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# Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China

Mark Csikszentmihalyi

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## Abstract

The turn to descriptive studies of ethics is inspired by the sense that our ethical theorizing needs to engage ethnography, history, and literature in order to address the full complexity of ethical life. This article examines four books that describe the cultivation of virtue in diverse cultural contexts, two concerning early China and two concerning Islam in recent years. All four emphasize the significance of embodiment, and they attend to the complex ways in which choice and agency interact with the authority of tradition. In considering these books, this article examines the relations between our academic claims concerning the self and ethics, conceptual or theoretical claims made in the elite writings of traditions, and the lived experiences of the people we study. The conclusion turns to our methodological foundations for studying these topics both comparatively and constructively

## Keywords

[Ethics](#) [Virtue](#) [Body, Human Moral and ethical aspects](#) [Confucianism](#)

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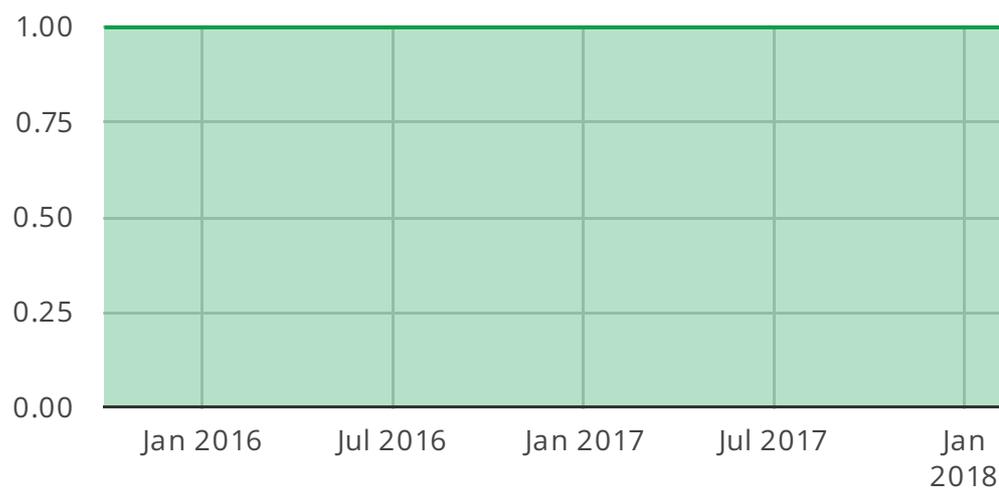
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