverence. However,

modern society needs to cast aside social integration and social restrictions and realize individual freedoms. Thus the contents of traditional transcendental faith are no longer a source of support to people; it has come to be seen as an illusion. Religion has arrived at a modern crisis (Simmel 2003, p. 27), and the Christianity's sacred awe has been left fractured by modernity.

Modernity has taken what was bestowed upon the people and all sacred objects and withdrawn it from the arena of human activity. Yet people today still have not gained the wonderful life that they were expecting. And so people have become nostalgic about tradition and reenchantment movements have poured forth. In the late 20th century, the restoration and recovery movements in China and the revival of religion in the West have both shown the significance for humanity of a having a sense of reverence that propagates either a tradition of sages or a religious tradition.

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