Chapter 6
Ritual and Rightness in the *Analects*

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Li 禮 and *yi* 義 are two central moral concepts in the *Analects*.[1] In classical Confucianism generally, and in the *Analects* in particular, *li* has a broad semantic range, referring to formal ceremonial rituals on the one hand, and basic rules of personal decorum on the other. What is similar across the range of referents is that the *li* comprise strictures of correct behavior. The *li* are a distinguishing characteristic of Confucian approaches to ethics and socio-political thought, a set of rules and protocols that were thought to constitute the wise practices of ancient moral exemplars filtered down through dynasties of the past. They constitute the core of the *Analects* ethical practice, and are importantly related to other moral concepts such as humankindness (*ren* 仁),[2] filial devotion (*xiao* 孝) and reverence (*jing* 敬).

However, even while the *li* were extensive and meant to be followed diligently, they were also understood as incapable of exhausting the whole range of activity that constitutes human life. There were bound to be cases in which one would either be unfamiliar with the relevant *li*, cases in which more than one *li* would seem to apply, or cases in which no rule of *li* would apply. As part of their reflections on the good life, the Confucians maintained another moral concept that seemed to cover morally upright behavior in these types of situations, where there was no obvious recourse to the *li*. This concept is that of *yi* or rightness.

In what follows, I will begin with a brief historical sketch to provide some context for the discussion that follows, and will then consider *li* and *yi* in turn. In the end, I will suggest how *li* and *yi* were both meant to facilitate the supreme value of social harmony that pervades much of the *Analects* and serves as its ultimate orientation.

[1] Translations of passages from the *Analects* in this chapter are the author's own.

[2] See Chap. 5 in this volume for more on the relationship between *ren* and *li*.

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Background: The Ru and Rituals

There is a strong historical connection between the Confucians and ritual. While this historical connection is not directly of philosophical interest, exploring it (even briefly) will help to provide some context to explain why the notion of *li* ended up playing such a central role in Confucian social, moral, and political philosophy.

Confucius and his circle of companions and students were members of the *ru* 儒, a class of individuals that were charged, historically, with carrying out important court and clan functions. The *ru* had a particular expertise in the *li* – here understood as the rites, formal ceremonies, and other formal procedures of the nobility. Indeed the root meaning of *li* refers to such formal cultural rites as funerals, banquets, or sacrificial offerings of sheep at the first of the month (3.17). The *li* were understood to be different during different eras, such that Confucius could speak of the *li* of former dynasties like the Xia 夏, Shang 商 and Zhou 周, suggesting that they were different across these eras (2.23); Confucius laments that there are no records of the *li* of the Xia and Shang dynasties (3.9). The *ru* studied the *li* alongside other disciplines such as music, archery, poetry, and history (see, e.g. 16.5, 16.13, 17.21).

We see this expertise in numerous passages. For example, a regular refrain in the text concerns deviations from ritual form. Consider the extensive criticisms of the Ji 季 family, one of the Three Families (Ji-sun, Meng-sun, and Shu-sun) that had usurped power from the descendants of the decaying Zhou royal lineage. Confucius balks at the Ji family employing eight rows of dancers (3.1), performing the *yong* ode during sacrifice (3.2), and making a ritual trip to Mount Tai (3.5), seeing in all of these a usurpation of the former king's and feudal lords' ritual prerogatives. Confucius himself believed that deviance from proper ritual form was a harbinger of social decay and disorder (16.2). Throughout the text, we find Confucius criticizing changes in details of ritual such as where and when a person must bow and what material is appropriate for ceremonial garb (9.3), and what length of mourning is appropriate after the death of one's parents (17.21). Indeed, some of the rituals had decayed so much that Confucius himself would rather not witness them (3.10) and his students openly wondered whether one should bother with them at all (3.17). Given their expertise, such detailed observations should come as no surprise.

It's clear, then, that the *li* were a source of great preoccupation for the early Confucians. Some have taken the ubiquitous discussion of *li* as signaling a primary or overriding focus. According to such interpretations, the early *ru* were a tightly knit group of individuals interested almost entirely in mastering the formal songs, chants, and dances that comprised these rites and ceremonies, and were uninterested in other goals such as social or political reform (see, e.g., Eno 1990). However, while the *li* were indeed weighty and central to Confucian concerns (as we shall see below), the term itself refers to much more than formal rites and ceremonies. What's more, the role of the *li* was much greater than upholding details of received cultural tradition. Over time, many members of this group of individuals—the *ru*—would come to have concerns that extended far beyond

their roles as ritual masters. Beyond maintaining and perpetuating the rites, the *ru* would seek social and political reform. Part of their core conception of how to reform society was to have it shot through with observance of *li*. And just as the *ru*'s concerns were themselves broadening, so too was their conception of the nature and extent of *li*. The aim of those undertaking Confucian educational training was to become exemplary individuals known as *junzi* or noblemen, persons of moral and cultural distinction who could reform society, lead by moral example, and thereby restore harmony.

Out of this background the Confucian discourse on ritual grew and expanded, and with the erosion of ritual their reflections on its role in social and moral life became more rich and sophisticated. In what follows, I will trace the role of *li* starting with its importance in early childhood development, and continue through its ceremonial and ethical aspects, finally concluding with a discussion of *li* in government.

Ritual and Family Life

When Meng Yizi 孟懿子 asks about filial devotion (*xiao*), Confucius says "Don't disobey." Moments later, Confucius clarifies his comment to another companion, Fan Chi 樊遲: "When they're alive serve your parents according to *li*, when they die bury them according to *li*, and sacrifice to them according to *li*." (2.5). The *li* are meant to stipulate norms of conducts across a wide range of human relations, so there are *li* that apply to family relations which must be followed strictly. But why are the *li* so important? A crucial reason for this concerns the role of the family in shaping the moral life of a child.

Much of one's early life is spent in the company of one's family. They play a vital role in cultivating one's learned reactions and propensities, and honing one's social and moral faculties. One's earliest preferences and dispositions, cares and concerns, likes and dislikes, are all shaped profoundly by one's familial environment. Consider, for example, that one's foundational moral experiences are likely to occur under the supervision and guidance of one's immediate family members. Children first acquire emotions in concrete episodes during childhood when parents or older siblings attend to the natural, biological reactions in the child and provide these reactions names keyed to the concurrent scenario, teaching the child that it is experiencing a particular emotion (de Sousa 1987, 2001). During such episodes, one is taught by one's family what is appropriate to feel in a wide range of specific roles. The family is likely the first unit to introduce one to normative notions such as correctness and appropriateness, what one is expected or permitted to say and feel in a wide array of social roles and situations. This will occur through constant correction and intervention, encouraging certain attitudes and behaviors while censuring others. Much of this will, of course, consist of rote learning and imitation; a child cannot be expected to have the insight or understanding of a mature moral agent, so strict compliance (without understanding) is necessary at the outset (cf. Cua 1996; Lai 2006). Nonetheless, in learning these roles and

expectations—even in rote ways—norms of moral correctness become part of one's psychological fabric, forming the basic dispositions and patterns of reflection and response that will color the rest of the person's moral growth (Sarkissian 2010a). Since the *li* constitute society's received wisdom concerning exemplary forms of conduct in particular roles, demanding strict compliance with the *li* not only shapes the emotional life of the child but also instills habits of personal comportment that reflect exemplary forms of conduct.

Consider, too, that families are naturally hierarchical and divided into particular stations and roles. The family mirrors how Confucians understand rituals functioning in social life—delineating norms according to social roles. The parent/child dyad is perhaps the most obvious of these relational roles, yet all family members were related to one another in strict ways. Children and parents, wives and husbands, older and younger siblings—each of these represents particular relationship dyads with attendant duties, obligations, and spheres of influence. Parents and elder siblings have obligations to nurture the younger members of the family, yet these younger members must be devoted and obedient in turn. Early family education includes the crucial dimension of learning family *roles*, where the child learns not only his own but also those of others he or she interacts with, such as parents, older siblings, and elders of the community, along with the duties, attitudes, and benefits that accrue to each individual according to their own particular position. It is precisely in the context of such clearly delineated roles that *li* can be expected to be articulated, stipulating how individuals ought to relate to one another.

Families thus prepare one to enter society with an understanding of oneself as always being related to others in determined ways, as an individual nested in networks of relationships governed by *li* and requiring certain excellences of character (Sarkissian 2010c). Ishani Maitra, writing about the function of etiquette and propriety generally, has noted that early childhood education in such strictures of correct behavior is largely aimed toward their accessibility—that is, to make them second nature.

> A rule is highly accessible for a particular group in a given context if members of that group tend to apply the rule automatically, without conscious reflection on its appropriateness or usefulness. Some rules may generally be more accessible than others; and some may be more accessible in certain contexts than in other contexts. One reason to suppose that rules of etiquette are highly accessible, at least for some individuals, is that these are rules that are often taught from a very early age. (Maitra 2004: 200).

When Confucius tells FAN Chi that being *xiao* means behaving according to the *li*, then, we can understand this as one instance of the general way that the *li* were meant to delineate proper conduct in relational roles. The *li* of the family help one to occupy one's place in society; a filial son, having properly observed the *li* and internalized them, will not defy his superiors (1.2), and will have the same reputation within the family as without (11.5). Some people said of Confucius, "Why did he not participate in government?" Confucius said, "What does the *Book of Documents* say of filial devotion? 'Be filial, be only filial/Be a friend to your brothers/You will be an asset to those governing.' [Being filial] is participating in government. Why this 'participate in government'?" (2.21).

Rituals as Sacred Rites

The *li* covered a diverse range of activities, among them formal religious rites. By engaging in formal rites linked to significant life moments (such as mourning rites, wedding rites, and sacrifices to one's ancestors) one can develop deep emotional connections with other individuals and foster a feeling of reverence for the spiritual dimension of human existence. The linkage between observing ritual and cultivating emotions such as humility and deference in the text is patent and undeniable; rituals require an emotional "presence" (3.12, 3.26), and emotional authenticity trumps procedural formality (3.4, 17.11).

But how are rituals connected with these emotions? Do ritual instill the emotions themselves? Or are emotions fostered in some other way? Philip Ivanhoe represents a standard way of interpreting the role of ritual when he writes that "one was not fully following the *li* until one performed each ritual with the appropriate attitude, but one could only develop these attitudes by practicing the *li*" (Ivanhoe 1990: 25). But how, exactly, does ritual develop the attitudes and emotions that are so central to ritual participation? One might think that rituals (or ritual procedures) themselves foster the feeling—that the particular gestures, incantations, or sequence of events of ritual ceremonies would evoke the appropriate emotions in the participant. Indeed, something about particular ritual forms was thought to be incredibly important and profound (e.g., the *Di* sacrifice mentioned in 3.11), and there is a marked bias against deviation from orthodox ritual form throughout the text.[3] (Similar sentiments are expressed toward music and orchestration, which is championed in its orthodox form and denigrated in its heterodox form, e.g., 15.11, 17.11, 17.18).

However, ritual forms themselves cannot be sufficient to elicit the emotions. It's clear in numerous passages of the *Analects* that the *li* could be observed without any emotional presence at all. Consider, for example, the infamous exchange between Confucius and his exasperating student Zaiwo 宰我, who protests against observing the traditional 3 year mourning period for his deceased parents (17.21). Zaiwo believes the lengthy, barren, and relatively solitary lifestyle demanded of mourners would hinder their educational practices, and might even lead them to lose ground in their studies of ritual and music. Shouldn't 1 year—the completion of the natural four season cycle—be enough? Confucius responds that if Zaiwo would feel at ease ending the mourning period and returning to normal life after 1 year, then he should do so. It seems as though, in this instance, the feelings are lacking and so the ritual is meaningless without them. We can also infer that the barren and simple mourning lifestyle would not be sufficient to make Zaiwo feel a greater sense of loss for his parents.

If ritual forms are not sufficient to foster the emotions that are so often cited in conjunction with them, how to rituals bring forth emotional development? An answer is suggested by Bryan Van Norden, who defines rituals as "learned human

[3] See the section on Ritual and Flexibility, below.

activities that is regarded as sacred" (Van Norden 2007: 102). Following Emile Durkheim, he notes that an important aspect of such sacred rituals is their independent authority or force, which practitioners themselves inject into the rituals.

> Because ritual is seen as sacred, it is regarded as having an authority that is not reducible to that of human individuals. This raises the question of what it is for something to be "sacred." To regard something as sacred is to think that the proper attitude toward it is awe or reverence. (Van Norden 2007: 102).

Rituals are supposed to be approached with a feeling of reverence, and this feeling of reverence in turn imbues the ritual with a kind of sacred authority. Put another way, without one's own emotional commitment the ritual will itself lack the characteristic feeling of reverence. The reverence is rooted in the feelings brought to the ritual by the participant, who must be taught what feelings are appropriate for the ceremony. While the ceremony itself must be well suited to evoking the emotions it is meant to express (for example, solemn music for mourning, festive music for celebrations), the practitioners must themselves infuse it with the requisite emotional presence. Rituals are likened to a coloring or decorating on top of a clean, pure foundation; they come after the emotions, not before (3.8). First comes knowledge, virtue, dignity, and this is perfected through ritual participation (15.33).

A novice might not feel any deep emotions during ritual participation. However, over time and with the encouragement of teachers, family members, and other ritual participants, the individual can be taught to foster the emotions for the ceremony. Rituals require coordination and cooperation amongst individuals who will be participating in various capacities, and such participation can foster feelings of community and co-dependence. Rituals demand from each participant appropriate commitment and spirit, lest the ritual itself fail to exemplify the feelings and attitudes associated with it. Over time, the ceremony, the individuals, and the emotions become intrinsically connected. At this stage, the ceremony itself may seem to demand or literally wrench the emotion from the participant, fostering feelings of humility and deference to it. According to Van Norden, it is this authority of ritual—this transcendence—that allows rituals to maintain and strengthen ties within a community.

> [A]s we participate in an external order maintained by human agency yet characterized by sacrality, we internalize values expressed by that order. This is, I take it, part of the force of [Confucius's] comment that, "To overcome oneself and to turn toward the rites is to become humane" (12.1). In other words, humans are originally resistant to ritual, so one must "overcome" one's original self and "turn" around, turn toward ritual. (Van Norden 2007: 111–112)

Ritual Propriety, Personal Restraint, and Decorum

Van Norden focuses on holy rites—rituals that must be regarded as sacred and approached as such. As mentioned at the outset, the *li* refer to a broad range of norms of conduct from formal ceremonies to more general strictures of proper

behavior. Consider, for example, a handshake. This is certainly a kind of ritual, and was offered by Herbert Fingarette as a modern Western analogue to Confucian ritual propriety—something similar to bowing which, in Confucius's time, would certainly count as *li* behavior (Fingarette 1972). Indeed, such standards of proper behavior were also captured by the *li*, and such standards could cut across a wide range of life situations quite distinct from sacred ceremonies. The *li* thus characterize how one ought to conduct oneself with regards to general demeanor and overall decorum. Herbert Fingarette finds this a distinguishing characteristic of Confucius's teachings, that he uses "the language and imagery of *li* as a medium within which to talk about the entire body of the mores, or more precisely, of the authentic tradition and reasonable conventions of society." (Fingarette 1972: 6).

When we submit to ritualized demeanor and decorum, we do so out of a desire to signal to others that they are within the scope of our moral concern, that we acknowledge them as meriting consideration and respect. Observing the rites in everyday exchanges can be considered a "formal enactment of respect for the community, its tradition, and its members," whereby we "forestall conflict, misunderstanding, disorientation, and surprise, protecting ourselves and each other from shame and insult" (Haines 2008: 478). To comport oneself according to the *li* in the presence of others signals that one cares. Refusing to do so, or neglecting to do so, signals the opposite—that others are not worthy of one's moral attention.

The overall cohesion and cooperativeness of a society will hinge upon the success of the innumerable small interactions of its individual members. The *Analects* emphasizes the importance of conduct in such microethical situations, which are frequently occurring situations in everyday life in which the stakes are seemingly low but in which there are nonetheless potential conflicts of interest between the individuals involved.[4] Microethical situations are often strategic in nature—that is, the outcomes for each person involved depends on the actions of the others. (Think about finding a parking spot, or waiting in line at the bank, or accidentally bumping into a distant acquaintance at a local store, or deciding how to divide up menial tasks at the workplace: these are all mundane sites of potential conflict.) It is precisely in these everyday interactions that one must regulate oneself and try to exemplify an excellence reflecting the spirit of ritual.

It's likely that when philosophers think of morality and ethics, they do not often think of these kinds of situations, which do not seem to reflect morality's importance and seriousness. For Confucius, though, these situations are the very basic and essential stuff of moral life, where one's comportment and style can exert tremendous influence on others (Kupperman 2002; Olberding 2007). It is one's conduct in close contact with particular people in everyday situations that is of paramount importance to constructing a thriving society where individuals and their interests are fulfilled in effortless fashion.

We can understand the importance of the outcomes of such microethical situations through the notion of self-fulfilling prophecies (Sarkissian 2010b).

[4] My usage of the term *microethics* is indebted to Adam Morton (Morton 2003).

In any social exchange, when we approach one another, we signal to one another our values, commitments, and intentions through our demeanor, facial expressions, and tone of voice. This happens even before we start talking; our overt behavior will trigger certain emotional reactions in others, making certain responses from them more likely to occur than others; a respectful demeanor will make it more likely that others act favorably toward us, whereas a stern demeanor might make them reticent or defensive. Once such emotions are activated, they guide the processing of any subsequent information, influencing how others perceive and interpret them. If initial impressions elicit favorable emotions, then subsequent behavior might be interpreted in this light; if initial impressions elicit irritation or suspicion, this too will color future impressions. Such automatic processes initiate spontaneously and inescapably upon the individual's encountering appropriate stimulus conditions (you can't ignore cues within your visual field, for example), where the environment directly causes mental activity. In psychology, this has been called the perception-behavior link (Bargh and Chartrand 1999).

From the Confucian standpoint, one must be mindful of how one comports oneself, for these actions can turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. Much of what determines whether an individual is willing to be cooperative, accommodating, or otherwise disposed to expend energy in forging relations with others will hinge on these first moves. Favorable first interactions are conducive to forging productive relationships, and vice-versa. By failing to be mindful of one's comportment and its effects on others, the possibility for reaching agreeable outcomes with others can be excluded from the outset. Ritual thus requires a degree of self-control or self-mastery, and such metaphors are used in various parts of the *Analects*. For example, YAN Yuan 顏淵 [YAN Hui 顏回]expresses gratitude toward Confucius, crediting him with enlarging himself with learning, while restraining him with the rites (9.11). The nobleman "studies broadly in culture, restrains himself through the rites, and does not overstep bounds" (6.27; cf. 12.15). Generally, those who restrain themselves seldom err (4.23). In a famous exchange with Yan Yuan, Confucius characterizes this ability to self-regulate as the core to humankindness (*ren*).

> Yan Yuan asked about humankindness. The Master said, "Discipline yourself and turn to the rites—this leads to humankindness. If, for one day, you discipline yourself and turn to the rites, the world would turn toward humankindness as well. Humankindness is in you—how could it come from others?" Yan Yuan asked, "I beg you for some details." The Master said, "If it's not *li*—don't look at it. If it's not *li*—don't listen to it. If it's not *li*—don't speak of it. If it's not *li*—don't act on it." (12.1)

Ritual decorum does require some individual creativity and style. Within the general parameters set by the *li* there would be considerable room for personal variation. Perhaps some forms of rituals would admit of variation to a greater degree than others. Hosting banquets, choosing gifts, making conversation—all of these would be amenable to personal appropriation and creativity. Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont emphasize that "full participation in a ritually-constituted community requires the personalization of prevailing customs, institutions, and values. What makes ritual profoundly different from law or rule is this process of making the tradition one's own" (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 51).

Nonetheless, even while emphasizing the creative and personal aspects of Confucian ethical conduct, Ames and Rosemont note that

> . . . personal refinement is only possible through the discipline provided by formalized roles and behaviors. Form without creative personalization is coercive and dehumanizing law; creative personal expression without form is randomness at best, and license at worst. It is only with the appropriate combination of form and personalization that community can be self-regulating and refined. (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 52)

Indeed, Book X of the *Analects* is perhaps best understood as capturing just these peculiarities of ritual performance by Confucius himself—his ability to infuse ritual observance with personal style. Take, for example, Confucius asking many questions upon visiting the Great Ancestral Temple of the Duke of Zhou 周公 even while presumably having detailed knowledge about it himself (10.21; cf. 3.15). As Kurtis Hagen notes, this may be an example of *li* behavior, but it is likely not acting according to some stipulative rule "dictating that one has to ask lots of questions in the Great Ancestral Temple, or even in temples in general" (Hagen 2010).

> Rather, Confucius's conduct was ritually appropriate (*li*) in the sense that this was a situation in which being inquisitive, and genuinely acting accordingly, expressed a proper sense-of-ritual. More generally, the point could be that one has to be deferential when one is in unfamiliar surroundings. (Hagen 2010: 7)

Edward Slingerland makes a similar point, arguing that the most straightforward meaning of this anecdote is that comporting oneself according to the *li* demands that "one ask polite questions upon entering someone else's ancestral temple, or that one not display one's superior knowledge of ritual" (Slingerland 2003: 23).

Ritual Mastery

While such metaphors of self-restraint and personal effort are key aspects of ritual behavior, the *Analects* maintains that through devoted practice one can develop a capacity to observe the *li* in an effortless fashion. Indeed, the wonderfully terse autobiography of Confucius in *Analects* 2.4 suggests that after a prolonged period (55 years) of study and self-cultivation, Confucius himself had achieved a state of advanced virtuosity, allowing him to assent to his emotional prompts without hesitation and without encountering friction or resistance by others:

> The Master said: At fifteen I set my heart on learning; At thirty I took my position [in society]; At forty I had no doubts; At fifty I understood the commands of Heaven; At sixty my ears were attuned; At seventy I could follow my heart's desires without transgressing norms.

This passage represents a kind of regulative ideal that mastery of the *li* is meant to facilitate. The passage states that Confucius set his mind on a course of study or cultivation at the age of 15, and pursued it for a span of 55 years. While rituals are not mentioned here explicitly, we can assume that they would constitute a large part of the formal learning during this time span. After such extensive study, Confucius

was able to cultivate a state of being such that he could follow his immediate inclinations in all of life's predicaments without transgressing social norms. A number of attempts have been made to account for this type of virtuosity.

Chenyang Li has advanced a metaphorical interpretation of *li* as cultural grammar, and hence ritual mastery as mastery of a cultural grammar (Li 2007). Just as grammar or syntax provides rules regulating the construction of sentences and phrases, ritual propriety can be understood as providing the rules governing all forms of ethical, social, and political norms of behavior. They provide the basic rules and norms of human behavior in society:

> According to the interpretation I present here, a culture is analogous to a language, a person in general observance of *li* in a culture is analogous to someone who follows the grammar of a language that he or she speaks, and a person of *ren* is analogous to someone who has mastered a language (Li 2007: 317).

Li extends this analogy in a number of ways. Children have to be taught the rules of grammar and so too must they be taught the rules of propriety. One way of doing both is through imitation or rote memorization. Studying grammar is necessary for linguistic competence, and studying *li* is necessary for cultural competence. Grammars are relatively stable yet also admit to changes, as do the *li*:

> We usually do not learn *li* in abstract forms, nor do we usually learn grammar in abstract forms. One becomes proficient in practicing *li* by following patterns of human activity in daily life, as one becomes grammatically proficient by using linguistic patterns. Although a person who has become skillful in performing *li* does not have to think about it all the time—one can act naturally in accordance with li—when someone does not behave appropriately, we will quickly notice that he or she violates some rules of *li* (Li 2007: 318).

Similarly, Karen Lai has claimed that the mature, skilled moral exemplar

> does not view the behavioral requirements embodied in *li* as constraints on his behavior. *Li* are no longer cumbersome and restrictive. But they are indispensable because they create the conditions for appropriate expressions of the self... the expression of attitudes, intention, and emotion within the boundaries of meaningful action (Lai 2006: 76).

At this point, observance of *li* proceeds forth from an internalized sense of it, and not a conscious application of it. Sarkissian has drawn from research in neuroscience to suggest how prolonged ritual performance might facilitate such effortless behavior through an accumulation of somatic markers that might expedite effortless navigation through social life (Sarkissian 2010a). Social experience provides individuals with a diverse repertoire of mental images that are triggered when one encounters new situations analogous to those previously experienced. These images will be tuned to the relevant situation type, and will be marked with a certain feel or emotional valence, attracting one to certain types of behaviors while distancing one from others. These images thus serve as emotional markers that work as a kind of 'biasing device', limiting the extent to which a person will need to consider or reason through the demands of the current situation:

> The accrual of these markers over time fine-tunes and accelerates the decision-making process; at the limit, the correct course of action would come to mind immediately, with compelling emotional valence... familiarity with a broad range of emotions, facilitated

> through exposure to literature, art, and social rituals, will allow one to perceive values in a wide range of scenarios, thus improving the likelihood of responding appropriately in any particular situation (Sarkissian 2010a: 7).

In accounting for the effortless ease of such exemplars, it is important to keep in mind the efficacy of rituals themselves. Rituals can be conceived as social scripts with predetermined sequences of actions. Thus, rituals would have an efficacy of their own that would be prompted by the correct invocation of a ritual form—for example, a greeting such as a bow. This would, under normal circumstances, lead to automatic and therefore predictable reciprocation in others. According to Fingarette, what is distinctive about ritual or ceremonial acts is the way they effortlessly steer social intercourse; in the appropriate setting, all that is needed is an initial ritual gesture, and everything else 'just happens' (Fingarette 1972: 8). Fingarette points out that in a "well-learned ceremony, each person does what he is supposed to do according to a pattern. My gestures are coordinated harmoniously with yours—though neither of us has to force, push, demand, compel, or otherwise 'make' this happen"; "the truly ceremonial 'takes place'; there is a kind of spontaneity. It happens 'of itself'" (Fingarette 1972: 9). These features are what lead Fingarette to characterize the *li* as 'magical'.

Given their mastery, the *junzi* would be able to invoke the correct ritual gestures and avail themselves to its efficacy, triggering patterns of response and reciprocation in an effortless fashion. As A.C. Graham has noted,

> The ritual act, influencing through interrelations which the agents do not analyse, does have an efficacy different in kind from the act calculated as means to an end. The man of Potency [*de*] who has, not an abstract knowledge of conventions, but an effortless skill and grace in operating with them, although 'doing nothing', does enhance the order around him. (Graham 1989: 25)

Deploying the right rituals therefore helps us get a grip on the 'magical' ability of virtuous exemplars such as Confucius at 70.

Ritual Government

We have noted that the rituals originally referred to the rites and ceremonies of the clan royalty. They were observed on important occasions throughout the year and were part of the core religious practices of court life, including sacrifices to ancestors. This might suggest that rituals were a distinct part of court life disassociated from other, more mundane aspects of rulership or governance. However, this would be highly misleading. In the *Analects*, ritual is often described as constitutive of a good or ideal form of government. For example, while commenting on how to guide or lead (*dao* 道) the people, Confucius claims that the proper way to regulate them is through ritual:

> Confucius said, "Guide them with government, order them with punishments, and the people will become evasive and have no sense of shame. Guide them with virtuous charisma, order them with ritual, and the people will feel ashamed and pattern themselves to the good" (2.3).

Here, Confucius contrasts two different systems of guiding or leading society. On the one hand, one could make extensive use of laws and punishments to delineate the norms of proper and improper conduct and spur the people along to socially desirable behavior. The use of laws and punishments were prevalent during Confucius's time, and were considered by many to be appropriate means to order the populace during a time of increasing population, greater social mobility, and more centralization of political and military power. As the ruling class was engaged in constant infighting, and ambitious, upwardly mobile peasants vied with existing members of the social elite for positions of power and influence, traditional clan-based forms of governance were being overturned. In tumultuous times, many thinkers saw an increasing need for objective and explicit laws and standards to properly regulate social behavior. Such laws and standards were promulgated on bamboo strips and bronze vessels and were seen as important tools of governance: they could be applied universally to all individuals regardless of their hereditary or social background; they would be clear and unambiguous; and they would be backed by strict punishments to insure their efficacy. During a time of social and political turmoil, the use of laws and punishments had widespread appeal.

Yet the early Confucians recorded in the *Analects* rejected these notions. From their perspective, such forms of regulation and guidance were exceedingly poor. There were several reasons why Confucians rejected penal law and advocated the *li* as the core component of their political vision. First, the use of laws and punishments was thought to lead to undesirable behavioral consequences among the commoners. Faced with the fear of being punished people will simply do all they can to evade them. But this provides no real leadership or guidance. A set of prohibitions outlawing certain actions will fail to advance laudable or ideal forms of conduct. Worse still, explicit laws will promote a practice of disputation and litigation. If such laws are to be applied to any particular instance of conduct it will require interpretation, hence individuals will resort to disputation and litigation in order to advance their own interpretations and avoid punitive consequences. This generates sophistry, glib or clever talk, and a general inclination toward self-interested and evasive behavior, seeking exceptions for oneself rather than conformity to a shared purpose (Hansen 1993: 64–65). Confucius tells YAN Yuan that he is as capable of handling litigation as anyone else, but what is necessary is to create a state of affairs where litigations is non-existent (12.13). Sor-hoon Tan observes that from the Confucian perspective, "laws are at best necessary evils. At their worst, laws undermine efforts at achieving a polity of virtuous people" (Tan 2011: 470).[5]

As an alternative, Confucius recommends guiding the people through observing rituals. What could this mean? How could one govern through observing the rites? It may not seem obvious, but once we take into account a widely shared assumption

[5] Additionally (and more prosaically) any increase in the use of penal law would pose a direct threat to the power and authority of the Confucians themselves. As experts of *li* their livelihood depended on its perpetuation. If government turned to penal law, what need would there be to consult the Confucians?

found throughout the early Chinese corpus—namely, that people will naturally emulate or imitate those above them in the social hierarchy as a principal way of learning and adopting new behaviors (see, e.g., Munro 1969)—the role of ritual will be easier to understand. Such emulation can occur either actively or passively: actively, individuals might choose to imitate others out of a desire to exemplify the admirable qualities they possess; passively, an individual might mimic the behavior of others not out of any conscious desire or intention but simply through being exposed to their example repeatedly. Either way, the widespread belief among thinkers of this time was that individuals are influenced by their environments, and will behave quite differently depending upon what models they are presented with. Thus, when Ji Kangzi 季康子 (one of the heads of the Ji family of Confucius's home state of Lu) asks Confucius about governing, Confucius replies, "If you were not so covetous yourself your people would not steal—even if you rewarded them for it" (12.18), and that if Ji Kangzi took the lead in correcting his comportment, no one would dare do otherwise (12.17; cf. 12.22).

The *Analects* was compiled during a period of great upheaval and social unrest. According to the psychological model just sketched, much of this unrest could be attributed to bad role models among the elites; poor behavior among the people reflects poor behavior among the ruling class. Thus, properly guiding the population must begin by reforming the behavior of the elites of society. The ruling class embraces ritual propriety and the people become reverent (13.4) and easily enlisted into service (14.41). Ruling with ritual is ruling without difficulty (4.13). This is a form of virtue politics—the idea that bringing about a state of harmony and order in the general population requires virtuous individuals in positions of power who, through the excellence of their character and moral example, influence others toward moral goodness. Indeed, the *Analects* places so much emphasis on the role of virtue in government that it is easy to characterize their entire political vision as hinging upon it. A virtuous and charismatic ruler, in particular, was believed capable of transforming the entire world by sheer power of his *de* 德—the charismatic influence of his moral example:

> The master said, "One who governs by means of his *de* is comparable to the Pole Star, which occupies its place and receives the homage of the myriad lesser stars" (2.1).
>
> The master said, "Majestic! Shun 舜 and Yu 禹 [6] possessed the whole world without even managing it" (8.18).
>
> The master said, "Someone who ruled without even acting (*wuwei* 無為)—was this not Shun? What did he do? He made himself reverent and took his proper position facing south—that is all!" (15.5).

The Confucians had some reason to believe in this. After all, according to their basic psychological model, people emulate those above them in the social hierarchy. If the kingpin of the system—the ruler—were to comport himself in a virtuous manner then the emulation could continue down through the ranks of ministers, officials, village leaders, etc., creating a linked chain of virtuous behavior throughout the land. This

[6] Mythical heroes and sage-rulers of antiquity, venerated by the Confucian and Mohist schools.

would allow the ruler to govern 'effortlessly'—by just sitting on the throne (as it were). In the words of Bruce and Taeko Brooks, "if the ruler has the right qualities, those below will *spontaneously* acquire those qualities. We might call this the *assent* of the governed; their capacity to respond to good influence" (Brooks and Brooks 1998: 94).

Governing by *li*, then, is governing without resorting to threats of violence. Indeed, laws and litigation will be unnecessary (12.13). Ritual is thus associated with an exemplary form of government whereby people are made pliant, obedient, and willing to serve. Having been presented with inspiring and admirable behavior from those above, the people will be ashamed of acting poorly, and will naturally turn toward the good. In these ways, the ruling class would, through manifesting the excellence of the moral traditions as captured in the *li*, elicit paradigmatic responses from the rest of the population, engendering feelings of admiration, fondness, and gratitude in them. Once these further psychological assumptions are made apparent, and as one keeps in mind the hierarchical, clan-based social political system that was practiced during Confucius's time, the Confucian notion of ruling by ritual gains some degree of plausibility.

Ritual propriety also applied to diplomatic relations, including state visits, banquets, signing of treaties, and ways of accommodating foreign visitors. In each of these strategic and potentially risky situations, the *li* provided guidelines meant to facilitate positive interactions. The importance of maintaining the *li* at the interpersonal level thus finds an analogue at the international level. As David Wong notes, in political negotiation, when one is trying to navigate a course between conflicting values, norms, and ends, agreement in practice will oftentimes be difficult to secure (even when agreement in theory seems possible), because "the process of coming to agreement presupposes a willingness to listen, to consider and to give weight to the other participants' views. This willingness depends on a significant degree of mutual respect that may not be possible without the ritual" (Wong 2000: 209). Members of the government at all ranks are routinely enlisted to negotiate difficult issues, not only within their own jurisdictions but also with foreign dignitaries as well. During such strategic encounters it would be paramount to allow for negotiations to proceed amicably so that mutually agreeable outcomes can be secured on a peaceful and reasoned basis. As William Haines puts it, "cooperation without coercion needs mutual confidence and an agreed plan. In the visible coordinations of ritual we refresh and observe our shared sense of the attractions of harmony, renewing our confidence in our mutual commitment" (Haines 2008: 474). This would be especially important when the individuals might occupy different ranks or social stations, where inequalities between individuals can be recast as a "shared adherence to a stable common way rather than a conflict of interest that threatens both parties" (Haines 2008: 474).

Political discourse during Confucius's time had eroded considerably, and kings and feudal lords were often more content to settle their differences through warfare rather than diplomacy. (This was, after all, the beginning of the Warring States (*Zhanguo* 戰國) period (453–221 B.C.E.) of Chinese antiquity.) In such a rancorous political environment, observing proper ritual protocols would maximize the potential at forging fruitful cooperative endeavors that might otherwise be derailed if individuals are not encouraged to trust or feel well disposed toward one another.

Rituals and Flexibility

Confucius and those in his circle reveal not only a detailed knowledge of ritual, but also a strong aversion to deviation from received ritual forms. In the *Analects*, ritual conservatism is the norm. Conservatism is so prevalent that the sole instance where Confucius accepts a departure from received tradition is noteworthy. This is his approval of a change from hemp hats to silk hats as part of ceremonial garb (9.3). The reason seems to be that such a deviation does not detract from the meaning or substance of the ceremony, and instead reflects practical considerations.[7] Even here, where Confucius seems to approve of a change in ritual, one should be very cautious to draw any general tendency toward flexibility. First, Confucius is approving an existing modification of the rites, and not initiating a change himself. Second, the change seems very trivial. During a time when ritual observance was declining, this would not be the place to pick a fight. Third, in the very same passage he rejects another existing modification—bowing on top of the stairs of the royal temple, not below—because this signals arrogance; in the apt words of Brooks and Brooks, "the 'below' option implies *asking* permission to ascend; the 'above' *presumes* it" (Brooks and Brooks 1998: 51).

This passage suggests that the conservatism toward *li* is tied importantly to its general function. If the *li* are to have meaning and efficacy they must remain relatively stable across time and must express values and commitments in a clear, unambiguous way. "The power of communally accepted forms of cultural expression to shape and guide behavior largely hinges upon their communal acceptance. It is only under very specific conditions that traditional rituals can be changed without significantly dissipating this power" (Wilson 1995: 274). Such dissipation in power of ritual can be understood as threatening communal well-being and social coordination, leading to fragmentation. As Stephen Wilson notes, ritual 'liberalism' (as it were) would have dire consequences for the individual who wishes to originate new ritual forms:

> Taking a public ritual like hand-shaking and deciding that for oneself it will dignify hostility and ill will rather than greeting of friendship... has two serious consequences for one's flourishing. First, it all but guarantees that no one will understand what one is seeking to convey in such a gesture...
>
> A second consequence of substantially altering public rituals to fit one's private specifications is even more significant—to turn one's back on much of what one's culture deems human is to turn one's back on any possibility of a fully human life in that community (Wilson 1995: 274).

On this reading, we can understand the importance of ritual stability apart from the content of any particular ritual tradition. Ishani Maitra has made similar comments about other meaning-bearing ritual practices, such as rules of etiquette. Rules of

[7] One might wonder how silk is more practical than hemp. Brooks and Brooks comment that production of silk is difficult and that its prevalence has deep political significance. "Silk is labor-intensive, monopolizing rural women at weaving time and rural families at silkworm-tending time; it implies an above-subsistence agriculture and a systematic platooning of the rural populace" (Brooks and Brooks 1998: 51).

etiquette must be elaborate and wide-ranging, but the end of social cohesiveness relies more on their stability than their particular form:

> [T]o realize the characteristic end of etiquette, there must be in place rules of etiquette governing a range of social interactions. But notice that, to realize this end, what is needed is some set of rules or other. Social cohesiveness would be equally well served by any number of alternate sets of rules (perhaps within some limits). In this sense, rules of etiquette are arbitrary. Moreover, they are generally perceived as such. Insofar as we participate in the practice because we value the end of social cohesiveness, this perceived arbitrariness need not undermine our willingness to abide by these rules (Maitra 2004: 200–201).

Of course, Confucius would likely disagree that there was anything arbitrary about the beauty of the Zhou rituals, but from our own perspective such considerations help explain the ritual conservatism that is so prominent in the text.

Finally, we might infer that for Confucius there was simply no other comparable standard available, no other culture or tradition, to match that of the waning Zhou dynasty. Without any serious competitors, maintaining the integrity of received ritual forms would be paramount. Confucius did not select the *li* from a rich marketplace of options. Rather, the choice for him seemed to have been to follow the *li* of the Zhou or to abandon them for clearly inferior forms of social arrangement, such as the use of laws and punishments. Hence, the conservatism might reflect, at a more basic level, a desire to foster the only real hope for a flourishing, harmonious world. Fingarette has championed this view. On his reading, Confucius "never once entertains" the possibility of conflicts of value, culture, and custom of which we are so aware (Fingarette 1972: 57). Confucius seems aware only of a *li* that has been passed down through the ages, and that has its seat in his own state of Lu. For Confucius, "there is no *genuine* option: either one follows the Way or one fails" (Fingarette 1972: 21).

Yi 義 or Rightness

The *li* seem to permeate all aspects of the *Analects*. They provide norms of conduct within the family and among social relations. They constitute the basis for proper government. They are tied to important religious practices and conventions. And they capture the best wisdom passed down through ancestral lines until the present. The *li* are the first thing one ought to consider when trying to exemplify the highest standards of human excellence (12.1). As D.C. Lau puts it, "the rites were a body of rules governing action in every aspect of life in the word repository of past insights into morality. It is, therefore, important that one should, unless there are strong reasons to the contrary, observe them" (Lau 1979: 20). Following the *li* is obviously paramount from the Confucian perspective.

However, while the *li* were extensive, and while one could spend a lifetime trying to master them, they fell short of covering every conceivable life situation. First, the *li* were most obviously applicable in certain settings and situation types—formal occasions such as meals, social and political gatherings, athletic competitions, and

religious ceremonies. In these stable, repeating situation types, individual duties and demands would be explicitly delineated and readily available through consulting the requisite texts and experts. Apart from such situations, the *li* would also dictate, in a general way, matters of etiquette and comportment that would apply to individuals occupying certain roles. For example, the *li* attending to individuals in their roles as hosts or guests would have broad applicability across a range of occasions. Second, there would always be cases of conflict, where more than one rule of *li* would seem to be applicable. For example, as we noted above, the *li* of filial piety requires a son to maintain a deferential attitude towards his father; however, he may also dissent if his father deviates from proper conduct (4.18). But when is it appropriate to dissent? In what manner? Should the son keep the matter to himself? The answers to such questions are not provided by the *li* themselves. Take, as another example, the injunction to avoid lengthy trips abroad when possible (4.19). While one might follow this as a rule, there may be occasions that seem to warrant such lengthy trips. When is it acceptable to leave one's family for an extended period? What types of reasons would justify the violation of this norm of conduct?[8] These questions admit of no easy answers. Nonetheless, in spite of there being no *li* (perhaps one would say meta-*li* at this point) to guide one in these instances, an exemplary person must continue to act in a way that exemplifies the spirit of ritual propriety, even if this entails acting contrary to ritual propriety (Ivanhoe 2000: 2).

It is in these situation types, where there is no standard *li* applicable to one's situation, that the notion of *yi* or rightness plays such a crucial role within early Confucian deliberations of ethical conduct. As Benjamin Schwartz puts it, *yi* denotes appropriate behavior "in the vast sea of unique life situations where more often than not there is no simple 'covering' rule of li" (Schwartz 1985: 79). As with many other normative concepts in the *Analects*, rightness (*yi*) is a quality associated with morally exemplary persons. Confucius extols his disciple Zizhang 子張 to continuously follow or move towards what is right (12.10) and tells Zilu 子路 that the nobleman puts rightness as his highest priority (16.23). This exaltation of rightness appears elsewhere as well. For example, we are told that the nobleman is neither for or against anything save what is right, which he follows invariably (4.10). Similarly, Confucius says that "the nobleman takes rightness as essential, enacts it by means of ritual propriety, brings it forth through modesty, and completes it with sincerity," suggesting that rightness has primacy amongst these various virtuous qualities (15.18).

The concept of rightness is often tokened in contexts where the nobleman might compromise himself owing to desires for profit or fame. Confucius states that riches and honors by means of what is not right were nothing to him (7.16), and tells Zilu that in order to become a perfected person one need have three qualities, one of which is thinking of rightness when seeing an opportunity for gain (14.12; cf 19.1). We are told that the nobleman converses about what is right, as opposed to the petty

[8] An edifying discussion of these issues having to do with tensions in discharging filial duty can be found in Elstein 2009.

person who only speaks of profit (4.16), and that the petty person will seek profit through robbery because his boldness is not tempered by a sense of what is right (17.23). In 16.10, Confucius outlines nine things that the nobleman focuses on, ending with the comment that the nobleman thinks of rightness when he sees an opportunity for acquisition. In 16.23, we are told that petty people who have the quality of being daring yet lack a sense of what is right will end up committing robbery. Finally, Confucius contrasts having notoriety or fame with being distinguished, which can only be secured through rightness (12.29).

We might clarify the relationship between ritual and rightness in a number of ways. Rituals seem to govern strictures of conduct on certain types of occasions and for individuals occupying certain roles. Thus, rituals can be known or stipulated in advance. Rightness, by contrast, seems largely to do with those life situations where one lacks an obvious rule of propriety that one could follow, yet nonetheless must exemplify the high standards of personal excellence that is embodied in the *li*. It should now perhaps be apparent that rightness is most often a quality or property of actions and not persons. In the words of D. C. Lau, "rightness is basically a character of acts and its application to agents is derivative. A man is righteous only in so far as he consistently does what is right" (Lau 1979: 27). This entails that rightness is highly situation-specific or particularistic in character.

A pressing question remains: how does the nobleman know which action is *yi* and which is not? If there is no default *li* script, how does the nobleman know how to proceed? Some have characterized it as a situation-specific practical judgment. Tu Wei-Ming 杜維明, for example, describes *yi* as "a practical judgment based upon a holistic evaluation of objective conditions. The man of righteousness (*yi*), unlike the man of profit, is resolved to be just in an equitable and open way" (Tu 1981: 52). But how to do so? There are places in the *Analects* where Confucius advocates the use of a kind of analogical reasoning. Consider, for example, his injunction of the 'negative golden rule' or 'silver rule'—do not do to others what you yourself would not desire (12.2)—and the virtue of reciprocity (*shu* 恕 4.15, 5.24). We should not treat others in ways that we ourselves would object to if the tables were turned. This injunction is given famous formulation in the following central passage of the *Analects*:

> Zizhang asked "Is there a single word that might serve a guide for one's entire life?" The Master said, "Wouldn't that be 'understanding' [*shu* 恕]? What you do not desire, do not impose on others" (15.24; c.f. 5.12, 6.30).

Shu refers to an ability to see the similarities between individuals, to view others as one would view oneself, and to extend to others a sympathetic understanding that one naturally has toward oneself. Elsewhere, Zigong 子貢 asks Confucius about humankindness, and in answering this question Confucius says that those who possess humankindness take "what is near at hand"—namely, themselves—as an analogy when thinking of others (6.30). If we think of these passages alongside the general injunction to think of rightness when tempted by profit or fame, it seems as though analogical reasoning might be especially useful in situations that lack an obvious *li* imperative: when tempted by personal gain or benefit, think of how this

would affect others, and do not act in ways that you yourself would find objectionable. Those who reason in such a fashion might thereby enhance their abilities to choose actions that are *yi*. In Ivanhoe's words, *shu*

> . . . helps one avoid becoming a slave to the *li*. It insures that individuals will have an active sense of their co-humanity with others. It guarantees that people will run the rules and not be run by the rules. One is to see oneself as dedicated to serving others according to the rituals, but one is also to see oneself as responsible for the well-being of others (Ivanhoe 1990: 128).

Apart from such models relying upon practical reasoning of one kind or another, there are other proposals that rest upon a more basic, intuitive faculty that accrues to individuals who have observed ritual propriety and dedicated themselves to exemplary conduct. For example, Joel Kupperman believes Confucius requires the virtuous agent to "gravitate" to the appropriate action; "what he 'feels like' doing is what is right" (Kupperman 1968: 184). Similarly, Philip Ivanhoe calls it an "intuitive sense of the Way" (Ivanhoe 2000: 1), and attributes some of this intuitive sense as resulting from prior ritual practice. "Rituals. . . guide one to develop a sense for what is right. This sense is necessary for a refined understanding of ritual. One develops this sense by continually reflecting upon the ultimate goal of ritual, the harmonious functioning of a society of human beings" (Ivanhoe 1990: 24). Though this comment is about proper execution of ritual, similar considerations would explain the sources of *yi* in the *Analects*. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames have also put forth such an interpretation, arguing that

> . . . actions that realize *yi* are not performed in accordance with strict guidelines. Such actions are, at least to some degree, spontaneous, novel, and creative. . .. The articulation of *yi* with respect to a given situation involves the emerging awareness of what is or is not appropriate in that situation and how one might act so as to realize this appropriateness in its highest degree (Hall and Ames 1987: 102).

Conclusion: *Li*, *Yi*, and Harmony

The first appearance of *li* in the *Analects* occurs in 1.12, where Youzi 有子 makes the following statement:

> When it comes to the practice of ritual, the harmony is what is valued. That was the beauty of the *dao* of the Former Sages, why great and small all followed it. There was something they did not practice—namely, knowing the value of harmony and going straight for it. If you don't restrain the practice with ritual propriety, that too is unacceptable.

Out of all the statements concerning ritual in the *Analects*, this one is perhaps the most appropriate as a summarizing position. It articulates many of the aspects of the *li* noted above: The *li* were valued, above all, because when practiced they effected harmony throughout the world. The importance of *li* is ultimately underscored because of its crucial—and irreplaceable—role in fostering social harmony. The word harmony (*he* 和) seldom appears in the text, but harmony is the regulative ideal which most of the teachings of the *Analects* were meant to bring about.

Harmony is a state in which each person exemplifies the virtues that obtain to them within their particular place in society. In exemplifying these virtues they harmonize with others.

There is great beauty in this Confucian vision of a society in which each person exemplifies the excellences of their particular roles and lives in harmonious union with others. According to Chenyang Li, harmony "presupposes the existence of different things and implies a certain favorable relationship among them," and "a harmonious relationship presupposes that [the individuals] have different perspectives and different views on various issues" (Li 2006: 584, 586). Confucius claims that an exemplary person "harmonizes and does not seek mere agreement," whereas a petty person "agrees but does not harmonize" (13.23). Li expands on this passage:

> For Confucius, a sensible person should be able to respect different opinions and be able to work with different people in a harmonious way. A major function of *li* 禮 (rites, rituals of propriety) is precisely to harmonize people of various kinds... Confucius and Confucians see a direct connection between *li* and *he*. They take *li* to be a central aspect of government and believe that through the good use of *li*, good government results in a harmonious society (Li 2006: 586–587).

Harmony relies upon attitudes of trust and goodwill, of community and shared purpose, that cannot be brought forward at whim; they must be cultivated. Rituals "foster a common bond between the living participants, a sense of community that is rooted in the past and stretches onward into the future" (Wong 2000: 209). We've noted throughout that the *li* are central to developing social and moral virtues such as humankindness, filial devotion, and reverence. These attitudes are crucial to facilitating harmony; without them, harmony is not in the offing. As Wong puts it, "One reason why harmony cannot be sought for its own sake is that aiming directly at harmony lacks the power of summoning forth attitudes that may be shaped into mutual respect between the participants" (Wong 2000: 209). These attitudes can best be instilled through shared practices; the *li* constitute such shared practices.

Ultimately, then, the *li* are tied directly to the most central value Confucians recognize—living in a harmonious world—and *yi* helps insure that one does so in the situations where one's commitment to this goal might be most strongly compromised.

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