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abolished as all should share in labor both within and outside of the household. Most importantly, the family should be a place of genuine love based on mutual respect, trust, and affection that fosters and encourages the children to grow and their parents with them. The implementation of the family model that is gestured to above, I believe would bring us much closer to an anarchist world.

In the process of articulating Asian anarchism, it only seemed fitting to begin on a personal level, as the personal is political. As I seek to further explore and explain Asian anarchism, I felt that starting with filial piety which underlies nearly every Asian culture and serves to condition and crush the individual from a young age made the most sense as a starting point. Alas, it also seems important to write about it while I am still young myself as one can only write about youth liberation and critique an age based family model from the perspective of the youth for so long. I hope that this essay has begun to demonstrate what exactly Asian anarchism is and will continue to be. As an end to this article, I will leave you with a quote from anarcha-feminist He Zhen's What Women Should Know About Communism, "If we only unite together, with communism we can naturally have a good future. There is no doubt about it. As we say colloquially, 'the good times are coming.'"

This piece is a continuation of a series of articles that seek to articulate Asian anarchism. To briefly reiterate, Asian anarchism aims to unite Asian and Asian diasporic thought under a lens of anti-hierarchical analysis as we look toward a liberatory future. As Asia is extremely diverse, there will be a plurality of viewpoints, and as a Chinese-Taiwanese writer, I am best suited to examine and critique the cultures that I know best. Additionally, this piece was written in tandem with a conversation between myself and another Chinese comrade, whose words are paraphrased in various places within the text. However, I would invite any Asian anarchist to give their own critiques and thoughts regarding the hierarchies within their own cultures.

Hierarchies permeate every society, and despite being thought of as natural, the reality is that hierarchical relations are taught and ingrained into us at a young age by the cultures that surround us. While anarchist critiques of the family model are quite extensive, I will be focusing on a core concept in the historical and present Chinese familial model and an alternative horizontal conception as a replacement. The basis of Chinese culture is heavily influenced by Confucianism and as a result, the concept of xiao (filial piety) is fundamental in placing hierarchy at the core of the Chinese family model. However, we first must understand what filial piety is and how it has evolved as a concept of social control throughout Chinese history.

Historical Context

Filial piety is an underlying concept within Confucianism that served as the foundation for both individual and societal harmony. Originally, it meant the unwavering obedience of a child to a parental figure, given that the parental figure is fulfilling their responsibilities and duties as a parent. The intention behind this concept was for children to treat their parents well, and vice versa.

Especially, as in the time of Confucius, it was common for the parents and children of the aristocratic class to commit murders and other atrocities upon one another. This can be best seen in Analects 2.5.

Meng Yi asked what filial piety was. The Master said, "It is not being disobedient." Soon after, as Fan Chi was driving him, the Master told him, saying, "Meng-sun asked me what filial piety was, and I answered him, — 'not being disobedient.'" Fan Chi said, "What did you mean?" The Master replied, "That parents, when alive, be served according to propriety; that, when dead, they should be buried according to propriety; and that they should be sacrificed to according to propriety."

The key phrase here, is that parents should be served according to propriety. This is indicative of the fact that filial piety was not originally intended to be used as a tool for parents to command their children however they want. However, they were only constrained by propriety, essentially the conventional social norms dictated by traditional ritualistic customs and behavior. This meant that parents could command their children to do essentially anything that fits within the social norms. These commands were to be regarded as essentially unconditional, with the child being forced to obey the parent as rebellion and defiance were seen as unacceptable within Confucian ethics. Additionally, as Neo-Confucianism came into being, it demolished the idea of "according to propriety" altogether and replaced it with total obedience, no matter the circumstance, to the parents, which is the form of filial piety that is most familiar to East Asians and Chinese people of today.

The roles of parent and child within Confucianism were rigid and firmly placed the former as a superior and the latter as a subordinate. This is largely tied to the Confuscianist concept of the rectification of names and the five basic relationships in life. The rectification of names, simply put, means that what something is called, should be what it is. Confucius explains this to his disciple in Analects 13.3.

in some countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, and Singapore is even written into law with punishment for noncompliance. As it is weaponized by States around the world and affects people from all of our cultures, it is our common enemy to defeat and hence our collective responsibility to critique and suggest alternative models for familial relations.

I do not believe in critique without suggesting an alternative, however I also do not believe in prescribing a solution to a societal issue that can only be addressed collectively, so here I present a vague notion of a replacement for the current model of family based upon filial piety. In the end, I do think filial piety did get a couple of things right, those being that the elderly should be cared for and that there should be a level of mutual respect between the child and parent. However, as previously written, I very much disagree with the means that filial piety uses to fulfill those ends. Instead of a family model based on obedience, service, and obligation, I would posit one with the principles of equality, mutual aid, and free association in mind. In my conception, parents and children should be seen as equals that have respect for one another, with children being liberated to pursue their own interests and explore their own ideas by being afforded their own autonomy and supported by their parents, no longer forced to obey and adhere to age based authority. Rather than children being coerced into providing material support for their parents, it should be the responsibility of the collective to ensure that the elderly along with those who cannot care for themselves are taken care of. Resources should be distributed to all according to their need. The principles of communal free association should also be applied to the raising of children, as it should not be undertaken by solely two parents but by the community. A return to communal childcare would build bonds of solidarity, induce horizontal socialization, and help to avoid abusive situations. Additionally, as in any anarchist conception of the family, societal roles and expectations based on identity should be done away with, hierarchies of age, gender, and class should be

populations, healthcare, or poverty. It shifts the narrative from a societal responsibility that a collective must fulfill to one of personal duty, positioning failures in care or support not as structural deficiencies but as moral failings of individuals and their families. This not only reduces the financial burden on the State but also obscures the broader need for the removal of the State at large and its replacement with an horizontal model. In this way, the State is able to undermine communal care and social movements aimed at a complete rehauling of the system. By framing care as an issue of individual morality rooted in filial piety, the State can suppress calls for systemic change while maintaining social control. The individualization of responsibility fragments efforts to address larger social inequalities and shifts attention away from the need for collective solutions, reinforcing both State power and existing social hierarchies while degrading collective solidarity.

Concluding Thoughts

While the above critique of filial piety is primarily a critique of the Confucianist model that is seen primarily in China and other East Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, that is not to say that a similar critique would not apply to other Asian countries and cultures. In fact, I believe that other strains of Asian anarchism could address other forms of filial piety such as tôn ti trật tự and khiêm tốn in Vietnamese culture or seva in Indian culture or the countless other forms that filial piety takes in the cultures of the Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, etc. This is not a concept that is limited to just China but is a cultural norm that stretches across the entirety of the Asian continent, and as such, should be addressed by anarchists from across Asia as we seek to deconstruct filial piety and work towards a liberatory world. Filial piety is not merely a concept in Asian culture and across the diaspora but is truly a reality that underlies the basis of our cultural existence, and

A superior man, in regard to what he does not know, shows a cautious reserve. If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success. When affairs cannot be carried on to success, proprieties and music do not flourish. When proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded. When punishments are not properly awarded, the people do not know how to move hand or foot. Therefore a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect.

People should act as they are called, for example: if someone is conceptually a father then they should act as a father, if someone is a mother then they should act as a mother, if someone is a child then they should act as a child. Importantly, that "should act as" is defined by propriety, and changes with time as all social norms do. Neo-Confucianism ties in the rectification of names with the five basic relationships of life, those being: the ruler and subject, the parent and child, the husband and wife, the elder brother and younger brother, and the friend to friend. In these relationships, those on the latter were expected to unconditionally respect and obey those on the former, creating in every instance but in the case of friends, a hierarchical relationship, often based upon age but sometimes off gender or class status. In every instance, it traps a person within a certain role or function within society that they must work within, as Confucious believed that defining every person's role in society and forcing everyone to act according to that role was the key to a good and just society.

These concepts of filial piety and rectification of names tied in with the five relationships of life would come to form the basis of China's social and political culture. Confucianism conceives of the family as the point in which obedience to societal hierarchies at large is established, with the family unit being emphasized

in particular to maintain social order. Indeed, obedience to family through filial piety is seen as a precursor to obedience to the state as described in Analects 1.2.

Master You said, "A young person who is filial and respectful of his elders rarely becomes the kind of person who is inclined to defy his superiors, and there has never been a case of one who is disinclined to defy his superiors stirring up rebellion. The gentleman applies himself to the roots. 'Once the roots are firmly established, the Way will grow.' Might we not say that filial piety and respect for elders constitute the root of Goodness?"

Within Confucianism, the family essentially serves as the place where the concept of obedience of authority is indoctrinated into citizens of the State from a young age, serving as a tool to create and maintain social control among the populace. The relationship of the parent to child serves as a parallel to that of the ruler and the ruled, an obedient child will grow up to be an obedient citizen. The emphasis on obedience to hierarchy stifles the questioning of authority and limits personal freedom, in regards to both the family and the state. Further, the essence of patriarchy and age-based hierarchy was imbued within Chinese society from the family model as the father was seen as the head of the house with the wife subservient to him and the children subservient to both. As these values became intrinsic to Chinese social order, they were pushed upon the people as villages were forcibly reshaped into Confucian models, with the empire appointing village heads and establishing these family hierarchies that were not present prior. In this manner, hierarchical obedience was internalized and instilled into society as they served an important role in both political and personal life.

As these hierarchies are internalized, they come to see social hierarchies and societal expectations based upon identity as natural and inevitable. The authority of elders, men, and the wealthy as opposed to the subjugation of the youth, women, and the poor is seen as how things have been and should be. These rigid social hierarchies shape the behavior of people, suppress individual autonomy, and limit the potential for equality, as people are taught to accept and act out their roles within the societal framework rather than challenge them. This process strengthens the control of social hierarchies as their reinforcement promotes the State's supposed social stability and conditions people to accept hierarchy as natural which in turn means that people will not revolt against inequality as it's just how the world works. Filial piety becomes a cultural tool to enforce hierarchies across every level of society, ensuring that each individual understands and accepts their place within the social order. By categorizing people based on these hierarchies, the state can more easily maintain control and perpetuate the hierarchical power structures that serve its interests.

A final critique of filial piety usage as an ideological weapon by the State is in how it shifts collective responsibilities onto the individual. As filial piety demands that children provide for and care for their parents, the collective responsibility of caring for the elderly is transferred from a societal goal to one that individuals must carry out on a personal level. As children are expected to owe lifelong debt and service to their parents, a cycle of individual obligation is created which alleviates communal responsibility to take care of each other as it's atomized down to a familial level. This applies to the State as well, as it can provide less resources to social security nets as that's assumed to have been provided by the children of the elderly. In fact, this dynamic mirrors the logic of neoliberalism, in which the State diminishes its role in social welfare and transfers the onus of care to individuals and private entities. Through invoking filial piety as a cultural and moral duty, the State is able to justify its own inaction to systemic issues such as aging

Filial piety suppresses individual autonomy by placing duty and obedience above personal desires, which on a macro scale leads to people placing the needs of the State and authority figures over their own desires. The obligation of service restricts personal freedom and autonomy as filial duty becomes a lifelong commitment that overshadows the pursuit of one's own desires. This relationship of service to the family becomes a model for hierarchical social interaction at large where obedience to the State and Capital takes precedence over personal rights and freedoms. As people are taught to obey their elders and follow commands without question, they easily accept a similar dynamic in the workplace, in political life, and in society at large. This suppression of individual thought and autonomy not only limits critical thinking but frames disobedience to the status quo as a betrayal of cultural values. Consequently, filial piety reinforces a rigid social structure where personal freedom is sacrificed for the preservation of societal order, leaving little room for dissent or personal expression. In this, filial piety is able to not only legitimize authoritarian States but also fosters a culture of conformity, where obedience is celebrated and rebellion is punished. By intertwining familial and political authority, filial piety discourages individuals from challenging the State, as it equates political dissent with personal immorality. This creates a powerful ideological foundation for state power, embedding loyalty and submission into the fabric of society.

Further, filial piety not only justifies the State but also instills the population with rigid social hierarchies based on age, gender, and class. From a young age, children are conditioned to define and categorize people as they grow up in a social situation with rigid hierarchies of age, gender, and class dictating how people ought to act based upon their identities. These expectations are shaped by societal ideals perpetuated by filial piety, where elders, men, and higher socioeconomic classes are afforded greater authority. Children learn that their role within society is dictated by their identity, and this understanding becomes deeply ingrained as they mature.

Critiques of Filial Piety's Effects Upon the Individual

Clearly, filial piety is utterly incompatible with any vision for an anarchist future. Now that the conceptual basis and background of the concept of filial piety has been laid out, I offer a critique from an Asian anarchist lens. To begin, let's examine the core values of filial piety which are obedience, service, and obligation. In contrast, anarchism posits freedom, mutual aid, and free association. Unwavering obedience to an authority figure, in this case parents, obviously infringes upon the freedom of an individual to do what they want as it subjugates their wants and needs to another person, this is perhaps the most egregious violation of anarchist principles within filial piety. Within filial piety, there is a lack of morality, in that there is no "right or wrong" but instead the parent is always right, no matter the circumstance. As that's the case, filial piety degrades parental to child relationships as it results in ineffective communication and often hypocritical standards. This can further result in distrust and hatred within familial relationships as children are unable to properly and fully express themselves and their objections to their parents. Disagreeing with the authority figure is seen as unfilial and is subsequently punished with both physical and social consequences as children are deprived of their dignity and ability to stand up for themselves. By conditioning children to always do whatever their parent says, no matter their feelings on the matter, their critical thinking skills and need to question the justification for the actions of those who hold authority inevitably dwindles, which is of course useful for not only the heads of the family but for an authoritarian and hierarchical State. On the other hand, freedom of thought and freedom to do, allow for a person to critique and demand justification for the systems that rule over us and actually take action to change them.

The concept of service is not inherently against anarchist thought, especially as mutual aid is a core concept within both anarchist theory and praxis. However, the conception of service within filial piety is one of exclusively one sided subservient service. The child is not only expected but societally compelled to provide the parent with unconditional material support. The logic behind this element of filial piety is that children owe a lifelong debt to their parents for bringing them into the world along with providing for them when they are young and unable to do so themselves. In fact, it's common for Chinese couples to have children to ensure material support as they get older, as they see children as investment possessions that they will get a material return on in the future. This type of mindset not only dehumanizes children as they are seen as a means to the end of accumulating Capital but has evolved within Capitalism to commodify people and relationships in a materialistic conception. Under filial piety, love is not shown by trust or mutual understanding or even affection but solely by material exchange. Just like under Capitalism, love and relationships are viewed as transactional rather than emotional, and a lack of or refusal to provide material support is seen as a sin within traditional Chinese culture. This once again creates a hierarchy within the family where the parents are the owed and the children are the owers. Additionally, in a similar manner to Capitalism, it alienates the children from their labor and autonomy as they are working to provide a life for their parents rather than for themselves. Obviously, children do not owe their parents the fruits of their labor nor material support when they get older, especially not unconditionally. While society should provide resources from each according to their ability, to each according to their need, parents should not have an inherent claim over the resources or labor of their children. As care should be provided not by the expectation and coercion of filial piety but by a genuine desire to support one another.

they are primed to obey the ruler with the same unquestioning submission. Through this social conditioning, filial piety prepares individuals to accept the hierarchical authority of the state. The act of obeying parents, without questioning their moral or ethical correctness, becomes the accepting of the State's authority, even when it may act unjustly. This creates a population that is likely to be submissive and not challenge the State because authority itself is seen as an inherent good, mirroring the role of the parent in the family structure.

Authority being justified by filial piety is furthered by the rectification of names as the ruler is conceptualized as a "parent" of the nation, and the subjects are like children. Just as a child should respect and obey their parents, a citizen should respect and obey the State. Confucius stated that social harmony was dependent on everyone fulfilling their given role within society. A parent ought to act as a parent and a child ought to act as a child, just as a ruler ought to act as a ruler and the subject to act as a subject. This philosophy is instrumental in legitimizing the hierarchies of culture and the authority of the State as it obliges individuals to adhere to their societal positions and roles without challenging their worldview. Disobedience to the family was equated with social chaos, just as disobedience to the state was seen as a threat to societal order. In this framework, the ruler's authority is considered natural and just, much like a parent's authority in the household. By teaching that questioning authority, whether parental or political, leads to disharmony and disorder, filial piety actively discourages resistance to the State and upholds authoritarian ideals. Thus becoming a form of ideological control where defying the State is seen not only as a political transgression but also as a moral failure to fulfill one's role within society. Filial piety, thus, serves as the cultural foundation for a hierarchical worldview that benefits those in the ruling class, ensuring that citizens internalize and perpetuate structures that keep the state in control.

ily's economic and social standing. This often means pursuing careers deemed prestigious or profitable, not out of personal desire, but to secure the family's reputation and ensure the continuation of its status. The expectation is for children to provide financial support, often sacrificing their own opportunities for education or career advancement to ensure the well-being of the family, thus reinforcing the idea that social and economic capital should remain concentrated within the family, perpetuating class inequality. The societal valorization of this form of sacrifice obscures the structural conditions that necessitate it, framing it instead as a familial duty. By positioning children as the primary means through which families should seek the accumulation of Capital, filial piety shifts responsibility away from systemic issues of wealth inequality and onto individual families, thus legitimizing and perpetuating class-based expectations and oppression.

The concept of filial piety serves as a tool of social domination that the State uses to maintain the status quo. The purpose of any power structure, including Capitalism and the State, is to self perpetuate itself and so, ideas that justify these hierarchical power structures are propped up and disseminated among the populace. Within Confucianism, the family unit is seen as the precursor to social order as it serves as the place where subservience to other hierarchical structures is established, with filial piety playing a key role in doing so. The parents play a pivotal role in conditioning the children with hierarchical ways of thinking and instilling the obedience of authority within them. Due to this indoctrination, the children become unquestioning citizens of the State that are accustomed to following the commands and dictates of those in positions of hierarchical authority. In this way, the family is not simply a private unit divorced from political life but instead a moral and social institution that instills the values of the State into its citizens. Confucius himself connected filial piety with societal harmony, as he asserted that obedience within the family leads to a well-ordered society. Just as the child learns to obey the parent unconditionally,

The obligation to maintain and uplift the family name and legacy is once again antithetical to anarchism, as it deprives the individual of autonomy and the ability to freely live out one's life. Within filial piety, the life choices of an individual are not up to them but rather are subject to the decisions by the elders. Children are forced to give up their individual values, interests, and pursuits to instead follow the traditional and often dogmatic values of the family.. Parents are given control to plan out the life of their child such as picking what schools to go to (often based off prestige and how it will reflect on the family), what job to work (often based off how much wealth and luxury the job will provide to the parents), who to marry (often based off ethnic demographic or class status), how many kids to have (often based off receiving a male heir), etc., all to create a child that has an obligation to fulfill their every need and embolden the family legacy. This makes the process of self actualization nigh impossible as the needs of the individual are subjugated for the needs of the family, as the child loses their autonomy and individuality, as well as their freedom. In this structure, the wants of the child are inherently subservient to those of the parents, as children functionally serve as extensions of the will of the family. This creates yet another hierarchical structure as the elderly are given control over the entirety of the life of the child so that the elderly may benefit. This expectation coerces individuals into conforming to external pressures from their families rather than exploring and fulfilling their own aspirations, thus undermining their capacity for free thought and action.

Additionally, the pursuit of family legacy often involves maintaining or enhancing social status, wealth, and influence, which can perpetuate existing social inequalities as it often involves exploiting or oppressing others to maintain or improve the family's social standing. People should live out their lives in accordance with their own values and their own wants rather than conforming to the expectations of those who came before them.

As an aside, before delving into filial piety's effects on a societal level, it's important to note its usage as a form of manipulation and abuse on an individual level. In many familial situations, filial piety is not merely a cultural ideal but a tool used to force obedience and subjugate the child as described above. Through invoking cultural duty to obey and serve familial elders, parents and authority figures can exert immense psychological pressure to coerce their children to conform to their expectations and fulfill their wants under the guise of familial obligations. This duty can be exploited in a variety of different ways, though I will name the ones that I believe are most correlated to the values of filial piety discussed above. Obedience to one's parents is rendered above all, effectively making the parents' authority unquestionable, essentially a form of authoritarian conditioning. In these dynamics, children are conditioned to accept their parents' authority as absolute and unquestionable, internalizing a mindset of submission that stifles critical thinking and self-assertion and can lead to learned helplessness. Service within filial piety creates a form of codependency where the child is expected to sacrifice their own needs and well-being for the parents, as they are compelled to provide material, emotional, and physical support to their parents, regardless of their own circumstances or desires. Obligation can be weaponized as a form of emotional blackmail implemented through gaslighting, where parents or elders invoke the child's supposed duty to justify unreasonable demands and influence over a child's life choices. While filial piety is not always invoked in this manner, this is a common occurrence within Chinese families and one that must be addressed.

Critiques of Filial Piety's Effects on Society

The consequences of filial piety however stretch far beyond the level of the family unit and in fact create the hierarchical structure that underlies all of Chinese culture and society. Through an

intersectional analysis, it becomes clear that filial piety is interconnected with hierarchies of not only age but also of gender and class status. As discussed prior, filial piety relies on the authoritarian rigidifying of people and their positions within society based on stereotypes that serve to define and categorize people in a hierarchical manner. Perhaps most apparent, the hierarchical structure of age is heavily prevalent within filial piety. Society is conditioned into being dictated by the elderly and the youth are subjugated as their individuality and autonomy is crushed. The youth are dominated and indoctrinated into believing in the all encompassing power of authority as they learn to do exactly and only what they are told by those older than them.

While children are dominated by their parents, hierarchy still exists between the parents as the patriarchal structure of the family subjugates the wife under the husband. Women are expected to give birth to and take care of children, do jobs around the household, and obey the husband in the same manner that the children obey the parents in order to fulfill marital filial piety. In this way, all that has been said on the oppression of the child through obedience, service, and obligation is true for all women as well. Women must unconditionally obey their husbands' commands, whether they want to or not. Women must provide services to their husbands, such as household work and childcare with no reciprocation, and were similarly seen as the property of their husbands. Women were obligated to marry into families for wealth or reputation rather than love and to abandon their dreams and pursuits to better serve their husbands. In this, filial piety is a core pillar in maintaining the system of the patriarchy, not only within the family unit but in society at large.

Of course, it would be remiss to critique filial piety without also mentioning how it enforces the class structure. Filial piety intertwines with class status, shaping familial expectations and obligations according to socio-economic standing. Children are burdened with the expectation of upholding and furthering the fam-