HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

Week 2: Confucius
Section 2: The Issue of Humanity vs. Nature: Blending Shang and Zhou

- Humanism
- Confucius' Blend - Zhou (天 *tiān*[natural] 命 *ming*[identity/role]) and the Shang (ancestor veneration) metaphor
    - Ancestor veneration becomes a framework for normativity
    - A human hierarchy of leadership and fidelity
    - Confucius develops 天 *tiān*[natural] 命 *ming*[identity/role] model to treat named social roles a natural basis for deriving normativity. This extends through history with respected ancestors bequeathing a pattern of social practices toward which we should have fidelity
    - Confucius is appealing to the authority of a human role hierarchy but not as authority from their continued existence after death
    - Confucius turns the Shang hierarchy on its side, making it historical - normative roles continue through history
    - He naturalizes ancestor veneration - no need to assume the existence of an afterlife
    - This is a natural role structure inherent in humans, the only animals with funeral rites
    - 孝 *Xiao*[filial piety] or continued respect for parents and older siblings becomes a continuing basis for the growth of morality
    - This higher-lower status relationships pervade society (older brother-younger brother, teacher-student, ruler-minister)
- Our link to ancestors is purely historical—not spiritual
    - Father passing patterns of behavior to the son, who in turn passes it on to his son (grandson)
    - The way a behavior *path* (*dào*) is preserved and transmitted, hence it involves respect for the

past *dào*s of behavior which we strive both to learn correctly and to transmit accurately

- This transmission leaves you with a form of obligation arising from respect for your ancestors
- These traditions continue throughout history