

What Does It Mean to Respect Our Elderly? A Confucian Perspective

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Ethical questions

- Cultural differences.
- Confucian morality:
 - Love (愛 – 差等之愛): differentiated and graded
 - Respect (敬 - 差等之敬): differentiated and graded

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:

1) Adult children have moral obligations to take care of their elderly parents (including their long term care).

2) Such obligations should be performed and guided in terms of the Confucian rites (禮).

3) Public policy should be made in ways to encourage/facilitate the undertaking of such obligations.

Ethical questions

- Contemporary liberal culture:
 - Adult children do not have moral obligations to take care of their elderly parents.
 - Individuals and the state have moral obligations for long term care.

(Jane English, Norman Daniels...)

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:
- “The gentleman devotes his efforts to the roots, for once the roots are established, the Way will grow therefrom. Filial piety and fraternal care are the root of *ren* (Analects 1.2). 君子務本，本立而道生。孝弟也者，其為仁之本與！

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:
- ‘*Ren* is to love people’ 「仁者愛人」
(Analects 12:22)
- ‘Loving one’s parent is *ren*’ 「親親，仁也」 (Analects 7A:15)

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:
 - One's capacity of love is not naturally directed to everyone with equal intensity. Your affection for your brother's baby is not like your affection for a neighbor's baby, and is rightly so (Mencius 3A5). 人之愛其兄子與鄰之子，本有差等。

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:
 - “So those who do not love their parents but love others are violating virtue. Those who do not respect their parents but respect others are violating the rites” (*The Classic of Filial Piety* 9; 孝經 9).

故不愛其親而愛他人者，謂之悖德。不敬其親而敬他人者，謂之悖禮。

Ethical questions

- Confucian Love by Extension (推己及人):
- ‘A person of *ren* extends his love from those he loves to those he does not love’ (Mencius 7B:1)
“仁者以其所愛及其所不愛”

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:
- “Treat with respect the elders in my family, and then extend that respect to include the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in my family, and then extend that tenderness to include the young in other families” (*Mencius* 1A7) 「老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼」

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:
- “When your parents are alive, comply with the rites in serving them; when they die, comply with the rites in burying them and in offering sacrifices to them” (Analects 2.5)
- 子曰：「生事之以禮；死葬之以禮，祭之以禮。」

Ethical questions

- Confucian view:

“Those who are considered filial these days are those who are able to provide food to their parents. However, even dogs and horses are, in some way, provided with food. If one shows no respect, where is the difference?” (Analects 2.7)

“今之孝者，是謂能養。至於犬馬，皆能有養；不敬，何以別乎？”

Ethical questions

- Adult Children's moral obligations to their elderly parents:
 1. Taking care of their lives (養口體) ;
 2. Taking care of their mental needs and making them happy (養志) ;
 3. Taking care of their spirits after they die (養靈) .

Long term care

- What does Confucian “respect” require today?
- If one’s elderly parents wish/prefer to live in their home rather than move to an institution, one should respect their wish/preference.
- One should give necessary assistance to them for realizing this wish/preference.

Long term care

- “Universal” facts:
- Given the choice, most elders would prefer to continue to live in their own homes (“aging in place”).
- They gradually lose functioning ability and need assistance with everyday tasks.

Long term care

“Consultancy Study on Community Care Services for the Elderly”

(http://www.elderlycommission.gov.hk/en/download/library/Community%20Care%20Services%20Report%202011_eng.pdf)

* Hong Kong in 2010:

- Population: 710 million
- 65 and above: 925900 (13.1%)

Long term care

* Most adult children in Hong Kong, shaped by the Confucian virtue of filial piety, still hold that they have moral obligations to take care of their elderly parents.

* They still undertake such obligations essentially in one way or another.

Long term care

Problems:

- * Some have changed their values to “voluntary choice” rather than moral obligation.
- * The government failed to offer effective assistance with the children who offer long term care to their elders at home.

Long term care

* The underlying principle of the government policy is:

“Ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”

「居家安老為主，院舍照顧作支援」

Long term care

Institutionalisation rate of international elderly population comparison (aged 60 or above): [75]

Institutionalisation rate

Hong Kong	6.8%	(2009)
Japan	3.0%	(2006)
Singapore	2.3%	(2006)
Taiwan	2.0%	(2009)
China	1.0%	(2008)
Australia	5.4%	(2006)
UK	4.2%	(2004)
Canada	4.2%	(2003)
USA	3.9%	(2004)

Table 3.1 of RCS International scene in the distribution of recipients and CCS as a percentage of population aged 65+ [94]

	Year	%65+ receiving RCS	Year	%65+ receiving CCS*
Australia	2007	6.0	2008	2.51
Austria	2003	3.6	2000	14.8
Canada	2007	3.5	2003	15.0
China	2008	1.73	2009	19 (in Shenzhen)
Germany	2008	3.7	2003	7.1
Hong Kong	2008	6.8	2010	0.8#
Ireland	2008	4.0	2000	5.0
Japan	2009	2.9	2000	5.5
Korea	2009	1.1	2000	0.2
Luxembourg	2007	4.7 (estimated)	2003	4.8
Netherlands	2008	6.7	2008	12.9
New Zealand	2009	3.6	2000	5.2
Norway	2008	5.5	2000	18.0
Singapore	2008	2.9	n.a.	n.a.
Sweden	2008	5.9	2000	9.1
Switzerland	2008	6.4	2000	5.4
Taiwan	2009	1.9	2006	1.0 (day care)
United Kingdom	2004	4.2 (estimated)	2002	20.3
United States	2004	3.9 (estimated)	2007	2.8

Long term care

“Apparently, there has been a tendency for older people (or their family members) to opt for RCS [Residential Care Services] instead of CCS [Community Care Services].

It could be attributable to the inadequacy of subsidized CCS and the unavailability of private CCS in the community; that made the older people and their family caregivers to have no alternatives but to choose RCS.”
[43]

Long term care

“Yet, due to the fact that a substantial portion of the private RCHE [Residential Care Home for the Elderly] users are recipients of the Government’s Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), the Government is actually providing RCS directly through provision of subvention to NGOs as operators and indirectly through CSSA payments to users. In view of the possible increased demand from an aging population, the highly subsidized nature of long term care (LTC) services, and the fact that there is no means-test mechanism in the current allocation of subsidized LTC services, it is anticipated that it could incur substantial fiscal pressure on the Government in the long run.” [44]

Long term care

“There is currently an imbalance between RCS and CCS in terms of volume and government expenditure on the two types of services:

In the 2010-2011 financial year:

24746 subsidized RCS vs. 7089 CCS places;

HK\$2549 million vs. HK\$381 million

[5][76]

Long term care

To manifest the “respect” of the elderly:

Housing policy

Welfare policy (CSSA)

Old Age Allowance

Health Care Policy

A voucher system for community
care

... ..

Long term care

- Should society provide cash subsidy to family caregivers to their elders?

An interesting cultural objection:

Hong Kong's Confucian cultural norms emphasize the family's moral responsibility of taking care of older family members. Providing cash subsidy to family members for taking care of their frail older family members is monetizing their familial relationship and is thus tarnishing the Confucian virtue of filial piety.

Long term care

* Should society provide cash subsidy to family caregivers to their elders?

This objection implies:

Moral obligation – no money;

No moral obligation – cash subsidy
(Australia, Canada, Ireland, Sweden and the
UK]

Long term care

- Proper Confucian reply:

Granted that familial obligation is a special moral obligation and should not be paid through a normal salary as in performing other occupations in the market,

yet society should offer certain cash subsidy to family caregivers (as a proper incentive, not as a competitive salary).

Long term care

- Proper Confucian reply:

1) Such cash subsidy should be set at a significantly lower rate (e.g., at least 50% lower?) than the salary of a relevant job in the market.

This way ensures that the primary motive of a family caregiver is filial piety, love and respect of one's elders, rather than making the money.

Long term care

- Proper Confucian reply:

2) Still the cash subsidy offers an appropriate financial incentive to encourage children to perform their moral obligation of taking care of their elderly parents.

It is like the function of our parent-aid tax allowance (for middle and upper class families):

“Dependent parent and dependent grandparent allowance”: \$40,000

Long term care

- Proper Confucian reply:

3) It is financially beneficial to our society in the long run:

A) It should be offered only to low-income families.

B) These families will be encouraged to help their elders live in their homes rather than send them to institutions that are funded (directly or indirectly) by the government.