

## Aging: Contemporary Challenges and Confucian Configurations

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Aging has become a widely discussed theme in academia, not least in the social sciences, in light of the current and projected future challenges it poses for European and East Asian societies. Such specific demographic challenges are unprecedented in the history of mankind, and therefore, as one might expect, not addressed anywhere in classical literature, be it Western, Asian or other. However, while currently both more expansive in scope and extensive in time than ever before, aging is a ‘homoversal’ feature, irrespective of time and place, which has been a preoccupation among human beings in most if not all world-cultures.

As a component of a larger cross-cultural research project on philosophical reflections on what it means to be a continuously aging human being living in time, what aging entails for one’s position in or vis-à-vis the various social institutions, and what sort of qualitative transformations are involved in the process of reaching an advanced age in human life, this paper focuses on Chinese and in particular Confucian classical literature in order to extract responses to issues such as those presented above. A primary purpose is to gain classical Chinese insights into conceptualizations and valuations concerning the process of aging and the status of the older generations in human society that may be instructive for a contemporary dialogue on cross-generational understanding in the aging societies of both East and West.