

2016

Confucian ritual and solidarity:
physicality, meaning, and
connection in classical
Confucianism

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/19736>

Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

**CONFUCIAN RITUAL AND SOLIDARITY:
PHYSICALITY, MEANING, AND CONNECTION IN CLASSICAL
CONFUCIANISM**

by

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B.A., Northwestern University, 2004

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2016

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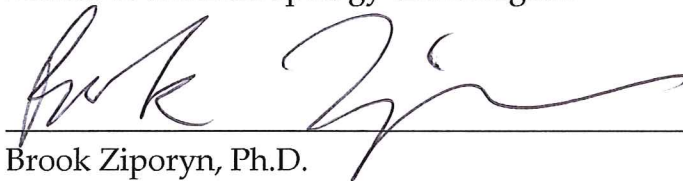
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DEDICATION

Being a work on Confucianism, this dissertation is naturally dedicated to my family: first and foremost to my parents, Michelle and Wah Kit Loh, to my brother, Steven Loh, and to my fiancée, Carolyn Herman. In accordance with prototype theory, this dedication also extends to the vital people who have so kindly been 師父 *Shi-fu* and 師母 *Shi-mu* to me over the many years of my education. Without the personal and professional support, guidance, and inspiration I received from all of you, this work would not have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the many teachers, colleagues and friends who have given me their unflagging support through the various and lengthy stages of this project, and whose efforts helped bring this project to completion. Deep thanks go to John Berthrong, who oversaw and encouraged the large majority of my graduate education as major advisor and whose guidance and incredible breadth of knowledge provided an embarrassment of intellectual opportunity. Though we were sadly unable to finish this project together, his rich influence can be found throughout this work, and I will always be grateful for his cheerful personal and professional support over so many years. I am similarly grateful to Diana Lobel, under whose generous mentorship I most often sharpened the critical skills of deep textual analysis and comparative thinking. Amidst the stress of dissertation writing, our lengthy conversations, which ranged in topic from Aristotle to Dogen, hedonic tone to *wu-wei*, were a constant reminder of the joys of collegial intellectual life. Professor Lobel is the first well accomplished, professional academic to engage me as a professional in my own right, and what confidence and surety of voice may be deserved in the coming pages owe a debt to her sincerely expressed interest in my views. I also owe a debt of gratitude to

Adam Seligman, whose stimulating mentorship in the earlier part of my time at BU served as a catalyst for many aspects of this project, and to the BU GRDS for its kind, patient support of me over the years, particularly through the efforts of Professors Jonathan Klawans and Jennifer Knust, as well as those of Karen Nardella, Wendy Czik, and Claire Sadar-Lake.

To each of the members of my committee, I am of course indebted for their hard work and efforts on my behalf, but to each I owe particular and unique debts that I would like to acknowledge. To Professor Korom, who was also willing to hire me as an editorial assistant for *Asian Ethnology*, I owe both my continued financial capacity to see this project through to its end and my exposure to numerous anthropological methodologies and resources, many of which influenced this work in oblique, surprising ways. To Professor Neville, whose stimulating work and kind instruction brought an infusion of excitement to the final, difficult days of the writing process, I owe many exciting new ways of expanding this work, particularly in regards to Peirce's semiotic theory. To Professor Weller and his work, I owe my initial fascination with the issues of unity and multiplicity, sincerity and subjunctivity, and the ultimately the realization that Confucianism is just as exciting outside of the books as it is inside of them (if not moreso). Finally, to Professor Ziporyn, to whom I owe my desire

to join academia in this field in the first place. It was his illuminating and stimulating instruction that sounded the bell for me as an undergraduate, and it is my professional hope that my work and I be able to impart to others the excitement and joy his mentorship has passed on to me. His comments on this work have continued to sharpen my thinking, and it has been a pleasure and honor to have him rejoin my circle of instructors.

Last but certainly not least, I thank my family, to whom I owe so much more than can ever be written here. I write about the family a good deal in this work, but it is you who taught me the true richness of what that means, literally from day one. It is my life's greatest joy to be your son, brother, and (soon to be) husband.

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BRIAN LOH

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Consensus scholarship notes that the ethics described in the Confucian textual corpus focuses its attention primarily on concrete relationships, specific roles, and reciprocal duties. This has occasioned concern about whether Confucian ethics can offer adequate moral guidelines for interactions between people who have enjoyed no prior contact. In response, this dissertation suggests that early Confucianism does guide interactions with strangers, but that this guidance is to be found less in its ethical concepts or moral precepts than in its embodied ritual practices.

To substantiate this claim, I carefully apply theories drawn from the fields of cognitive science, cognitive philosophy, American pragmatism, and ritual

theory to several early Confucian texts: the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi*, and the ritual manuals of the *Liji* and the *Yili*. From pragmatism and cognitive philosophy, I assemble lenses of conceptual and pre-conceptual meaning and use them to examine the effects of ritual practice on the creation of group boundaries and the generation of solidarity. In so doing, I reveal that the solidarity generated by embodied practice and physical co-presence shapes the boundaries and structure of early Confucian groups as much as concepts or shared values. I further outline the neural and psychological processes by which the physicality of Confucian ritual practice creates pre-conceptual solidarity, then highlight the ways that solidarity is framed and given a meaningful direction by the varied Confucian exemplars. Ultimately, I demonstrate that mutual engagement in ritual practice allows strangers to bond quickly, without the benefit of prior relationship or shared proposition. This, I argue, is the heart of the Confucian treatment of strangers. Ritual practice simultaneously creates a relationship between new contacts and energizes that relationship with strong, pre-conceptually-generated solidarity.

This dissertation also analyzes a number of related topics, including the relationship between ritual practice and group boundaries and the influence of the body upon concepts and categorization. In its broadest goals, this study

offers insight into the rich character of early Confucian physicality, suggests novel guidelines for the analysis of contemporary Confucianism, and reflects possible ways in which solidarity might be formed between members of groups with different value orientations.

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Tall stands that pear-tree;
 Its leaves grow very thick.
 Alone I walk and unbefriended.
 True indeed, there are other men;
 But they are not like people of one's own clan.
 Heigh, you that walk upon that road,
 Why do you not join me?
 A man that has no brothers,
 Why do you not help him?
 -Shijing (The Classic of Odes) 119¹

At heart, this is a work about Confucian ritual and the Confucian group.

Though the title of this dissertation includes the key terms connectivity and solidarity, over the course of the following work, I hope to show how both of these terms are inextricably bound with the course of ritual cultivation as both process and goal in the Confucian tradition. As the title also notes, this is also a work about *meaning* and how conceptual and pre-conceptual forms of meaning generated through Confucian ritual practice may have functioned as ways of

¹ 1996. *The Book of Songs*. Translated by Arthur Waley. Edited by Joseph R. Allen. New York: Grove Press.

orienting and rooting people in an intersubjective context, thus generating a more nuanced and thickly layered picture of solidarity in early Confucian China.

As a method of exploring these themes within the context of Confucian ritual, I begin this dissertation by addressing a well-known, but still thought provoking article by Ambrose King that represents a number of contemporary critiques dealing with the relevance and applicability of the Confucian tradition in current times. Not only does it articulate the Confucian ethical conundrum that this dissertation takes as its core, it also serves to frame two key theoretical issues that this dissertation re-examines.

In 1985, the sociologist Ambrose King (Jin Yaoji 金耀基) claimed that Confucianism does not provide sufficient conceptual or practical resources to motivate people to overcome the gap in empathy between personal relationships and the relationship to the “group.” He states, “It seems to me that Confucian social ethics has failed to provide viable ‘linkage’ between the individual and the *ch’un* [*qun* 群], the non-familistic group. The root of the Confucian Problematik lies in the fact that the boundary between self and the group has not been conceptually articulated... Indeed it could be argued that Confucianism does not provide the individual with ethical guidance in dealing with ‘strangers’ with whom one has no particular relations.” (1985, 58) He continues,

Indeed, in the outer world, when the individual faces an amorphous entity called group or society, he finds himself no longer structurally situated in a relation-based social web. In this setting the Confucian value and norms would seem to him not morally abiding and relevant. The common saying *jen pu wei chi, t'ien chü ti mieh* ("If one does not think of his own interest, neither heaven nor earth will save him"), by no means a socially embarrassing statement, only becomes thinkable and understandable in a relation-free social context. (King 1985, 65)

The heart of King's critique as presented in this passage lies in his claim that Confucian values and norms no longer seem to have effective power when they are not articulated in terms of a particular, personal relationship (*lun* 倫), the prism he claims almost all Confucian ethics are passed. This serves as the first of the major issues this dissertation serves to address.

The issue of relating the individual person to both strangers and greater society is not merely a contemporary concern. As the above poem from the *Shijing* suggests, the treatment of strangers would have found enough resonance with people to have been one of the popular songs collected during the early Zhou Dynasty. This song would have been transmitted through the collection of musical lyrics probably known merely as the *Shi* (*Odes*) to the people of the warring states period and eventually edited into the familiar and more-or-less stable text we now know as the *Shijing*. This transmission suggests that from at least the time of Confucius, and most probably much earlier, this issue concerning extending empathy to outsiders would have held as much resonance

with the populace of early China as it did with Ambrose King's twentieth century contemporaries. Moreover, the discussions of Mohist "*jian ai*" and the individualist tendencies assumed by Qin Legalist philosophy also testify to the continuing presence of this issue in early Chinese intellectual life. In short, the issue of generating solidarity with the stranger, and by extension, the larger non-familistic group is an issue that would have been present for thinkers throughout the Warring States period.

King's article helpfully raises this criticism and specifies a theoretical reason why Confucian thought as set out in the textual tradition has seemingly been unable to overcome this challenge. His article, however, is a brief contribution to an anthology and does not explore this issue with much depth.²

² Confucianism as a term always requires a bit of qualification because it is not a direct translation of any one particular Chinese term. Confucianism is not a terribly precise term because it is easily translatable into three different Chinese terms: 儒家 *ru jia*, 儒學 *ru xue*, and 儒教 *ru jiao*. Generally speaking, *ru jia*, or the family of scholars is the specific slice of the whole of Confucianism to which I refer, though *ru jia* and *ru xue* (the *ru* form of learning) contain considerable categorical overlap. In contemporary times, *ru jiao* tends to refer less to the learning and culture passed down by Confucius and more to the practice of venerating Confucius himself (Yao 2000).

There is also a question of membership and origins with the term Confucianism. Confucius seems to see himself as belonging to part of this tradition of *ru* which may first have referred to a specific set of ritual experts. This tradition antedates him by at least several hundred years. On the other hand, as we will note, this term evolves throughout Chinese history, first coming to represent training in particular classical texts, then absorbing the valence of a specific lineage of thought by around the time of the Xunzi. By the seventh century, *ru* certainly comes to represent a lineage centered on Confucius as its first teacher and ideal exponent. Given that the term "Confucianism" in contemporary times effectively points to this final connotation of this

Nevertheless, this criticism seems to have retained a fair amount of persuasive power. Despite being formulated over twenty-five years before Ames' 2011 work on Confucian Role Ethics, Ames still highlights this particular dynamic as a place where Confucian ethics might meet a practical limitation. Citing Bertrand Russell in addition to King, Ames confirms that one of the key practical problems for Confucianism is the problem of *extension*: how to extend the presumably natural empathy of the family beyond the limits of blood ties and personal relations. As Russell notes, "Filial piety, and the strength of the family generally, are perhaps the weakest point in Confucian ethics, the only point where the system departs seriously from common sense. Family feeling has militated against public spirit..."(qtd in Ames 2011, 262)

Russel, King, and Ames are not alone in citing as problematic the prioritization of personal connection and reciprocity as the foundation of Confucian ethical motivation. This particular issue is well-tread ground.³ After

term *ru*, and this connotation accords with the tradition studied by of contemporary Chinese scholars of *rujia* thought, I have retained it for the length of this study. Thomas A. Wilson gives an excellent discussion of the issues mentioned here concerning this term in his introduction to *On Sacred Ground: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius*. (2002, 23)

³ See, for example, issue 6 of *Dao* (2007), a special issue specifically discussion the question of filial piety as the "root of morality" or the "source of corruption." Guo Qiyong and Liu Qingping are significant contributors to this issue.

all, most concrete guidelines given by the classical Confucian masters concern the proper means of interacting within a given relationship, and until modern times the vast majority of human interaction would have been with people with whom one has a particular, definable relationship.⁴ In Confucian ethical thought, we thus see affection-based reciprocity being played out first and foremost within the natural context of familial reciprocity in the parent-child relationship, governed by parental love and reciprocal filial piety. This basic model is then echoed in the other early core relationships (五倫 *wu lun*): husband-wife, elder-younger sibling, ruler-subject, and friendships in general. Though each has its own governing virtue (仁 *ren*, 別 *bie*/禮 *li*, 悌 *ti*, 忠 *zhong*, and 信 *xin* respectively), reciprocity undergirds all of these relationships. This reciprocity in turn serves as

⁴ This is not just applicable to the idea of living in situations dominated by Durkheim's organic solidarity (as opposed to mechanical solidarity). After all, large cities have been around for millennia. The argument here is closer to one Peter Nosco makes: that both relationships and the very social space in which they are conducted have changed in character. In Confucian China, the officially promoted paradigm of the public family (ruled by the emperor-father) opens up in modern times and that the structure of modern institutions only recently forced an opening of a "public space" between the state and its citizens. Whereas before family and state were portrayed as direct analogies ("official space" and "family space" being exact analogues), the newer "public space" marked an area neither "official" nor "private" in nature, thus placing this public space outside the range of Confucian ethics. (2008, 24-25) Nosco's thoughts also point us to reasons why this issue is such a vital one to contemporary Confucians— while this type of public space is relatively foreign to and unconsidered by the early Confucians, interactions within public space are now commonplace in China and most developed countries.

a primary root that secures moral obligation and serves as the basis for all other relational interaction.

Of course, obligation alone does not represent the heart of the Confucian ethical project; one who acts from obligation alone without genuine feelings of respect and care is missing the mark (Analects 1.4). However, it is nevertheless also true that because there is no pre-established relationship between strangers (and thus no reciprocal exchange), the Confucian suggestion that family feeling be extended (at a lesser degree) to others beyond the family seems to lack the same imperative force as does the morality regarding filial piety or family duties. Extension stands on the path of cultivation, certainly, but does not seem to take on the same imperative weight.⁵

If it can be shown that Confucianism relies almost exclusively on reciprocity and roles for its moral guidance, a subject addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, then the effective range of the people governed by Confucian ethics would

⁵ As will be discussed in chapter 2, the Confucians probably understood this dynamic to be mitigated somewhat by the fact that Confucianism seeks, in part, to develop dispositions, and dispositions tend to be flexible across contexts. As Analects 1:2 states, "It is rare to find a person who is filial to his parents and respectful of his elders, yet who likes to oppose his ruling superior. And never has there been one who does not dislike opposing his ruler who has raised a rebellion." Here dispositions developed within the family are seen to assert themselves in contexts beyond those in which they were originally developed. Nevertheless, extension always comes in the context of placing one's own family first, as will be discussed shortly.

seem to be limited to only those with whom a person has an existing relationship.⁶ The “in-group” for any particular Confucian—that is to say, the group of people that Confucian ethical norms connect to any one person—would then seem to be extremely limited. From this point of view, there could be no meaningful relationship to a larger “group” in the same way that we see in propositionally-based forms of grouping like communism (or nationalism, Christianity, etc.). The closest approximation we might find in early China prior to the rise of specific lineages of thought is loyalty to a particular ruling lineage (whatever the scale).⁷ Loyalty to a lineage, however, is just another form of personal relationship, and does not necessitate identification with others ruled by the same lineage. Certainly, the far-reaching sense of national unity we are

⁶ Government positions seem to be the striking exception to this rule. Nevertheless, it is clear that since duties to family underwrite the moral legitimacy of rulership (Mencius 7A35; *Liji*, “Great Learning” 43.1, etc.), family duty takes first priority even for those tasked with the care of many.

⁷ We might also make an argument for a sense of cultural unity, which Peter Bol locates in Analects 9.5 in his translation of 斯文 *si wen* as “this culture of ours,” the aggregated culture that survived the death of King Wen and favored by heaven but this seems to be a much later development. In 9.5, however, culture appears to be considered an object of transmission rather than a milieu to which one belongs. Here, Confucius claims that those who threaten him cannot harm him because he is transmitting the culture favored by heaven. One can certainly participate in the patterned norms of *wen*, but solidarity would be more heavily influenced by physical co-participation in those patterns or at least through embodied familiarity rather than propositional matching. We see this briefly in 14.17, in the note about barbarians wearing their robes folded to the left and their hair worn down.

accustomed to today was not even a rejected possibility for the early Chinese, most of whom never left their immediate regions and may or may not have had a sense of the empire as a whole.

Thus another way of understanding the key drive of this project is to view it as an examination of the nature of the Confucian group. The above point of view argues against a notion of abstract, “imagined” groups—here borrowing the use of “imagined” from Benedict Anderson’s (1991) work—and argues instead that Confucian groups are first and foremost communities bounded by experienced solidarity rather than propositional, abstract boundaries. The first issues this dissertation addresses can thus take the form of these key questions: How does Confucianism navigate between tenable solidarity and abstract empathy? How can we understand the Confucian group in terms of abstract boundaries verses experienced solidarity? Both of these questions are ways of understanding how Confucianism deals with strangers.

In sum, this issue concerns the breadth of the Confucian moral circle and its practical ability to extend beyond the bounds of the family to reach those with whom one has no personal connection. This band of people extends from those within our own cultural context who we have not yet met and extends to the “barbarians” who stand beyond the edge of civilized society, or in terms more

suitable to contemporary sensibilities, those who do not share worldview assumptions concerning values, ethics, and appropriateness. This study suggests that though boundaries drawn upon the lines of culture were strong, the early Chinese worldview also implicitly presents a number of alternative ways of viewing the group that supplemented this more conventional way of understanding the difference between insiders and outsiders.

The second of the issues that I have chosen to address is another assumption embedded in a supporting point of King's aforementioned criticism. I quote this point at some length here because it illustrates a major theme to which I will respond.

Insofar as Confucian theory is concerned, there is no formal treatment of the concept of *ch'un* [group]. *Ch'un* remains an elusive and shifting concept. Fei Hsiao-t'ung correctly argues that the boundary between *chi* [self] and *ch'un* is relative and ambiguous; in the Chinese tradition, there is no group boundary as such—the outer limit of the group is the vague concept of *t'ien-hsia* [all under heaven]. Barbara Ward has also pointed out that one feature of Chinese social structuring is the relative lack of clear boundaries for defining an "in-group." Even the term *chia* [family], which describes the basic social unit, is conceptually unclear. Sometimes it includes only members of a nuclear family, but it may also include all members of a lineage or a clan. Moreover, the common expression *tzu chia jen* ("our family people") can refer to any person one wants to include; the concept of *tzu chia jen* can be contracted or expanded depending upon the circumstances. It can theoretically be extended to an unlimited number of people and thereby becomes what is called *t'ien-hsia i-chia* ("all the world belongs to one family") (King 1985, 61).

In other words, according to King and the scholars he cites, interpersonal and social boundaries are ambiguous and elastic. King uses this conceptual ambiguity as part of his demonstration that Confucianism needs further conceptual clarity. Clearly articulating the borders of the group, family, and individual, he suggests, would allow for a clear means of outlining the duties of single persons in relation to the group as a whole.

This seems like a fair project, and I lend my intellectual support to such endeavors. At the same time, focusing purely on the conceptual resources leaves out much of the richness of the Confucian tradition. Over-reliance on the conceptual tradition in contemporary scholarship is the second of the issues I seek to address, and I will address it not simply by arguing that much of early Confucian life was not textual—this is self-evident. Rather than extrapolate solely from Confucianism's *conceptual* resources, I hope to look more closely at other resources available to the early Confucian tradition. Specifically, I will examine the way in which Confucian ritual (and ritual in general) is able to create non-conceptual ways of relating to and generating solidarity between strangers, and how it harmonizes those ways of relating with the propositional, conceptual, “worldview” level of meaning that the aforementioned scholars deal

with. My focus for this dissertation will thus rely heavily on the physicality of early Confucianism.

Specifically, I will be examining one area of non-conceptual interaction—pre-conceptual interaction. What I index by using the word “pre-conceptual” is that area of human cognition that stands prior to and is formative of concrete concepts. This often refers to unconscious mental activity, but by this, I do not primarily mean to invoke the layer of cognition that we do not have conscious access to. Rather, I often speak of thoughts, feelings, or emotions that first arise directly from bodily experience. As opposed to thoughts received through a cogitative, reflective, analytical process, such as might arise during the process of deduction, pre-conceptual thought processes are those that allow the interpretation and categorization of experience into something as definite and concrete as a concept. Examining the pre-conceptual arena thus examines how the mind builds concepts and makes judgements from the fabric of embodied experience. Because it arises directly from experience, pre-conceptual thought is by nature non-abstract, both spatially and temporally.

One of the advantages of this approach is that by taking the effects of human physicality and embodiment seriously, it allows for a more holistic development of how Confucians may have engaged and interacted with others.

Focusing primarily on the conceptual, textual tradition overlooks the key area in which Confucian cultivation takes place. In addition, this approach also harmonizes well with early Confucian sensibilities. The *Analects* clearly depicts a Confucius more interested in correcting particular mistakes of particular students within specific circumstances than in creating timeless rules of behavior. This suggests that clarity of philosophical concepts was not a primary concern for Confucius himself. Although the various authors that may have contributed to the text of the *Analects* at a later date do engage in some conceptual clarification, it is unlikely that the crux of their focus was oriented toward clarifying these points. As I will review in Chapter 2, the Confucian tradition, though eventually systematized by later expositors, focused less on conceptual clarity than it did on molding particular behaviors located in concrete, historical contexts. Focusing primarily on conceptual clarity thus instantiates an investigative methodology that comes relatively late to the arena of Chinese philosophic discourse.

While significant scholarship has been done on early Confucian physicality,⁸ this particular area of studies, particularly studies based on the *san li*

⁸ See Ames (1993a), Csikszentmihalyi (2004), and Hahm (2009) for example.

(the collection of ritual texts received from that period), has just begun to be tapped in contemporary western scholarship. I will state at the outset that it is unlikely that Confucians would have understood the dynamics I will raise in the concrete and explicit terms I use to describe them. Nevertheless, I maintain that Confucians would have at least aware of the effects of shared physicality upon pre-conceptual solidarity—their developmental focus on physical rituals supports this point. This point, along with other methodological concerns raised here, will be discussed in much closer detail in the methodology section of this chapter.

In summary then, I explore an alternative answer to the question of extension, one that re-examines a basic premise upon which King's and many other scholars' solutions are built: that honing conceptual knowledge is the best avenue from which to refine the Confucian ethical tradition. Against this premise I suggest that since the clarity of concepts was secondary to developing relational sensitivity and the development of character in early Confucianism, and since the primary means of accomplishing this was understood to be the enactment of physical rituals, contemporary explorations and extensions of the tradition should also probe concrete, embodied practices in addition to exploring concepts abstracted from particular instances. Over the course of this dissertation, I

propose that sharing physical rituals creates a type of non-conceptual relationality that undergirded the conceptual world of Confucian ritual life, and that this physically based relationality would have been part of the background into which Confucian ethical life was woven.

In terms of current Confucian scholarship, these are the primary two issues I will examine. There are also number of other academic conversations that intersect my treatment of the Confucian ritual tradition. The first of these is found within contemporary ritual theory. As described in the methodology section below, one of the areas of scholarship I will use to examine the characteristics of Confucian ritual is the area of anthropological and sociological ritual theory. Part of my hope, however, is not only that ritual theory will have important insights for the consideration of Confucian ritual, but that the particularities of the Confucian ritual tradition will also bring fruitful insights to the field of ritual theory as a whole. In the conclusions of his book, Michael Ing suggests that Confucian ritual as described in the *Liji* functions differently from two mainstream theories of ritual, theories he calls the “correspondence” and “subjunctive” theories of ritual (2012, 204). This dissertation hopes to pick up this particular strain of discussion in more detail in order to show how Confucian ritual brings a number of heretofore unconsidered characteristics of ritual into

the discussion of ritual theory. Ing, Seligman et al. (2008), and Seligman and Weller (2013) describe ritual as enacting a liturgical order or a reality; I hope to deconstruct this process in greater detail to show how it contributes to the creation of empathy and solidarity.

This project's focus on solidarity and empathy also highlights the broadest and most "practically oriented" conversation to which this project contributes: finding the means to extend empathy across the boundaries created on the basis of abstracted, propositional knowledge (such as boundaries of cultural or religious tradition, nationality, or ideology). Because generalized knowledge (and by extension generalized or shared meaning) consists of stereotypes by nature, reliance solely on shared meaning distorts our interactions by creating stereotypical lenses through which we view the other. I do not seek to demean the value of shared meaning; indeed, the world would be radically impoverished without it. I merely propose that finding additional, alternate means to extend empathy is vital to our contemporary context. This dissertation proposes shared action as one such source of solidarity because it generates embodied rather than conceptual empathy and thus can stand without the benefit of a shared structure of meaning to inform it.

Methodology and Chapter Summary

This study takes the intellectual and popular resurgence of Confucianism in contemporary China and its cultural sphere as a backdrop. In other words, while I am interested in exploring how ancient Chinese society might have functioned, I also hope that this work will be of some small service in helping to identify ways that Confucian ritual and ethics can be powerful resources for contemporary life. In this, I follow in the tracks of many contemporary Confucian scholars such as Du Weiming (Tu Wei-ming), Fan Ruping, Yu Yingshi, Peng Guoxiang, Ambrose King himself, and others, all of whom continue to probe both early and Neo-Confucianism for conceptual resources to help Confucianism regain some of its position as a relevant mode of thought and life.

This dissertation is thus primarily concerned with the contemporary implications of Confucianism, treated as a religious tradition, ethical system, and philosophy of life.⁹ Like Steve Angle in his book *Sagehood*, I ask the question,

⁹ Though the status of Confucianism as a religion is still under debate, as Anna Sun (2013) notes, so much scholarship has been done discussing Confucianism as a religion that it currently is treated as one, whether or not that treatment is actually justified. According to Sun, this treatment can trace a path back to Max Weber's treatment of it in his comparative survey of world religions. Confucianism is also well known to fit Tillich's definition of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern."

what insights does Confucianism have to offer the fields contemporary philosophy, anthropology, and religious studies? As I answer these questions by exploring the dialectical shaping process between pre-conceptual and conceptual layers of meaning in Confucianism, this dissertation consists of three sections that correspond to a “calibration” section, followed by interpretations of both conceptual and pre-conceptual aspects of the Confucian tradition. Given that each of these sections recommends itself to a different hermeneutical tool in its analysis, methodological concerns are perhaps most easily described according to section. As I will demonstrate, however, each of these tools goes hand-in-hand with those used in other sections and thus form a linked whole supporting this dissertation’s overall trajectory.

The first section of this dissertation, Chapters 1 and 2, is an exploration of the Confucian group in philosophical, social scientific, and cognitive scientific terms. The methodology of this section is fairly straight-forward; I apply various models and theories of grouping from these fields to the given Confucian texts to see how well they match and what insights can be gleaned from such a comparison. I am aware of the difficulties inherent in explicating a foreign tradition grounded in a different time, language, geographic location, and cultural milieu in terms of modern academic theories. The drive of this section is,

after all, to (as much as is possible) help us vacate many of the assumptions concerning Confucianism native to western academic and lived culture as well as the foundational presumptions about norms that undergird both our understanding of the body, mind, and personhood and our modes of experiencing the world. My hope is thus to strip these theories down to a relatively culture-free level. This in turn gives us the mental space necessary for understanding a culture that may or may not share those assumptions.

The next chapter of this section, chapter 2, is a discussion of Confucian conceptual meaning, and will continue with this careful culturally grounded methodology. Chapter two will examine classical Confucianism's emic discussion of ritual self-cultivation and will consist of historically grounded textual exegesis. Thus, for this portion of the dissertation, my methodology resumes a more conventional, textually-based approach. It might be argued that because my current project is "presentist" in that it is mainly concerned about currently applicable insights gleaned from Confucianism, historical precision could be of less import than it might be for other projects geared primarily toward exegesis. Since I am primarily interested in Confucianism's insights on ethics and social organization for contemporary use, whether the concept of *li* as coherence first developed in the 5th or 4th century might seem to be of less

consequence than the fact that it exists in the first place. Nevertheless, I have chosen to include much of the scholarship surrounding the historical dating and layering of the texts in question for several reasons. First, I am trying to avoid as much as is possible the reading of neo-Confucian sensibilities into the classical texts. Since I am trying to match concepts with possible pre-conceptual elements of their meaning, and since ritual practice changes from time to time, matching the correct set of conceptual and pre-conceptual meanings together is necessary to obtain an accurate picture of how these dynamics functioned in early China and thus convincingly explain part of the power of the tradition as a whole.

Steven Angle in offers an excellent methodology for bringing Confucianism into dialogue with contemporary thought in his “rooted global philosophy.” Rooted global philosophy attempts to root itself as much as possible in the emic descriptions a tradition provides for itself, all while noting places of openness in the tradition that allows for dialogue with other places and times. Second, in attempt to shed light on contemporary Confucianism, I am examining early Confucianism as the period of Confucianism most structurally similar to post-dynastic Confucianism. Neither pre-Qin Confucianism nor contemporary Confucianism draws upon state authority in the creation of a stable orthodoxy or orthopraxy, and this has critical ramifications on the structure of the Confucian

group. C.K. Yang's (1961) famous classification of Confucianism as a religion diffused into state apparatus is not fitting for either of these periods, and it is my hope that isolating early Confucianism from state-sponsored Confucianism will help to shed new light on challenges faced by contemporary Confucians.

Chapter three serves as an introduction to this dissertation's primary theory of meaning, an exploration of pre-conceptual meaning, and an analysis of the early Confucian awareness of and use of pre-conceptual layers of meaning in Confucian ritual texts. The methodology used here to examine pre-conceptual levels of meaning applies an interpretive lens derived from the contemporary cognitive sciences, particularly those from the embodiment and enactment branches of study. In this I will be loosely following Edward Slingerland's methodology, first developed in his 2008 work, *What Science Offers the Humanities* and further built upon in his award winning article "Metaphor and Meaning in Early China" (2011).¹⁰ This section of the dissertation thus takes an "embodiment methodology" as one of its cornerstones. By this I mean to say that I rely heavily on scholarship that treats the physicality of the body as a significant factor in determining and understanding the character of human experience, cognition,

¹⁰ This article won the *Dao* 2011 Best Annual essay award.

and culture. Because this methodology is relatively new and mildly controversial, I will spend some time both highlighting its advantages for this project and defending it against possible challenges.

This approach has several advantages, not the least of which is the fact that a focus on the body resonates with Confucianism's own native preference for something similar to pre-conceptual meaning as a mode of instruction and learning. This is to say that the process of learning and thus the formation of concepts and ideas for the Confucians is ideally a process they envisioned taking place without the encumbrance of linguistic transmission. This is no doubt in part due to the worry concerning what Eno (1990) terms "sophistic distortion" expressed in Analects 17.17 and 17.18.¹¹ The passage following these two selections is the *locus classicus* for the early Confucian stance against verbal communication:

子曰：「予欲無言。」子貢曰：「子如不言，則小子何述焉？」子曰：「天何言哉？四時行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉？」

The master said, "I wish I no longer needed to speak."

¹¹ Slingerland reads this as a worry concerning a disparity between action and deed, perhaps along the lines of thinking that words are cheap. This is also probably the case, but such a reading only

Zigong said, “If the Master did not speak, then how would little ones like us present what we have learned from you?”

The Master replied, “What does Heaven ever say? Yet the four seasons move with it, and the myriad creatures are born from it. What does heaven ever say?” (17.19)¹²

This passage is often read in conjunction with 2.1, which references ruling according to virtue like the pole star rules the heavens from its central place, and it should also be taken in context with 15.5, in which Shun orders the kingdom by sitting in the ritually correct position. In both cases the presence of virtue (德 *de*) is a key factor, but note also that in both cases, no propositions are exchanged. Rather, understanding and influence are effected in a “student” without the benefit of verbal communication.¹³ In fact, *de* itself is presented in these passages as a form of pre-conceptual, non-propositional influence. In effect both Heaven and Shun are exemplars, and the crux of the exemplar’s role is not discourse, but enactment and exhibition that induces a spontaneous response. While it might be a stretch to attribute the transmission of embodied knowledge to Heaven, this is certainly the case for the Sage kings and the first Zhou rulers.

¹² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

¹³ See also 14.37 for another example of the Confucian preference for not speaking.

These passages along with the weight of ritual cultivation implies that Confucianism is an embodied tradition. Confucianism cannot be fully understood without taking into account the physical nature of ritual cultivation. As noted in the statement of the problem section, focus on conceptual clarity is secondary to the actual practice and embodiment of the ritual tradition, which includes both the appropriate emotions, and more importantly, the actual physical acts. Many commentators have approached this practice from a tacit/embodied skill point of view, comparing it to Aristotelean *praxis* and other skilled behavior.¹⁴ Others have grounded certain Confucian virtues in actions rather than dispositions—for example, it been argued that *yi*, the characteristic often translated as “rightness,” “righteousness,” or “appropriateness,” is better understood as a characteristic of actions that are then ascribed to an actor (Lau

¹⁴ Alasdair McIntyre actually discusses this using the term *practice*: “By a practice I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.” (1997, 182) Here we see many of the same characteristics we will observe of Confucian ritual cultivation, including the fact that ritual is a socially established, cooperative human activity aimed at achieving excellence, and at least by the time of Xunzi, is understood in terms of being oriented toward the fulfillment of needs.

1979, 27).¹⁵ The appropriateness of an act may surely be understood cognitively, but as the sense of rightness or fittingness is first a pre-conceptual, non-sensory experience, only embodied practice can give the whole sense of what is appropriate in a particular situation. This sense of “fitting” is and must be a pre-conceptual sense.¹⁶ My methodology is one contribution to this line of scholarship that focuses on the physical, embodied resources of the tradition. In sum, this methodology has the advantage of taking the body seriously in a way that Confucians themselves would have found in harmony with their own sensibilities.

An embodiment approach also serves as another hermenutical tool that can help to overcome some of the obvious methodological challenges inherent in the process of attempting to study pre-conceptual knowledge in relation to early Confucianism. The most obvious of these problems is a fairly basic one: how can

¹⁵ Hall and Ames (1987, 102-103) worry that this understanding of *yi* implies an objective, immutable, external standard which ought to be universally applied and that it masks the inner dimensions of a person who acts characteristically in such a way. While I share their concern that *yi* also describe an internal aspect of a person’s character, I do consider *yi* to be related to a person’s skill at fitting harmoniously into a particular context. Stated simply, *yi* can be understood as a “sense” of how things, matters, and people within a context (including oneself) best fit together. This is an internal characteristic gained and sharpened by experience. See section 3.4 for a cognitive scientific exploration of *yi* as a non-conceptual sense.

¹⁶ The sense of rightness as a non-sensory experience is discussed in section 3.3.2

a scholar from the post-modern, technology-driven, information age claim to examine embodied, pre-conceptual knowledge in a foreign culture that existed over two thousand years ago? More simply, how does one study the embodied experience of someone from a different place and time? After all, this dissertation seeks, in essence, to get a glimpse at the experiences of the early Chinese, what some might describe as the “insides” of a person, a prospect which is daunting even when examining contemporary people. These difficulties are further compounded by the same methodological challenges that arose in the above chapters: how can one avoid misrepresenting the thought of a people embedded in a radically different cultural setting? How does one avoid reading one’s own assumptions, cultural or otherwise, into the ideas of the early Chinese?

This embodiment approach has been chosen in part by an attempt to responsibly address these concerns, and my broadest answer to these issues lies in the concept of physicality itself and the issue of embodiment. Presumably all humans have a physical body, and thus all humans draw from a mutually analogous structure of experience and cognitive thought. Situating oneself within scholarship that treats the physicality of the body as a significant factor in determining and understanding the character of human experience, cognition,

and culture theoretically allows one to bypass some of the problems associated with studying foreign cultures.

Some, however, might not consider the body to be as useful a hermeneutic as this study claims that it is. Consider the broad range of humanities-based methodological theory that ignores the body in its analysis of philosophy, religion, society, and culture. This is due mainly to the notion that language and culture molds both thought and experience, and thus that culture, not physicality is the bedrock from which experience springs. We can see this clearly when considering some popular methodological approaches to comparative studies.

Many philosophers, anthropologists, and other social scientists assume a *tabula rasa* understanding of the human person. According to this view, humans emerge as a blank slate upon which society and culture leave their mark. As a logical corollary of this, culture and history go “all the way down.” This is to say that social influence is the only significant constituent of personhood and thus serves as the only meaningful determinant of human cognition, meaning, expression, and social organization. This starting point also implies that our access to and understanding of the reality we live in is totally socially constructed and that any attempt to understand the world around us is structured and constricted by the limitations of human fabrications such as

language and other cultural norms. Edward Slingerland, in characterizing this perspective states that as “linguistic-cultural beings ... we have no direct cognitive access to reality, and things in the world are meaningful to us only through the filter of linguistically or culturally mediated preconceptions.” (2008, 15)

If this is the case, then *any* attempt to understand a foreign culture is fraught with interpretive challenges. The significant differences between the realities created by disparate cultural worldviews would not allow for direct translation between them (if we even accept that translation is possible at all). Communication and understanding between two different cultures would then require that anyone engaged in cross-cultural dialogue must engage in the nigh-impossible task of bracketing their native conceptions of the world and only examining foreign cultures by building completely new concepts from the ground up. In other words, for 21st century American scholars to understand early Chinese thought (as I suggest is possible) they would need to situate themselves within the early Chinese context as thoroughly as possible. They would begin by immersing themselves in the most foundational cultural denominator available, then attempt to enter the early Chinese worldview from that cultural gateway.

Within the field of Confucian studies, Roger Ames is one well-known champion of the need to take Chinese thought on its own terms (as opposed to taking it through the lens of western philosophical terms). In his chapter “The Body as Ritual Practice,” Roger Ames articulates this position well.

There is a hermeneutic sensibility required in pursuing an understanding of an alternate cultural tradition. We begin from a first impression—a rather indeterminate feeling about what is culturally “other” which is initially meaningful on the basis of what we perceive to be similarities between our own cultural experience and what we perceive as alien. Along with these perceived similarities, there is generally a welter of seemingly inexplicable and even bizarre cultural elements which, in degree, make the encounter exotic for us. Following Hans-Georg Gadamer, the process of unraveling and understanding the most bizarre cultural elements requires us to return to those features we initially took to be familiar and from which we derived our confidence of at least a limited understanding, and re-assess our initial reading of them. (1993, 149)

Here Ames presents cultural differences as being so strong that even those elements that invite a natural feeling of similarity need to be reassessed. He then goes on to state that because of these differences, “the Chinese perception of physicality can be shown to be so far removed from our own assumptions that an exploration of the differences can be an occasion to appreciate the degree to which the Chinese are a truly *different order of humanity*.” (ibid, emphasis mine.) According to this, nothing—not even our baseline sense of physicality—can be taken for granted as being similar; everything must be re-examined, and the

baseline assumption for all intercultural comparisons is one of radical difference rather than similarity. Studies beginning with characterizations of early Chinese language have also become fairly common over the past several decades of scholarship for similar reasons. Because of its place as a basic unit of culture, language has become one source for linguistic analyses have gained significant support as a valid, responsible methodology.¹⁷ Less extreme versions of a *tabula rasa* formulation might acknowledge a baseline of physical similarities and preferences hardwired into human physicality, but do not acknowledge any meaningful place for them.

The insights of such viewpoints are well taken; I do accept that there is a layer of the human person that is primarily shaped by context and that there are deep mistakes to be made in the dismissal of the depth of these differences. Careful historically and culturally grounded studies keep scholars from the dangers of reductionism and inaccurate comparison. A commitment to protecting spatial, temporal, and cultural diversity and defends the staggering

¹⁷ The mass noun theory, for example, is a well-known case of such a methodology in early Chinese studies (see Hansen 1985). Even though this particular theory was later discredited, the validity of linguistic analysis as a basic method of drawing foundational cultural assumptions from the nature and structure of language has become almost baseline for accepted methodology. For current examples of this method, see Ziporyn 2012 and Ames 2011 for two examples among many.

range of human creativity. Furthermore, historically grounded texts tend to be more interesting in general; being forced to take a text on its own terms opens our world by forcing us to confront that which is truly alien. On the other hand, maintaining a commitment to social constructions as the *sole* locus of human development leads to other theoretical challenges. If we cannot access some realm of truth uninfluenced by particularistic social lenses, as this cluster of theories suggests is the case, then comparative scholarship of any kind, not to mention cross-cultural dialogue would be impossible.

Edward Slingerland has covered much of this ground in his 2008 work, *What Science Can Offer the Humanities*. Slingerland specifically pushes back against what he sees as the core of "postmodern relativism." Under the rubric of postmodern relativism, Slingerland (perhaps controversially) includes theories such as post-structuralism, social constructivism (the SSSM methodology), philosophical hermutics, and neo-pragmatism, all of which assume a *tabula rasa* human nature. (2008, 15). Though his formulation of the problem is primarily oriented toward the obliteration of mind-body dualism, objectivism, and representationalism, his comments on the limitations of postmodern relativism follow the same outlines of this discussion, and his criticisms of these theories are points that I have taken to heart.

In their place, Slingerland suggests a methodological stance known as “vertical integration” or “consilience.” This stance attempts to use the insights of the natural sciences to shed light on the humanities. In this case, Slingerland uses the findings of cognitive science to craft what he hopes will be a universal foundation for meaning. The theoretical advantage of such an approach is that it at least partially helps to bypass some of the issues of the inaccessibility of foreign cultures by grounding the issue of interpretation in the biologically wired structures of human cognition that have been observed and tested in the field of neuroscience.

Slingerland thus claims that the human body-mind is able to serve as a “universal decoding key,” one that allows us to bypass many of the uncertainties inherent in social constructivist, post-structuralist, and other *tabula rasa*-based theories. In his words,

even when confronted by the most alien of cultural practices or artifacts, our own body-minds can serve as a universal decoding key. The tools provided by cognitive linguistics for uncovering and tracing the embodied origins of the products of the human mind across cultures and across time allow us, then, a clear way out of the postmodern prisonhouse of language without committing us to a rightly discredited form of Enlightenment realism. (2008, 218)

Slingerland claims that cognitive science provides a layer of physically-based cognition which can serve as a Rosetta Stone, able to translate the entirety of

human thought into a language that can be understood under the rubric of basic cognitive structures rooted in the motor and perceptual apparatus of the human body.

Slingerland stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from those he labels “postmodernists;” he almost completely downplays the importance of cultural difference. Interpreting the findings of the cognitive scientists that he cites, Slingerland claims that cultural differences constitute “a rather thin and malleable wafer riding on a deep, massive, and mostly invariant set of cognitive universals.” (2008a, 212)

Like Nathaniel Barrett in his review (2010) of Slingerland, I believe that Slingerland has presented insufficient proof of such a radical claim. Though the studies he presents are compelling in terms of showing the importance of embodiment in determining cognitive structures, he makes little allotment for the ways in which philosophers like Bourdieu (1977) and others discuss the concept of the “socially informed body.”¹⁸ In light of the work of these scholars, I would suggest that the “thickness” of culture versus the “thinness” of embodied

¹⁸ See also Michael Foucault’s “Body/Power” (1980); Comaroff’s *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (1985), Bourdieu’s (1977) “Outline of a theory of Practice,” Marcell Mauss’s (1973) “Techniques of the Body,” and Roy Rappaport’s (1967) *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* for ways in which culture alters bodily experience.

cognition remains an open question. I thus do not follow Slingerland all the way to his claim that embodiment can serve as a “universal decoding key” for all possible ideas and concepts. Nor do I follow his recommendation that humanists must accept the empirical validity of “physicalism” or the nature and necessity of explanatory reduction as starting points for such an interdisciplinary approach. Neither of these seem to me to be appropriate conclusions to draw from the evidence as presented. What Slingerland and the scientists he cites do prove, however, is that there *is* actually a layer of meaning that is shaped by the physical structures of the human brain and is cross-culturally accessible, and that this is one possible interpretive tool.

This, of course, does not mean that propositional, conceptual knowledge or the social norms that result from such knowledge will play no part in my discussion of pre-conceptual knowledge; as I and many scholars have noted, bodily experience is often socially informed. The mind affects the body as much as the body affects the mind, and thus the insights of scholars such as J. Z. Smith, Clifford Geertz, Bourdieu, Foucault, Gadamer, and others that Slingerland criticizes are certainly not to be ignored. I will nevertheless argue that however society might valence a particular idea, there remains a core structure of human

cognition that assembles the basic building block of a concept upon which social conditioning can then act.

I thus again hope to walk a middle ground between these two general methodologies (consilience and Slingerland's postmodernist relativism) by understanding meaning and concepts as being filtered through multiple lenses before they reach the state in which we access them.¹⁹ On one hand, I follow Slingerland and much of the cognitive science community in holding that there is a significant part of human cognition that is largely shaped by our physicality and that this layer of physicality is largely universal to *homo sapiens*. On the other hand, I will claim that cultural differences loom larger than what is presented in Slingerland's "thin wafer" representation of culture, largely because language and culture do, in fact, create differences in the construction of meaning. A theoretical acceptance of the Christian Trinity would, in fact, lead me to experience a different reality than one in which time is cyclical and karma determines rebirth or one in which the universe is meaningless and in which we are all mechanically and materially determined. Though I do not have the

¹⁹ Nor do I accept all of the conclusions he draws from those methodological starting points, particularly those regarding the absence of human free will (the absence of a singular "homunculus-like" brain center does not

scientific training necessary to determine where the line between hard-wired cognition and culture actually falls (if such a determination is even possible), the cognitive sciences do seem to demonstrate that there is at least one modality of cognitive meaning construction that remains untouched by social conditioning, and this modality is what I draw upon to examine pre-conceptual meaning in early Confucian ritual.

What then constitutes the heart of an embodiment methodology beyond a partial reliance on cognitive science data? Embodiment has come to mean a number of things over the last few decades of scholarship and takes on different valences when being examined from pragmatist, phenomenological, cognitive scientific and Confucian angles. For the sake of clarity, I outline here some of the basic propositions of embodiment as I have chosen to circumscribe it. Though this is not a comprehensive treatment of the entire subject of embodiment, several of the basic premises that inform my own methods are as follows:

- 1) **The body is a basis for the structure and functioning of the mind.** In more general terms, this implies that aspects of the body and mind are not independent entities. Rather, the body and mind are two parts of the same

whole, and influencing one has effects on the other.²⁰ This includes the obvious issue of psychosomatic effects, but also implies the opposite: that the body has a deep part of forming basic modes of the mind's ways of learning and forming thoughts. Again, this also implies that cognitive capacities share structural similarities regardless of culture. In regard to this work, this premise is the most significant of those listed here and will thus be explained and explored in much greater detail in chapter 3.

- 2) **Rationality and Emotion are primarily non-dual.** Though both of these capacities can certainly function in isolation from each other, this work takes their cohesive functioning to be the natural and fullest form of their

²⁰ One premise that I do not mention here will be conspicuous in its absence: I do not discuss the non-duality of mind and body here for a few reasons. The main reason for this is that though Slingerland and many of the cognitive philosophers whom I will later cite believe that mind and body cannot be non-dual, they use this premise to make a number of ontological claims. For example, they present consciousness as illusory (which is still a hotly debated issue in cognitive science. See David Chalmers on the "hard problem," the issue of explaining why and how we feel consciousness, rather than being materialistically identical automatons which experience nothing.) More pressingly, free will and individual agency seem to necessitate the ontological separation of at least some functions of the mind from body. Since the material world is determined in cause and effect, if the mind were to arise purely from physical sources without a metaphysical agent intervening, there would be no such thing as free will—only the illusion of it.

Simply because this discussion lies outside the scope of this study, I will note that there are generally two ways of understanding the non-duality of the mind and body—ontologically and functionally. This study assumes only the functional unity of mind and body, a position which does not require the reduction of the totality of the human mind to physical processes.

use. Several case studies in neuroscience have been made that demonstrate that rational thinking alone cannot serve as an appropriate guide for even ordinary choices without access to the emotive, evaluative aspect of ourselves.²¹

3) **Cognition is primarily oriented toward the modification of behavior.**

Though this may not initially appear to be related to embodiment, it speaks to the character of the mind as being oriented toward the preservation and flourishing of the person as a whole, and this means, first and foremost, modulating behavior so that the person remains in a positive relationship to his or her environment. As people, our bodies are our primary means of being in and interacting with our environment; thus, cognition is very often primarily oriented toward the care of our physicality, moving on to higher level needs only after basic physical safety is taken care of.²²

²¹ See in particular Pfister, H.R., & Böhm, G. (2008) and Damasio's theory of semantic markers (see section 3.3.1) who examine the critical role of emotion in valuation, and thus in decision making.

²² Note the similarity here to Dewey's pragmatism, with which cognitive philosophy often finds itself aligned.

Those familiar with cognitive science will note that these particular premises come from one particular cluster of neuro-scientific theory, what is colloquially known as the 4E cluster: embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended cognition. Since the concept of extended cognition is still exceedingly controversial, I will be drawing primarily from the first three of these linked views of human cognition for my neuro-cognitive sources. These schools of cognitive science developed over the last few decades in opposition to the tradition “representational” view of cognition, which held that the mind is primarily a data processing center that forms representations of external reality within the mind and is possibly controlled by a single neurological center. Lakoff and Johnson’s landmark book *Metaphors We Live By* is probably the earliest study well-known to the humanities in this neuro-scientific cluster and has been used in a number of other studies on early Chinese analogies.²³

As mentioned earlier, part of the understanding of embodiment is the idea that the motor and perceptual apparatus of the body contribute to pre-

²³ See Allen (1997) and Slingerland (2003) for two of the earlier applications of Lakoff and Johnson’s work to Chinese studies.

conceptual meaning. Pre-conceptual meaning then serves as a building block for conceptual meaning. Thus for the bulk of chapter 3, I will be studying the Confucian ritual manuals to examine the way that pre-conceptual bonding can be derived from early Chinese ritual motion. Given that pre-conceptual knowledge is built from physical action, a study of ritual movement (within the context of ideal practice) could give us a clue as to what some of the pre-conceptual meaning built within the frame of Confucian ritual might have been like. I then analyze how pre-conceptual meaning contributes to Confucian cultivation.

In chapter four, I turn to ritual theory in general and to interaction ritual theory in particular to continue my exploration of pre-conceptual modes of group formation. Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual (IR) serves as the first step in moving toward a concerted understanding of not only how pre-conceptual aspects of ritual help cultivation, but how they help group formation. IR studies how shared physicality, interactions, and expectations amplify mood and shift mood into a shared, intersubjective space. After the description of IR, I examine how IR may be applicable to concrete Confucian rituals and the problem of the ethical treatment of strangers. As I will show, the solidarity built in the process of

interaction ritual alone is directionless and needs a frame in order to make it both moral and goal-directed.

Chapter five addresses this issue. First, I demonstrate possible weaknesses in the solidarity of propositionally-based groups. As I note, the further abstracted we become from the embodied foundations of meaning, the less is communicated through the language and other generalizable forms of knowledge. After this, I examine how focusing on a local frame while bracketing out broader, more comprehensive frameworks of ultimate meaning allows goal directed groups to form through a particular form of shared action, called “flow action” after Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of *flow*. I also show how flow resonates and echoes Confucian ritual in a way that the insights of one are applicable to the other. By the end of chapter five, I will have painted an entire picture of group formation through pre-conceptual activity and applied it to the Confucian program of ritual practice to demonstrate how strangers are made part of the Confucian community despite the fact that they may not have shared relationship or proposition.²⁴

²⁴Though Csikszentmihalyi himself does not link the flow phenomenon to ritual practice, several aspects of the framework are required to access flow echo ritual frameworks. William Hardy McNeill bridges this gap a little more closely in his documentation of a similar phenomenon among those who practice military marching drills. He specifically links what he

The final chapter of this dissertation draws the insights of the dissertation together into a comprehensive whole. This chapter is largely a synthetic chapter, combining the insights of ritual theory, cognitive science and Confucianism itself. I will explore the hypothesis that the Confucian ritual tradition harnesses experiential empathy through ritually created frameworks in its attempt to organize and harmoniously order society as a whole.²⁵ Confucian ritual requires mastery of ritual culture; practitioners of Confucian ritual thus share what I will term “dispositional frameworks.” In other words, Confucianism attempts to universalize or generalize a dynamic dependency on embodied physicality and action in order to create empathy. Empathy arising from Confucian ritual thus engages meaning first on the embodied level before it proceeds to and combines with emic forms of conceptual and propositional meaning (as found in the

refers to as “muscular bonding” to religious rituals in his book *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human Ceremony*. Here he notes that “specifically religious manifestations of such bonding became an important way of creating emotionally vibrant primary groups within which human lives found meaning and direction.” (5) Note that McNeill places the creation of the group through action prior to its sharing of propositional meaning.

²⁵ Confucian ritual stands as the final move in a progression that I began to outline in footnotes 12 and 19. In Csikszentmihalyi’s flow, empathy is completely dependent on intimate familiarity with the activity, environment, and the others in the participating group. McNeill’s “muscular bonding” requires intimate familiarity with the particular drill practiced at the time, but not with the participants themselves. Confucian ritual, particularly in the Mencian line of ritual theory, removes the required contextual familiarity by one more level to a familiarity with ritual tendencies rather than specific ritual practices.

Confucian canon). Together, these chapters will reveal the means by which Confucianism both manages communal relations and relations beyond the immediate community.

Chapter 1: The Confucian In-Group

君子敬而無失，與人恭而有禮。四海之內，皆兄弟也。君子何患乎無兄弟也？

The worthy man is reverent and without transgression, respectful and decorous with people. All within the four seas are his brothers. How could a worthy man be worried about being without brothers? – *Analects* 12.5

This chapter concerns the idea of a Confucian in-group and how such a group might be drawn. If we are to discuss how classical Confucianism seems to treat strangers, we must first determine whom to label as strangers and whom not to. In classical Confucianism, making this determination is more complicated than it might seem, in large part because of preferred Confucian strategies for dealing with ambiguity and the resultant groups and categories with hazy boundaries. In this chapter, I will explore the reasons for this complexity and suggest some possible solutions to the issues raised by this question.

One avenue to determining who might have been part of the Confucian “in-group” is to examine shared identity. To claim an identity is to posit a

boundary and mark the inside of that boundary as different from the outside.

From a personal standpoint it means that the blackness on the inside of one's eyelids (or personal sphere of influence, or other posited personal boundary) is somehow qualitatively different from the blackness outside of them, and this difference is what makes a person who he or she is rather than someone or something else. Group identities have classically been thought to function similarly. Part of what defines a community is a shared identity – the sense that the communal “we” shares something that differentiates it from others.

According to this view, without clear knowledge of that characteristic that makes the “us” different from the “not-us,” the concept of group identity becomes meaningless.

The first section of this chapter argues from a sociological angle that though there was such a thing as a Confucian *group*, “Confucian” as a shared moral *identity* did not actually develop until very late in the classical period, when we see the larger category of people dedicated to classical learning, the 儒 *ru*, begin to become contiguous with the Confucian identity.²⁶ This analysis will

²⁶ As Czikszenmihalyi and Nylan (2003, 65) note, there was for quite some time a linguistic distinction between Confucius' own followers and those who were inheritors of his thought from later figures: “surely it is significant that in the early sources phrases like “Kongshi zhi menren” 孔氏之門人, literally “those who (learned) at the gate of the Kong,” referred only to

lead us to the observation that shared propositional knowledge is only a partially sufficient way of characterizing the Confucian group in its pre-imperial form.

The second section of this chapter offers an alternative way of understanding the Confucian group based on the prototype theory of categorization, personal connections, and embodied solidarity.

1.1. Identity as Membership in a Moral Community

In this discussion I treat identity as a core, constitutive aspect of a person.

This is to say that identity is not incidental; a person cannot discard part of his or her identity without becoming someone or something else entirely. I do not

mean to imply that identities describe essential characteristics, nor do I mean to posit some metaphysical soul that serves as the core of who we “really are.” I do mean to specify, however, that the characteristics that make up our identities are

formative in some way. This is one of the main reasons I begin this chapter with

Emile Durkheim’s analysis of community and the identity that arises from it.

Durkheim recognizes that society is not just a collection of individuals; society forms and conforms individuals to its structure and values.

the immediate circle of Confucius's disciples alive in his time; [and] that the term *zhu Ru* 諸儒 (“various Ru”) was used in contradistinction to Confucius's “disciples” (*dizi* 弟子) in the first biography of Confucius (in the *Shiji*.)” (Czikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003, 65)

There are, of course, other constitutive sources of identity. Family identity, however defined, is a powerful source of identity, as are other formative associations, beliefs, and activities. We can also understand roles as being formative aspects our identity and personhood. When speaking of group identity, however, I would suggest that sociology is the correct place to begin, because it covers the majority of the cases listed above, with the notable exception of family. There is no isolated point from which each individual begins life and from which he or she is able to rationally select associations, values, beliefs, or activities. Nor do we usually create these from nothing. Many, if not most of our formative characteristics are given either by our birth society or by other groups with which we have contact.

Durkheim argues that one of the primary commonalities that binds a community together and gives it its identity is a shared orientation toward the sacred. We can observe this most clearly in Durkheim's definition of religion: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things — that is to say, things set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."

(1965/1915) Though many would argue that Durkheim collapses religion down to society, I would argue the opposite: that Durkheim's understanding of society

is inherently a religious one. Durkheim sees societies as primarily moral communities arising from shared orientations toward a sacred, the ground of that society's meaning, value, and order.

Here Durkheim uses the term "sacred" as a term representing ultimate values that stand beyond the bounds of negotiation and thus serve as the foundation that allows society to exist. It is the non-negotiability of the sacred that elevates society and its norms above the fungible, economic requirements of its component individuals. Because of this, society cannot be explained by simple recourse to the sum of the individual persons that make it up. Rather, the society (and the sacred behind it) is something that *allows* the self to arise in the first place by providing the moral schema enabling a person to move from an economic to a moral schema.

Charles Taylor's work demonstrates this nicely. Taylor suggests that selves linked to our ability to evaluate our choices (what he calls strong evaluation) connects boundaries of self with the values that that self holds. Taylor's *Sources of Self* discusses the formation of the self in moral terms (1989, 24-28). Taylor makes the point that our selves arise in part from our value orientations and that who we are depends largely on where we face in our orientation toward the Good. To value a particular good is to allow that good,

whether local or ultimate, to determine the direction of the path we travel and the means by which we traverse it, thus shaping who we are. In his words

The goods which command our awe must also function in some sense as standards for us. ... My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. ... To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about ... what has meaning and importance for you, and what is trivial and secondary. (1989; 21, 27-28)

He concludes, "To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand." (1989,

27) In other words, Taylor states that we understand who we are by placing ourselves in a particular moral geography, what he calls a "framework."

Frameworks are thus matrices of significance and meaning that provide us with the value standards through which we understand ourselves, our actions, our goals, and the world with which we interact. More specifically, these frameworks of value and meaning allow for the evaluation and ranking of our desires, inclinations, and choices.

This understanding of self is contrasted by an understanding of self based upon desires and inclinations alone. What Taylor asserts is that true selfhood begins not with the specific desires or preferences that people are born with, but with the ability to determine the relative value of those desires, a process he terms "strong evaluation." He contrasts someone who evaluates desires in this

way with the “simple weigher of alternatives.” Though the latter is capable of choosing between alternatives, he or she would be incapable of understanding the choice except as a function the volume of pleasure attained. Thus the “simple weigher” would be able to engage in the delay of gratification but would only frame the choice in terms of greater pleasure gained by it. The strong evaluator on the other hand is able to give a *qualitative* evaluation of his acts, choosing which pleasures are more or less worthy by framing those acts inside a vision of a worthy life. To give a Confucian example, even though a person cultivating himself may enjoy sex or beauty more than virtue, a person would still be able to choose virtue over sex or beauty because of his evaluation of their comparative worth. The strong evaluator is thus able to choose the *type* of person he will become according to a set of values, where the simple weigher is limited to the pursuit of the strongest pleasure as understood unreflectively. Strong evaluators thus truly have a sense of “self,” a guiding, evaluative force that stands over the impulses of their desires and proclivities. This choice is product and expression of his or her moral orientation. To put a social scientific vocabulary to this distinction, we might draw an analogy between the simple weigher as someone operating in the field of pure economics and the strong evaluator as someone occupying the field of morals. Where the former judges primarily on the basis of

material cost-benefit calculations, the other brings qualitative, non-economic considerations to evaluate the desirability of those same cost-benefit calculations.²⁷

The sacred that informs the Durkheimian moral self might be embodied in a being or object such as a sacred animal, God, thunderstorm or the like, or represented in an ideal such as equality, as could be argued was the case in ideal communist societies. Regardless of the form it takes, as the ultimate value, it governs social organization both in attractive and restrictive terms. Durkheim focuses on the restrictive when he speaks of the sacred as “set apart and forbidden.” As that which is most valued, the sacred is considered inviolable. It is thus protected against violation by the strictest and most immutable of taboos. These taboos serve in turn as the foundation for a society’s laws, including laws governing economic exchange. This sacred is the source of Durkheim’s concept of the “pre-contractual,” or those principles that frame and limit the valid scope

²⁷ By making this distinction I do not intend to posit an ontological divide between these two methods of evaluation; like Taylor I merely point to the fact that there is a qualitative difference between someone who makes decisions based on a hierarchy of values and those who operate only under a rubric of pleasure.

of contracts.²⁸ The sacred as an encapsulation of value may also determine the aims and direction of a particular society (though this is not always the case).²⁹

The economic, rational choice model is the major sociological model set in contradistinction to Durkheim's moral communities.³⁰ Such a framework suggests that society is better explained by viewing it as a voluntary association of individuals existing for the sake of mutual benefit. The players in such a model are thus primarily motivated by profit as opposed to schemas of moral worth, and movements of society can thus be understood best through the lens of rational calculation, in which there are measurable means of determining the probability of one outcome over another. Note that in such a schema, society implies no shared morals, and though individuals may adopt them, morals are

²⁸ Child labor laws and Muslim usury prohibitions are two examples of the sacred limiting the free function of the market as a pre-contractual—both represent cases in which individual utility maximization is constrained by socially given hierarchies of worth.

²⁹ For a simple example, if God is the sacred for a Christian community, laws against blasphemy might represent the restrictive side of things, while a desire to build the City of God on earth might represent an attractive aim. As it is easier to frame this attractive aspect of social values in terms of Max Weber's discussion of charisma than Durkheim's sacred, social aims will be discussed further below. Nevertheless, here we can note that a society's eschatological impulse is often a manifestation of the most powerful attractions of a social sacred and its character is determined by the nature of that sacred. If equality is sacred to communists, then the New Communist Man and the New Order will be characterized by perfect equality.

³⁰ When I refer to economics, I am, of course, not referring merely to the drive to obtain pecuniary resources; personal power, influence, emotional resources and other such benefits also fall within this purview.

not inherent in group. The voluntary association requires only an aggregate of economically driven simple weighers, and such an association is maintained only insofar as it remains beneficial for each individual involved.³¹ Though we might call a voluntary association of individuals existing for the sake of mutual benefit a group, it is a very different sort of group than a moral community. Such association is merely a form of mutual egotism, and such a group does not form its members. Against the purely economic reading of society, Durkheim's writing argues powerfully that true society is determined by a shared orientation toward the sacred, which elevates members of a society above a collection of ego-driven evaluators into a group with a single, collective identity.

These economic model and the moral community are, of course, theoretical pure types. In reality, both moral and economic dynamics flow and pull at people within the same society. This is why the rules and norms of society are determined by the common Good and protect the sacred from being violated (the sacred is "set apart and forbidden"). This in turn helps to maintain society

³¹ Durkheim himself alludes to this in his model of organic solidarity, in which a society stays together not out of the shared values that give rise to mechanical solidarity and the moral community, but from economic need resulting from the division of labor. Just as a heart or an arm are not self-sufficient and need the other parts of the body to function, so too members of society stay together because they are unable to support themselves independently. Association thus becomes a function of economics rather than values.

by preventing economic pressures from destroying the sacred and thus collapsing the very foundations upon which society is built.³² In sum, this theory presents the group as defined by a sacred, non-negotiable core of values, the support of which gives rise to authority and agency, both construed morally. This core further gives identity to the individuals shaped by it; thus even strangers within such a society can recognize each other as being part of a single

³² We can, perhaps, use the instance of marriage as a helpful, small-scale example of how economic factors and moral factors play out within a single group. On one hand, marriage can be understood economically, as the association of two people for the purposes of mutual benefit, whether those benefits be financial, emotional, reproductive, or otherwise described. A marriage pursued purely economically would thus be pursued only insofar as the association is optimally beneficial; if one party begins to see that their interests (however defined) would be best served by a dissolution of that association, a divorce takes place and the marriage “fails” as it were. I qualify the word *fails* because, under a purely economic rubric, the marriage actually continues to further its intended purpose (personal benefit) *by its dissolution*. It succeeds in its purposes by ending at that point. On the other hand, we can describe a purely morally based marriage, in which a new society (family) is formed on the basis of shared values and in which personal benefit plays no part. In this model, the bride and groom would come to be true selves by internalizing the values upon which their marriage had been founded (fidelity, perhaps) and placing those values above simple economics. In the process, they gain a new identity, as members of the Trustworth family, perhaps (which, of course is defined by its loyalty). Subsequently, the most important aim of the Trustworth family would be to protect, foster, and embody the fidelity upon which their family is founded and which gives them their selves and thus their identity, regardless of how personally satisfying the experience. To be unfaithful, then, would be to tear the entire social fabric by violating the sacred upon which it is founded. In order to maintain its integrity as a whole, the Trustworth family would either have to maintain its old boundaries and sanction—probably eject—the offending member (“No Trustworth can be unfaithful! You are unfaithful and therefore are no longer a Trustworth!”) or change values completely (“The Trustworth family will now be known as the Faithlacks!”), giving them an entirely new identity in the process.

moral community and thus subject to whatever norms and obligations arise from that core.

The extent to which a person is driven by moral concerns over economic concerns thus indicates both how morally formed a person is and to what extent his or her own identity is a social identity rather than an economic one. The more internalized the group's values and norms, the more a person's identity hinges upon social and moral grounds. Adam Seligman elaborates on these lines:

To steal [a] candy bar would make me a thief, a particular type of person that I do not wish to be. Were I, in fact, a thief, I could no longer remain who I am. Thus, the very essence of self, that me which touches on that which we conceive as the most personal, turns out to be the most social. What, after all, is more collective than the prohibition of theft, which in our [Abrahamic] tradition goes back to the Decalogue if not before?

From the candy bar theft example we learn that there seems a strong relation between what makes a self and what makes moral authority. That aspect of my very personhood that is violated when I become a thief (but not a plumber, a mountain-climber, a philatelist, or speaker of Hungarian) is defined by overwhelmingly social or collective criteria... (2000, 37)

The desire to not be a thief depicted here is not one born of coercion or fear of consequence, but one embedded in a social, moral understanding of what kinds of lives are worthy and what kinds of lives are not, and what values are worth pursuing. This gives us a socially informed vision of the self that is constituted by connections and obligations, and one that is violated by the abrogation of

social laws and regulations. In other words, self comes to be not in the expression of individuality and difference, but in the owning, the *inhabiting* of the social morals, duties, and obligations that passed onto him. In this process, social duties become *desirable* even as they remain obligatory. Such a person becomes more fully himself by growing into something *more* than him or herself; the person and will become embodiments and extensions of the roles (and thus the greater social structure) that he or she adopts. In so doing, he or she pursues that ultimate value to which that person binds him or herself.³³ This is why Seligman further writes that

To give free rein to desire is to lose the self—that same self who is realized in the (internal) subjection (as opposed to external coercion) of will. The very violation that sullies the self, for which it feels shame, of course, is a violation of the moral authority of the community. (Seligman 2000, 38)

³³ Note that when I discuss the internalization of values, I do not mean to imply that there is a rational choice process of valuation occurring as might be the case with the Kantian autonomous self. Rather, I simply point to a process similar to a “coming of age,” in which one engages in the process of moving from self-centered values to social values. The biblical passage John 21:18 does a decent job of pointing in this direction: “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” (RSV) From a Confucian point of view (and that of most religious traditions), allowing morals to determine your actions is just the beginning of self-cultivation; the rest is learning to love what needs to be done.

This mode of understanding selfhood and identity ascribes a whole set of attendant meanings to legitimacy, authority, and ultimately, as we will see, agency. When we, as members of society, internalize social norms, we accept them as extensions of the sacred, the Good. Thus, as our values match those of the society that instated them, we acknowledge the legitimacy of the laws that protect those values and the authority that enforces those laws. Legitimacy, after all, arises from the public acceptance of a particular power. In this model, this acceptance is grounded in the recognition that a particular power represents or embodies the values and the Good that stand at the heart of community. Without the communal referent that stands behind legitimacy, the exercise of power is merely domination, the coercion that one individual or group exercises over others. With legitimacy, the exercise of power is elevated to an exercise of authority—legitimate power to which all within that community subject themselves. This willing subjection is a result of accepting the values embedded in social norms (Seligman 2000, 4).

To return to Seligman's example above, if stealing is acknowledged to be bad by a society, then the laws and regulations prohibiting theft would be considered legitimate, and citizens of that society would accept the exercise of power to prevent theft as a legitimate use of power—this would be an exercise of

authority. Even the thief himself, assuming he is a proper member of society (i.e. someone that accepts its norms) would recognize on some level the rightness of theft prevention. Regardless of what circumstances that led to the breaking of that norm, should he acknowledge it as a legitimate prohibition, he would acknowledge the fairness of the employment of force to prevent his theft and the principle of subsequent punishment as a reflection of preventative force.

Authority thus depends on legitimacy, which is in turn founded on the communal acceptance of community values. The self that arises as constituted by a sacred authority is thus both intrinsically moral (as opposed to economic) and intrinsically social. Seligman's claim reveals that if we wish to understand how to understand the links between people in society, especially those links that are not *explicitly* governed by roles and their expectations, we need to understand the authority that binds them, thus turning a simple collection of personal orientations into a communal sacred.

This brings us to the concept of agency. While contemporary scholarship broadly defines agency as the ability to effect non-trivial change, the understanding of agency I present here is slightly different in that it is conceptually differentiated from the exercise of power *simpliciter*. While power is necessary to effect change of any sort, agency as Seligman understands it is

inextricably linked to the idea of authority. As we have seen, a person becoming a strong evaluator signals the development of a moral self over and above the economic self, and the concept of the sacred (as shorthand for a shared social Good) signals the rise of social organization whose enforcement climbs above coercion to authority and legitimate rule. Agency thus differentiates itself from power through its connection to authority, and thus to social norms.

When the amoral economic evaluator effects change, he or she exercises his or her own power in order to maximize gains. There is no appeal to a greater Good or a hierarchy of worth; rather, there is only the exercise of power for an increase in profit. In contrast, an agent, in its original usage, was one who executed the will of a particular authority such as a king or a deity. The power they exercised was not their own, individual power; rather, their power was derived from the authority which they served. Thus while the ability to effect change is still a part of agency, it also involves social values. Agency was thus originally understood as being moral, legitimate power, fundamentally tied to

the values of the group rather than to the individual himself. In short, this model of agency is the power to effect moral, social change.³⁴

Those sociologically inclined will note that this understanding of agency allows us to slip from a purely Durkheimian depiction of society into a hybrid involving not only the sacred, but a concept of meaning akin to that which Max Weber invokes in his discussion of charisma. Simplified for brevity, Weber's studies of charisma suggest that societies hold values at their core which include

³⁴ We can consider two different moral valences within the feminist movement for an example of this distinction. Feminists in general are linked by their efforts to improve the situation of women in society. This, however, can be framed either morally or economically, and I would suggest that this is one possible source of public confusion concerning the identity of the feminist movement. Feminists who seek to improve the lot of women simply from the vantage of collective profit exercise their power on the purely economic plane. There is certainly nothing wrong with this; all sorts of groups form for economic benefit. There is, however, also nothing to distinguish a lobby of this kind of feminism from an electronics lobby or a parasailing lobby. All three are groups are simply out to maximize their gains. As other groups (e.g. electronics engineers, parasailers, or, as historically been the case, men) jockey for the same positions or resources, these groups are naturally set against each other. This type of economic action is thus competitive at best and divisive at worst. Given this study's definition of agency, the victory of purely economic feminists would not be considered an exercise of agency as defined here so much as the effective application of power.

This type of feminism is distinct from a feminism grounded in the moral principle of gender equality, which theoretically gains its power not from the personal status or abilities of the feminists involved, but from a society which supports such a good as equality. In this case, by eliminating inequality, feminists would be protecting the society (by protecting the goods mandated by its sacred), and their actions to regain equality would therefore be an exercise of legitimate power (i.e. authority). If successful (remember that agency also requires the ability to effect change), it would thus qualify as an exercise of agency. Note that far from being divisive, feminism under these terms *strengthens* the fabric of society by strengthening the sacred upon which it is built. In so doing, it unites its women with others in that society who share in those communal values—engineers, parasailers, and men alike.

an understanding of a perfect, utopian, Good order. A charismatic call, then, is a call to change society to match with this charismatic order, whether that implies living up to a particular social vision, as was the case with the American Civil Rights movement, or changing to another order completely, as we saw with the Chinese revolution of 1911. A concept of agency as defined above thus not only represents the attempt to protect and defend a good social order, but the ability to transform current society into something closer to an ideal. Agency linked to charisma thus also carries with it the concepts of center and periphery forwarded by Edward Shils (1975). The strength of charismatic agency relies on how closely the agent stands to those values most sacred, most central to a society. Agents by definition act on the moral, social plane; centrality indicates how important a particular value is for the society in question or how closely a person embodies those values.

Thus developed, these three identity-determining concepts—group, authority, and agency—are of a piece and cannot exist without each other, and all three are circumscribed by the concept of the sacred. On one hand, group acceptance of the sacred gives rise to both our concepts of agency and authority. On the other hand, authority and agency are the dynamics that keep the sacred inviolable and thus keep the power of economics from overwhelming and

destroying the core of society. Socially constituted selves thus arise clearly bounded by a moral orientation that simultaneously serves as group identity. The agency of the socially constituted self stems not from one's own capabilities or status but from how well one's attempt to effect change aligns with the protection or enhancement of the sacred. This is true whether the action simply stops a thief or begins a civil rights movement.

1.1.1 Confucian Community?

Many of the aspects of the relationship between group and identity formation enumerated above lend themselves well to application to classical Confucianism. Mark Czikszenmihalyi's (2001, 267-268) analysis of the *Analects*, for example, shows that the early Confucian teacher disciple relationship may have included a ritual exchange of meat gifts that doubled as an ad-hoc reciprocal "economy" both for the sake of group differentiation and for the sake of value differentiation. As meat in context derived its value primarily from its sacrificial use, creating an economy of meat conveyed a dual message concerning the value of ritual practice and the eschewing of other more conventional values. If Czikszenmihalyi's hypothesis is correct, then we can see the nascent buds of a moral community here. Ritual would literally serve as a precontractual in

determining how exchanges take place and what exchanges are permitted: Confucius accepted students who brought gifts of meat (7.7), would not bow when receiving expensive non-meat gifts (10.23), and actively discouraged inappropriate gifts that were detrimental to the practice of ritual (18:4). As we will see, ritual is Confucius' chosen mode of living the Way, which could theoretically serve as a manifestation of a sacred toward which Confucians orient themselves.

The remainder of the *Analects* paints a fairly straightforward picture of how value, authority, agency, and thus how group dynamics play out. As the locus of value, the Way is a ground for authority, and grants agency (again, understood in terms of legitimate power) in the form of *de*, most often translated as "Virtue," "power" or "moral charisma." *De* results from yielding to the *dao*. Herbert Fingarette writes about this as he discusses characteristics of the *junzi*, the worthy Confucian.³⁵

³⁵ The term *junzi* has been translated many ways, each with its own merits and drawbacks. I have chosen to translate this term in manner keyed to this present study. The translation "worthy Confucian" recalls the ideas of worth, the term Taylor uses in conjunction with strong evaluation. This translation thus implies a person who embodies the Confucian evaluation of what is "worthy." This translation works particularly well when placed in opposition to the *xiao ren* or "petty person," who is consistently portrayed as being primarily concerned with personal benefit or profit to the exclusion of morality. Other translations have their benefits as well. "Gentleman" has the merits of implying "gentility" and "nobility," with the

I say that the *junzi*'s will does not impose itself, because I mean to emphasize that *de*, the particular power of the *dao*, is not itself willpower. The will is bent towards *li* and *ren* ... and this means that the *junzi* intends no one to respond to him by virtue of his affirming his personal will as such. ...The *junzi* accomplishes by yielding (*rang*)—he yields his will to the *dao*...; as Confucius tells us, the *junzi* gives no orders. (Fingarette 2003, 291)

In this there is a fairly clear depiction of how Confucian agency in the *Analects* works, and thus from whence Confucian authority springs. The *li* and *ren* that Fingarette references here are two cardinal Confucian concepts. *Li* are the rituals and social norms into which Confucian values are written, and *ren* is the primary Confucian virtue. Much more will be said about these two terms later; what I hope to suggest now is that in saying that the will is bent toward *li* and *ren*, Fingarette is in effect stating that the worthy Confucian (the *junzi*) focuses upon internalizing the social norms and dispositions that carry the Dao as ultimate value. Once this happens the gentleman gains the power, and thus the agency, of

concomitant sense of being part of the ruling class. By charging this term with a moral valance, Confucius forges a link between morality and rulership, making “gentleman” a fair choice. “Gentleman” is unfortunately gender specific in a way that does not seem to be merited. Ames and Rosemont’s “authoritative person” (2008) highlights the way in which the actions of Confucian exemplars often become norms for later people, while their translation of the term as “exemplary person” (1999) highlights the influential visibility and excellence of the *junzi* .

the Dao, which in turn allows him to affect change that brings the Dao more presently into the world.³⁶

The *Analects* also gives us brief a glimpse into a world in which the Way prevails through his comment on the sage king Shun in 15.5. The sage-kings were legendary figures that exercised a utopian rule at the beginning of history; Confucius' invocation of Shun thus signifies his read on characteristics of a perfect social order: "Shun may be counted among those who governed without conscious effort. What was it that he did? He reverently took his [ritual] place facing south, and that is all."³⁷ This passage is generally read as a passage concerning both ritual efficacy and as an endorsement of rule by ritual practice. Here, Shun signals the start of ritual activity by taking his ritually appointed place at the head of the kingdom, and the world ordered itself by following ritual impeccably.

These passages give a fairly transparent picture of authority, community, and the Way as portrayed in the *Analects*. The Way as ultimate value is

³⁶ *De* is in some senses a naturalized reification of the concept of agency described in the theoretical section above. *De* is seen as an actual type of power, similar to a physical wind, except that it operates on the moral plane. If agency is seen as the exercise of legitimate power to transform the world, *de* collapses all of those concepts into a single, natural force.

³⁷子曰：「無為而治者，其舜也與？夫何為哉，恭己正南面而已矣。」

instantiated through *ren* and *li*. Practitioners of the Way can thus be recognized as those who are dedicated to virtue and ritual over and above wealth, status, or other personal benefit. Those who have managed to embody the Way gain not just moral authority but actual charismatic agency from the Way in the power of *de*. Thus far, the vision espoused by Confucius conforms to our sociologically grounded expectations for a moral community.

Had Confucius appointed a clear authority tasked with teaching and passing down the “true” Way, Confucianism likely would have continued to conform to the given model. This was not the case, and what we see over the next few centuries in the development of Confucian thought is a disagreement about almost every sociologically significant, identity determining factor that was discussed above. In short, the development of the Confucian Way is neither unified nor mutually agreeable. In line with this view, Czikszenmihalyi and Nylan (2003, 59) argue concisely that the tendency to understand the development of Confucianism in terms of textually-oriented lineages was largely the result of editorial exercise in the Han.

One major obstacle to understanding the early history of China is the still-prevalent notion that discrete schools of thought contended in the Warring States and Han periods A majority [of historians] ... continue to treat the terms "Ru" and "Dao" as direct and unproblematic references to two scholastic "isms," Confucianism and Daoism, and to ignore

discrepancies among the rhetorical constructions in the early sources. ... if extant materials are any guide to that distant past, the impulse to assign early beliefs to academic "schools" predicated on text-based traditions corresponds more closely with the genealogizing tendencies of the Eastern Han and post-Han periods than with early Han realities.

If there were no discrete, text-based schools in either the early Han or classical China, then the content of the Way ascribed to Confucius would be relatively unconstrained. As many contemporary academics can attest, discrete schools of thought oriented toward the transmission of a particular message can protect the integrity of that message rather fiercely against unintended interpretations, and often generate an orthodoxy or orthopraxy of their own. The Odes themselves celebrate this:

Very hard have we striven
That the rites might be without mistake.
The skillful recitant conveys the message,
Goes and gives it to the pious son (Mao 209)³⁸

Without an organized institution passing along the teachings, Confucius' own particular interpretation of the Way as recorded in the *Analects* and possibly a number of other books was developed in a broad number of ways.

Even if the Way is present in the patterns of nature, as suggested in portions of the *Liji*, it still requires human interpretation and translation into

³⁸ Waley translation (1996, 195).

models for human behavior.³⁹ Other Confucians such as Xunzi locate the standards of the Way specifically in the deliberative action of the human *xin*, the organ of thought that includes both the cogitative functions of the mind and the emotional capacities of the heart. For Xunzi, this heart/mind is responsible for determining the best way to bring the Way into the world and in so doing creates a uniquely human way (70/19/1-3).

This open nature of the Way is what I am calling value ambiguity in early Confucian thought. This ambiguity is characterized, however, not by an ambiguity as to what those values are (what the Confucians seem to value seems fairly standard across the centuries) but by a shifting hierarchy of values between different Confucian writers. While all Confucians see themselves as defenders and proponents of the Way, not all Confucians seem to commit to a primary value as the standard for ethical decision making, and this variability is exacerbated even further across writers in different contexts.

Because of this, the accord between classical Durkheimian theory and Confucianism we have built thus far tends to break apart when we attempt to

³⁹ See 劉殿爵, 陳方正 (1992), 禮記逐字索引 *Liji Zhuzi Suoyin*, (hereafter “*Liji*”) “*Liyun*” 9.24-25, for example.

include the remaining representatives of those we currently call Confucian. A study of both the overall corpus of Confucian texts and the contents of those texts also reveals a decided emphasis on contextualism over systemic unity. Though it is certainly the case that the overall discussion flows around the same basic concepts and stories, it is not the case that each of these concepts plays the same role or takes the same position of importance. Concerning the overall textual tradition, Chenyang Li notes that of the Song Dynasty's recognized Confucian *Thirteen Classics*, only two of the thirteen, the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, focused primarily on *ren*; others, such as the *Book of Changes*, *Book of Songs*, and *Book of History* focused more upon the concept of harmony, while yet others focus mostly upon *li* as ritual or ritual propriety (2013, 19). If we return other major classical texts such as the *Xunzi* to the list of major Confucian works, we have an even wider variety of focal concerns represented. Thus if we concern ourselves with the resources of the entire Confucian textual corpus rather than focus on those which have received the most philosophical attention thus far, our scope of Confucian concerns broadens greatly, and it becomes far more difficult to pinpoint one primary, overarching standard, concern, or end that unifies the all of these lineages.

E. Bruce Brooks and A. Takeo Brooks (1998) and Michael Nylan (2001) also make the argument that Confucian authors tend to frame the Confucian Way in response to the challenges presented by detractors in their particular time. Faced with the challenge of the Mohists and early Naturalists (such as the early Daoists), the Zi-Meng lineage attempted to ground the Confucian ritual way in the natural order itself.⁴⁰ Xunzi on the other hand, faced with more developed arguments from Zhuangzi and other later naturalists, attempted to separate morality from the natural way and place it within the realm of human artifice, thus completely altering the way the Way is framed within the cosmos. Given this scholarship, it stands to reason that what the Confucian authors sought to defend was not a particular cosmology or a particular set of objective truths about the world, but a particular Way. To build from Hall and Ames's (1987, 17) distinction between "truth-seeking" concerns and "way-seeking," the Confucians were interested in defending the Confucian Way of life—that is, the practices generative of flourishing and harmony—rather than the supporting cosmology or other supporting frameworks of speculative meaning.

⁴⁰ Lau, D.C. 劉殿爵, and Fong Ching Chen 陳方正, ed. 1992. *Liji zhuzi suoyin* 禮記逐字索引 (henceforth "*Liji*") "Li Yun" chapter, section 4.

Further compounding the complexity of this issue is the fact that the contents of the Confucian texts themselves tend to favor the promotion of particular outcomes or actions for their particular contexts over the depiction of a consistent system. Mencius 7B24, for instance, suggests that even though the exercise of the virtues within relationships is to some extent “mandated” (命 *ming*) by our natures (what we might translate as “hardwired”), because there is an element of human nature to their exercise, it is perhaps better not to see them as “mandated,” presumably because such a view might seemingly diminish the need to exert moral effort.

Because of these changes, the most famous later expositors of the Confucian tradition disagree widely on just about every concrete descriptor of the Way that is generally considered sociologically significant. Lee Yearly brings this into stark relief in his “two strands” classification of Confucianism, the Mencius strand and the Xunzi strand. In his words:

The difference between the two strands can be stated in terms of the cosmogonies that underlie them, the role past sages play in them, and the distinctive moral emphases they produce. In the Mencius strand, Heaven gives each person a nature, and therefore anyone can become a sage, a fully flourishing, benevolent person. In the Xunzi strand, past sages best understood Heaven’s plans and provided highly differentiated social forms that need to be followed if humans are to be perfected. In the former the sages are the grammarians of human nature; in the latter they are legislators to human beings. In the former virtues like benevolence

and righteousness are highlighted. In the latter virtues like ritual (*li*) and loyalty are highlighted. (2008, 141)

While Mencius and Xunzi clearly have similar goals and a similar endpoint, Yearly's commentary underscores differences between Mencius and Xunzi in the realms of cosmos, authority, and priority of certain standards above others. Bracketing issues of cosmology for now, we are left with significant differences in the social location of authority and in priority of value.

Now a pan-Confucian "sacred" in the Durkheimian sense, as something beyond the realm of negotiation is much harder to pin down. The sacred remains the Way, but the content of the Way is different from a sociological standpoint and makes the premise of a consistent, formative group identity less tenable. For the Mencian lineage, heaven and the Way, both moral standards are internal. 7B32 states that the teachings of the gentleman come from nowhere except his own bosom, and yet the Way can be found there. 7A4 famously creates the continuity between Heaven and Man. These passages together arguably makes Mencian thought autonomous, as played out fully, Mencius' thought collapses the distinction between heaven and the human (天人合一 *tian ren he yi*), functionally granting each individual the ability to make moral distinctions through their own judgment. Mencians, like Kantians, carry the ability to discern

right from wrong within themselves, practically giving them a high level of moral autonomy. At the same time, Mencius would assume that all people properly discerning Heaven's impulses within themselves will naturally harmonize, like variations on a musical theme, thus grounding all of this interpretation in invariant, sacred values. In the Mencian strain, then, we find a sacred that is invariant and accessed autonomously.

In Xunzi's thought, however, we find the inverse — something that approximates what we might call a heteronomy of tradition. Xunzi sees human morality as forming a triad with Heaven and Earth. The Way, therefore, is actually guided by the need to harmonize with the natural cosmos, but in a manner that only scaffolds the broadest of requirements. Man brings to completion what Heaven creates and Earth sustains, thus providing a rationale for why the sage kings formulated ritual to begin with beyond simple utilitarian species interest. In this triadic system, humans order the raw, naturally chaotic world within themselves, between themselves, and in the greater world, thus allowing everything to flourish and bring themselves to completion. Flourishing

is thus part of the cosmic human *telos*.⁴¹ The means by which all of this is accomplished, however, is not given—heaven does not speak and is not a standard for morality. Ritual and the standards for right and wrong are the result of human artifice. This means that the Way is artificially created and thus open to a number of possible alternative formulations.⁴² Because of this, it is possible

⁴¹ The understanding of *telos* I support here is a light one. When applied to ethical theory, it follows Rawls' 1971 usage of the term "teleological" to describe ethical theories in which "the good is defined independently from the right, and the right is defined as that which maximizes the good." (Rawls 1971, 24, 30) When I refer to *telos* in regard to *Xunzi*, then, it follows the pattern of being goal directed in attempting to maximize the good. In this it is similar to what Kwong Loi Shun calls the normative dimension of *ming*, which is bestowed by heaven and is roughly equivalent to a duty (qtd in Slingerland 1996, 567). In Mencius 7A3 we see this when he says, "Dying after exhausting one's way [dao], this is proper *ming*. Dying in shackles—this is not proper *ming*."

⁴² There is some debate concerning whether or not Xunzi's philosophy allows or does not allow for multiple formulations of the Way. In Paul Goldin's view, there is only one Way, formulated by the sage kings because they identified the natural, essential human distinction-making capacity. The sage kings saw this and created their rituals as an augmentation of this natural, essential tendency. Goldin thus further claims that this alignment with the natural also brings ritual into alignment with Heaven the given set of rituals is the *only possible* set of rituals Xunzi's sage kings could have produced. "There is no other Way, and no other constellation of rituals that conform to the Way... For the rituals have a *double* function: they facilitate peaceful society by establishing conventions of interaction; and they ensure at the same time that these conventions are appropriate to the human condition—and to the Way." (1999, 73) Goldin further cites Ivanhoe's "A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought" for support.

This view clashes with that of those scholars who view Xunzi's philosophy as a deliberate break from naturalism. Franklin Perkins, Robert Eno, and Michael Nylan all support some form of this thesis, in which morality is a transcendence of and conscious break from amoral chaos inherent in Heaven and raw human nature. Ziporyn's coherence-based understanding of Xunzi's philosophy, in which multiple possible Ways can cohere valuably while still being grounded in natural human needs, also seems to carry this thesis in the background. Though these scholars do not make uniform claims about the reason why Xunzi thought the sage kings chose these rituals (or ritual at all) as their organizing principle, all of them see ritual as being far more arbitrary than Goldin's view would allow.

these rituals could be reformulated or the system as a whole swapped for a different one should a sage deem it necessary. Sages exhibiting the clarity of charismatic force necessary to make such a sweeping change have not appeared since the legendary founding of the Zhou (or, barring that since the three sage kings themselves), however, so the received forms and rituals are, for all practical purposes, beyond contestation or adjustment. Practically speaking, Xunzi's Confucianism should be considered heteronomous, grounded on the traditional conventions passed down by the sage kings. Theoretically, however, the existence of valid alternative ways of fulfilling the human *telos* would allow a true sage—one that had sufficient charismatic power—to alter the system wholesale, possibly giving new definitions of the permissible and impermissible so long as the new system also leads to unimpeded human flourishing. Because

My own view, discussed above, lies between these two points. I respectfully disagree with Goldin's claim that ritual is the only possible way that the human distinction-making process could be included without falling back onto the laws and contracts he criticizes—simple normative, non-ritualized roles articulating the expected division of labor can also foster the same sense of familiarity and confidence while according with distinction-making. Nevertheless, I also disagree with the claim that Xunzi sees ritual as breaking completely from the natural world as some of these scholars suggest. This is primarily because the impetus for ritual lies anchored in human satisfaction and flourishing. Because of this, it cannot be divorced from natural human needs. Confirming the fact that rituals are artificial does not mean that they are arbitrary.

of this, Xunzi's moral order is not quite beyond the realm of negotiation—ethics are a matter of tradition and practical functionality.⁴³

Thus in sociological terms, the Confucian Way, that which we have been calling the essence of the Confucian tradition, functions as sacred for both scholars, but the ability to wield the Way's authority proceeds through two different channels. For Mencius it proceeds through human nature, theoretically imbuing all humans with authority. For Xunzi, only those of sagely capacity have access to the authority of the way. The difference here is similar in type to the issues of authority in Christianity between Catholicism and some Protestant denominations, with charismatic authority limited to clergy and sages for Xunzi and Catholics, and with authority theoretically accessible to all humans for Mencius and Protestants.

This parallel with Christianity continues to serve well if we consider the history of relations between Protestantism and Catholicism beginning post-reformation and continuing into American history. While the umbrella term

⁴³ Tradition is also one of the primordial sources of the sacred, but Xunzi's version of the Way is slightly different because its formulation is specifically grounded in a consequential outcome. Where traditional sacralty is beyond negotiation primarily because of the incommensurable value of participation in the ways of those who came before, Xunzi's Way is open about the focus of the sage kings on a particular outcome: harmony and flourishing. It therefore lacks the same sacral dynamic as this primordial sacred.

“Christianity” covers Catholics and the Protestant denominations, relations between these two groups has been marred by war, segregation, and mutual discrimination. Is this then, the single moral community Durkheim envisions? I would argue that this is not the case. Similarly, followers of Xunzi and Mencius are both Confucian, but their understanding of the Way cannot form a single moral community and the types of communities they each generate are also incompatible with each other. As discussed above, an autonomous, internal source of morality and a heteronomous source grounded in tradition produce vastly different moral communities. Focusing only on that which both scholars share—a dedication to harmony and flourishing in the shape of Confucian virtues—gives a false positive in terms of possibilities for typical Durkheimian mechanical solidarity, something Xunzi himself confirms in his exclusion of Mencius from the true line of transmission from the sage kings through Confucius to himself.

However, despite the authority granted by the clear, individual excellence of these scholars, the authority that arises from their mastery of the tradition and the power of their thought does not rise to the level of authority over the tradition as a whole. Even the most seminal figures of the classical tradition did not themselves enjoy authoritative control over the tradition as a whole. Even

the *Analects* of Confucius did not gain canonical status until roughly the 7th century C.E. (Wilson 2002, 21-25). While this has the striking advantage of allowing Confucianism to be an extraordinarily fluid and inclusive system which can foreground particular ideas or thinkers as key in some contexts and relegate them to the background in others, it also makes the tradition difficult to define as a whole either in terms of external borders or shared identity.⁴⁴ And while the creation of a unified Confucianism was most likely not the goal of these classical scholars, their efforts do highlight the overall dynamics of the Confucian tradition shorn of the circumscribing authority of the state. As these scholars added their voices to the pool of Confucian thought, their efforts created smaller sub-divisions within Confucian thought rather than unifying the overall tradition.

Lest I seem to be overstating my case, I should note that there is constancy in the Way as understood by the Confucian scholars for whom we still have extant materials. Two specific values remain unchanged. The first is harmony,

⁴⁴ This inclusivity has even led some scholars to deny that any one characteristic need be exhibited for inclusion into the Confucian community. For example, Tu Weiming et al. make a claim that “there are no specific attributes one must manifest in order to be considered Confucian, nor is being Confucian limited to a particular region, group, or political or social organization” (Tu et al. 1992, 5). In this description, Tu et al. effectively opens the boundaries of the Confucian tradition to everyone who wishes to be associated.

with its attendant characteristics of relationality, order, and resonance. What is sought here is not the so-called “harmony” of forced submission, but the genuine rapport between people at ease.⁴⁵ The second is virtue, with its accompanying concepts of general excellence and flourishing as well as the specific values embedded in each of the individual Confucian virtues. The Way also gives a very broad aim to its followers: simply to magnify the presence of the Way in the world by promoting and embodying the values it represents. Or, to use language more amenable to early Chinese metaphors, Confucian aim is to bring about the free flow of the Way. This metaphor has the advantage of fitting with the Chinese analogies of blockage (*sai* 塞) and flow (*tong* 通) as well.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ This formulation thus requires more than the simple imposition of rules and obligations upon an individual by state or society; it implies the mutual responsiveness of both individual and society to the valid requirements of each. There is, of course, a balance of give-and-take involved in this process, but the Way implies that there is a proper, fulfilling way to balance both individual and social needs.

⁴⁶ Note that this broad aim could be understood under multiple rubrics. Van Norden, for example, sees a *telos* ascribed to Confucians (2007). I would again assert that his understanding is understandable under the rubric of promoting the Way. Brook Ziporyn (2012) on the other hand seems to understand the Way largely as a coherence or set of mutually cohering coherences recognized, selected, and valued by a particular sage. This Way naturally attracts people to it and divides the world in such a way that it can bring about “maximal coherences with maximal human value.” (220) In this case, the goals given by the Way align with the values recognized and foregrounded by that particular sage and the Way that he proposes, but should not be confused with a *telos*.

Moreover, Confucian identity does eventually come to the fore as a topic of debate. In his translation of Xunzi's work, Eric Hutton suggests that the *Xunzi* is one of the first times the word *ru* is used to refer to the Confucian school as a whole (2014, 46 f.). At the same time, if we analyze Xunzi's own distinct criticism of each of the different *ru* lineages at the end of the "Against the Twelve Masters" chapter, he seems to see them as Ways distinct from his own, even though they are linked through a common progenitor. Given that Xunzi was the last of the classical Confucian authors and perhaps the clearest systemetizers of the period, it would be surprising if greater cohesiveness were to be found in the work of scholars preceding him.

All of this is to say that many, if not all of the elements usually gestured toward in the recognition of the Confucian tradition have been highly flexible and contextually dependent throughout its history, texts and major scholars inclusive. Even within the elect circle of Xunzi, Mencius, and Confucius himself, three scholars who are now nearly universally recognized as being the core scholars of classical Confucianism, there was an attempt to include some and exclude others from the true, authentic lineage. Xunzi authors his own version of a "*daotong*," removing the Zisi-Mencius lineage from the authentic line of transmission and tracing his own credentials back to the sage kings through

Confucius. In studying these dynamics, we thus begin to find that Confucian sociality unaided by state institutions looks more and more like the small, individually defined circles described by King rather than an emergent Durkheimian moral community.

Given the above analysis, it would be difficult to make the claim that there was a unified Confucian identity based upon shared propositional constructions of the Way. If we continue to follow Taylor's model for the morally generated self, we will begin to find that a self oriented toward the values of the Way also takes on much of the ambiguity that the "Confucian" Way itself holds. While the Confucian self is unequivocally a moral self, which values the varied Confucian exemplars considered primary at what time seems largely dependent upon context. This itself creates an ambiguity of identity. Just as a river may be slow moving and majestic in one region or narrow and swift running in another, so too the way the Confucian person is described changes, being more or less individualistic, more or less concerned with roles or virtue, heteronomously or autonomously constituted, all depending on context. Though the overall destination of the river and the Way remain unchanged, the character of the path changes according to local, contextual factors. These changes are likely most

pronounced between different Confucian scholars facing different sets of circumstances in different times.

Regardless, this ambiguity further indicates that while Confucians share an end goal distinctive to the Confucian tradition, each particular Confucian will arrive at his or her own hierarchy of values. We can subsequently draw the conclusion that differing hierarchies of value will result in completely different senses of self. While one Confucian may prioritize the values of self-cultivation and virtue and thus engage harmoniously with others for the sake of developing virtue, another might be most concerned with caring relationships, and thus develop virtue for the sake of being more able to develop thicker, more fruitfully connective relationships. Note that while both selves are recognizably Confucian selves, the former ultimately values primarily self-cultivation (in tandem with others), while the latter roots itself in relational action as the prime value.

At the beginning of this chapter, I denied the existence of a pan-Confucian identity based upon Confucian teachings, but I affirmed the existence of a Confucian group. How, then, are we to understand the concept of the Confucian group? Thus far, we have seen that though Confucian scholars share a moral orientation toward a single sacred, their interpretations of that sacred do not allow them to benefit from the solidarity of a unitary moral community. The next

section discusses in what way we should understand them as being part of the same group at all, and proceeds to analyze the Confucian in-group.

1.2 Prototype Grouping

To say that something or someone belongs in a particular group is to say that he, she, or it belongs with certain other things or people for some reason. Sometimes, groupings form arbitrarily and the reason that things are in a group is nothing more than the whims of fate or the bounds of probability.⁴⁷ Most of the time, however, we tend to see other reasons behind groupings. Classical western philosophy and folk psychology have both tended to assume that similarity is the primary basis of the process of categorization. As George Lakoff (1987) and many before him have argued, however, this is only one small part of what actually goes on when we group things.

The title of Lakoff's book *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* is case in point. Lakoff writes that many people encountering the title of his book tend to immediately infer that these three things are grouped on the basis of commonalities, when in actuality, the Australian aboriginal category from which

⁴⁷ Here we can think the often arbitrary formation of classroom groups.

his title is drawn is more accurately described as a combination of a basic prototype and objects related to that prototype through associative chains. The category in question, *balan*, actually holds a number of other things as well: water, lightning, the sun, the hairy mary grub, and many others. This category is understood by its speakers to have human women as its main category prototype, but other things are included in the category by affiliative chains. The sun, for example, is understood to be the moon's wife and is therefore included with the category associated with prototypical wives. Associations chain out from there: things affiliated with the sun like sunburn are included, as is the hairy mary grub, whose sting feels like sunburn and is therefore linked through a long chain to human females (Dixon 1982). At this point we have neither commonality nor prototype as the overarching determinant of this category.

In 1953, Wittgenstein was the first major figure to challenge the premise that categories are defined by common properties in his famous theory of family resemblances. Since then, a chain of cognitive anthropologists has continued to offer alternatives, qualifications, and additions to the idea of commonality as the categorization offering and elaborating on what has been named prototype theory (1953). Under prototype theory, commonality grouping is only one specialized case in a wide range of categorization methods promoted by human

cognition. At least in the west (and likely in many other places), however, the tendency to classify primarily according to commonality is fairly pervasive, rooted as it is in two thousand years of western philosophical tradition and the cultural conditioning that arises from it.⁴⁸ Because of this, we see the tendency to characterize groups primarily in terms of commonalities. The consideration of Confucianism is no exception.

Academic understandings of the Confucian group tend to default to the identification of commonalities as well. Consider the following phrase: “the Confucian school was characterized by its strong ethical sense, its social responsibility, and its constructive, rational approach to man’s immediate problems.” (Mote 1971, 35) One possible way in which this phrase can be read is that all members of the Confucian school will commonly share these attributes; those with these attributes are candidates, those without are not. Argumentation against this reading would then take the form of disputing whether or not all

⁴⁸ This plays out even in such things as common education. Take the Sesame Street educational program, for example, and its song “Which of these things is not like the other?” which presents a number of objects, all except one of which share a particular commonality. Though my own experience is personal rather than researched on this point, growing up in the US, I do not recall exposed to a selection of objects in which the grouping offered was based around a project or need (hammer, nails, and wood, for example), and the odd factor out was something that was irrelevant to the task at hand. It is likely that I was, in fact, exposed to such an exercise, but at a rate much lower than the Sesame Street example above.

Confucians really do share a desire for social responsibility or a rational approach to man's problems, and an opposing case point would show that this was not the case for so-and-so, thus seeking to change the parameters by which we understand this.

This reading tends to be widely prevalent in the way that the question of Confucian identity presents itself today. Take Xinzhong Yao's (2001) article, "Who is Confucian today?" He suggests that the three primary methods on which modern Confucian identity are being argued about are as follows:

- (1) Rational intellectuals develop Confucianism in the direction of philosophical and metaphysical discourse and claim that only when engaged extensively in such discourses based on the classics can a person legitimately be recognised as a Confucian.
- (2) Religious groups develop Confucianism in the direction of a religious institution and doctrine and confirm that only those who take part in a Confucian community and honour Confucian founders and shapers should be considered Confucians.
- (3) Ordinary people continue to demonstrate traits of Confucian values and observe part of Confucian moral codes in their daily life. Keen observers and researchers in Confucian Studies have conscientiously explored the implicit dimensions of Confucian identity and argue that those who bear Confucian values are Confucians. (313-314)

According to this account, those aspiring to be contemporary Confucians, high intellectuals included, often rely on commonality based readings of Confucian grouping. This is, however, precisely the type of grouping I suggest we should avoid over the course of the next chapter and when interpreting Confucian

philosophy in general. I would instead offer that rather than defaulting to commonality as the reigning modality for understanding the Confucian group (and grouping in general in early Chinese thought), we should instead tap into prototype theory and examine how well or not people fit the central model that represents the group “Confucians.”

The difference here may initially seem subtle but is significant. Groupings governed by commonality are binary on two counts. In such groups, either one possesses the characteristic or one does not; this is a binary membership criterion. It also polarizes how we understand the construction of that group: either all members of the group possess a characteristic or that characteristic is irrelevant to the group’s constitution. In groupings patterned around an idealized model, this binary nature is sometimes the case, but it need not be. Furthermore, prototype grouping does not boil down to listing the characteristics of the prototype and examining how many of those characteristics an object also has. Such a method would be inadequate to account for a number of categories which are not exemplified by ideals with more than one characteristic, such as colors.

To simplify and summarize a wide array of literature, what the cognitive anthropologists found was that cross-culturally, there is a basic level at which

categories tend to be formed. Categorization at this level is determined by a number of experiential factors: gestalt perception, mental imagery, motor activities, social function, and memory (which has to do with exposure to particular instances of a category and the ability to recall them). The theme of all of these determiners of “basic-level” categorization follows along the same lines and is summed up neatly by Lakoff:

Perhaps the best way of thinking about basic-level categories is that they are “human sized.” They depend not on objects themselves, independent of people, but on the way people interact with objects: the way they perceive them, image them, organize information about them, and behave toward them with their bodies. The relevant properties clustering together to define such categories are not inherent to the objects, but are interactional properties, having to do with the way people interact with objects. (Lakoff 1987, 51)

In this scheme, objects are classified in a particular way not because they are the same, but because *we* experience them in a similar way. We can take *motor activities*, or how one interacts physically with a particular category of objects as an easy illustration that will become more important later in this discussion.

According to Roger Brown (1965, 318), one reason we tend to group certain things together is because we have particular, distinctive physical actions that we perform while interacting with them, and that often the distinctive action can represent the category as a whole. Flowers are to be sniffed, cats to be lightly petted at a particular height, chairs to be sat in in a particular way. All of the

listed base-level category determiners function in this way, just in different forms of interaction.

In addition, Eleanor Rosch (1973) has found that there are certain members of these basic-level categories tended to have “better or best” example status: robins are seen as better representatives of the *bird* category than penguins, desk chairs as better representatives of *chair* than beanbag chairs or rockers, and so on. The most representative members tend to be those which best fit the cluster of interactional properties that gave rise to the category. Chairs, for example, are categorized with reference to a particular sitting motion. Beanbag chairs are less central members of the *chair* category in part because they involve slightly different interactive motions. This is not to say that beanbag chairs are less members of the *chair* group because they are less central members—they remain full members of the group regardless. This prototype theory allows grouping with both hazy boundaries and a recognizable center.

This particular nuance is key to our discussion, because it allows us to introduce the concept of “distance” into our conceptions of grouping in a way that commonality groupings do not. In other words, how well a person matches a particular relational prototype can help to determine the moral weight one ought to place upon that relationship. This is one way to deal with Ambrose

King's assertion that Confucianism sees all relationships as understood through the metaphor of the family. Even if all younger men are to be understood as younger brothers, we can assign moral weight to those that best fit the overarching prototype of "younger brother" (perhaps "brothers" who share biological and ethical ties) standing at the heart of the circle, and unknown strangers at the other. We will develop this more below.

What the above depiction of brotherhood would require, however, is that family members be understood as more than merely those who share one's own blood. Prototype categorization allows this again in a way that commonality-based grouping cannot account for. Prototypes allow for what Lakoff calls "radial structures." Broadly speaking a radial structure is "one where there is a central case and conventionalized variations on it which cannot be predicted by general rules." (1989, 84) Lakoff discusses radial prototype category structures, couched with the examples of the category *mother* thusly:

The category *mother* ..., is structured radially with respect to a number of its subcategories: there is a *central* subcategory, defined by a cluster of converging cognitive models (the birth model, the nurturance model, etc.); in addition, there are *noncentral extensions* which are not specialized instances of the central subcategory, but rather are variants of it (*adoptive mother, birth mother, foster mother, surrogate mother*). These variants are not generated from the central model by general rules; instead, they are extended by convention and must be learned. ... The central model determines the possibilities for extensions, together with the possible relations between the central model and the extension models. We will

describe the extensions of a central model as being *motivated* by the central model plus certain general principles of extension. (1987, 91; italics original)

What this explanation points out is that when we think about mothers, we do not think of one particular standard model, we think of a convergence of several different cognitive models on a single point—in western countries, this tends to be a collection of relationships and roles all lived out by a single person: the woman who gave birth to, lives with, provided the genetic material for, raises, and is legally responsible for children, while being married to and living together with the father of her children. This, however, need not be the case, and that fact need not change what is or is not included in the *mother* category. Moreover, women (and as some argue, men) can still be mothers if they do not fit all aspects of this prototype, but they are usually considered variants. Adoptive mothers, step mothers, foster mothers, natural mothers (women who gave their children up for adoption) and others have all been included in the prototype category “mother” by English-speaking cultures. Note that who is included in this category varies according to culture. Nursemaids, for example, are not included in the English categorization for “mother” where the modern Chinese equivalent, 保姆 *baomu*, is considered a type of *mu*, the Chinese equivalent for *mother*. In radial structures there are no ready rules for who or what is or is not included —

the *balan* category described above is also structured radially and the things that are included are present almost entirely by social convention.

According to prototype thinking, then, we can list the characteristics of the Confucian school, not because all Confucians need to share these characteristics but because the prototypical Confucians—and, here we can think of the Confucian sages—are experienced in characteristic ways, and this experience, I will argue, is generated by their particular social functions, the way they are imaged, and the particular brand of charismatic joy that they engender. Further aspects of prototype thinking will be raised when immediately warranted. The following subsection presents brief arguments for why prototype grouping are not only applicable, but should be *preferred* to commonality grouping when examining early Confucian culture.

1.2.1 The Applicability of Prototype Grouping to Chinese Thinking and Confucianism

The cognitive anthropologists, scientists, and philosophers in the field assert that prototype thinking is as cross-cultural and pan-human as the human body is. This also serves as an argument opening for why aspects of prototype

thinking could be applied to classical Confucianism, which is removed from our current context by time, space, and social context.

If prototype thinking is pan-human, though, we should find strong evidence of it in Confucian thought, and indeed we do. In fact, the application of prototype-based grouping to Confucian thinking may not initially seem terribly novel because the major parts of Confucianism lend themselves so well to it. Sages, rituals, virtues, and as will be discussed, coherences (*li* 理), all fundamental aspects of Confucianism, are most naturally thought of as prototypes. Yao, Shun, Yu, Kings Wen and Wu, the Duke of Zhou all serve as contributing “generator” prototypes of the tradition Confucius espoused, with each characterized not by similarity to each other, but by their particular ability to inspire virtue and order in the world – this is to say, sages as described by Confucius himself are characterized partly by their social function and the affective experience they engender, and partly by the members of the “generator group” specified.⁴⁹ We can see this in *Analects* 2.1 where the sage is likened to the pole star, revered by all other stars, and in 12.19, where the worthy man’s (君子 *junzi*) virtue is likened to the wind through the grass. We also see Confucius’

⁴⁹ Generator prototype groups will be discussed in more detail shortly.

students attempting to find prototypes of virtue—cognitive reference points from which the categories of virtuous behavior can be drawn—by asking whether or not certain people can or cannot be considered *ren*, the capstone virtue of Confucian thought.⁵⁰ Following this line, we can also take 5.3 into consideration, in which Confucius asserts that since Zijian is a true gentleman, his home of *Lu* must also have had a true gentleman for him to model his behavior on. The suggestion here is that exemplary behavior must be learned from prototypical behavior, not derived from abstract principles.

Even the concept of a “way” can be understood in terms of prototyping. Imagine for a moment a tennis coach witnessing the excellent, effective, and beautiful exercise of a particular skill in action, in a tennis serve, for example. A she might thereupon exclaim “*That’s the way to do it! That’s the way to serve a ball!*” She knows, of course, that there are many excellent ways of serving a ball, but wants to set that image in her students’ minds as the prototype way of hitting the ball. That image then becomes our cognitive reference point for how to serve a ball, an image we attempt to conform ourselves to in the future. I would argue that the same dynamics are true of the Confucian Way. Confucius

⁵⁰ 5.5, 5.8, 5.19, and 6:30 are all examples of students attempting to find prototypes for *ren*.

highlights the prototype left by the sage kings and exclaims, “*That’s the way to do it! That’s the Way!*”

The consistent reliance on prototypes in Confucianism serves as an argument for the fact that Confucius and his followers were, at least in part, prototype thinkers themselves. And again, this may not seem new. This section on prototypes, however, serves both as a reminder that similarity based thinking, while a strong western *philosophical* default, is not necessarily the most prominent *cognitive* default.

We will also see strong resonances between the prototype thinking described here, and Brook Ziporyn’s explication of 理 *li* as a form of coherence. Ziporyn contends that coherence-based thinking is basic to early Chinese thought and that even before its explicit development in the term *li*, it underwrites many Chinese concepts. My contention here is that coherence-based thinking is an extension of prototype thinking that is culturally specific to the Chinese context.

At the most basic level, Ziporyn describes coherences as intelligible groupings that arise in accord with human values. This is to say that human value determines whether or not a collection of things, events, people, desires, and anything else can be cognized and assembled as a unified whole. Wax, a bit

of string, and a flame all come together as a candle because we as humans value sustainable fire. Without that value, there would be no reason for those things to come together despite their physical properties. Before the desire for scientifically obtained knowledge, a chimpanzee and a book cannot come together (cohere) in our minds as “Experiment 24-A, testing primates and symbolic manipulation,” though it might come together as a joke, or a method of revenge, or something else. Conversely, what we understand collectively as “the Boston bar scene” is cobbled together only because we might desire to find out whether an amenable environment, satisfying beverages, and agreeable company can be located all at once in Boston.

This aspect of *li* seems most similar to a version of categorization Barsalou refers to as “ad hoc” categorization (1985). Ad hoc categorization is similarly value-based because these categories arise around particular goals. Ad hoc categories thus include categories like *things I can use to stay afloat*, *objects used to fasten two pieces of wood together*, and *places to get good beverages*. Some have suggested that prototype categorization and value-based categorization are two different and conflicting types of categorization (Durand and Paolella 2013). Lakoff, however, takes goal-oriented categorizing as a confirmation of his theory.

He does not enumerate exactly how this is the case, so I will do my best to fill in the gap.

What almost all studies have noticed is that goal-based categorization exhibits prototype effects. This is to say that even goal-based categories are graded in terms of representativeness. When we consider the goal-based category “things to burn to keep warm,” people tend to think firewood is more representative of the category than chairs are even though both are flammable (Barsalou 1985). If this is the case, then we can see the dynamics of prototyping functioning to help classify goal-based categories, implying that these types of categorizing are not uninfluenced by each other.

More telling, however, is the fact that base-level categorization can be framed as goal-oriented categories just as easily as they can prototype categories. Consider Lakoff’s suggestion that base-level categories are “human shaped.” We can thus posit the fact that these categories are human shaped for the sake of human purposes, even if those purposes are pre-conceptually given. The base-level category determinants noted before such as gestalt perception and mental imagery often show that humans have embodied and cognitive preferences for how things are perceived. Experiments done by Kay and McDaniel (1978) concerning color categories, for example, show that in humans there are very

small bands of light wavelengths within each color category and that almost everyone cross-culturally uses these bands as cognitive prototypes for their color categories. These colors are sub-consciously selected as “focal colors” because they are the wavelengths that register as “purest” in the brain—only the receptors for that particular color of light register a response. We can thus say that the human body “values” these colors over others in the sense that it privileges these wavelengths; they become the cognitive ideals against which other wavelengths are measured. There is nothing in the physical world that makes the 475 nm wavelength a “better” blue than 455 nm. This is purely the body’s selection. The same dynamics can be said for how some things are perceived to be groups (gestalt perception) without our thinking about it. A triplet of consecutively flashing lights “moving” down an LED display are not grouped because we make a decision to see a grouping but because the body and mind are designed to group them that way.

All of these tendencies rooted in the body and its hardwired cognition tend to be designed for the sake of survival and reproduction. If the body privileges some ways of seeing things over others, there tends to be a survival advantage for such cognitive defaults. The positions of focal colors have the advantage of helping to differentiate different properties of objects, for example.

Read this way, we can say that the body (a constitutive part of who we are) interjects its values into the way we categorize things. This effectively shunts the purpose for these categories to the level of evolutionary survival mechanisms. In other words, base-level categories can actually be understood as goal-oriented categories, with the goals being provided by the body's own default for survival. Prototyping is thus also goal-oriented, or at very least provides a mirror mechanism for future goals. When chairs are categorized, they are categorized in part by the motion we make to interact with that chair. This in turn provides a mental catalogue of things that allow us to make that particular motion in the future.

Coherences are also centric in nature, like prototypes. Any given coherence is understood to be a dyadic balance of the elements that constitute it, and can be represented by a range within which any object, person, or event is intelligible as a whole. This range is governed by a center, that which is both the ideal for that object and the point from which any particular instantiation cannot stray too far and remain itself. Coherences are thus prototypes themselves—the standard to which all instances of a particular thing are held and the point that mediates between the disparate elements. Given this, we can see coherence thinking as an instance of prototyped goal-based categorization.

Before we move on, there is one final point to be made here. Part of the strength of coherence as a concept is that it blurs the boundaries between sameness and difference. This may seem to be a point of difference between coherences and prototypes—prototypes seem to be clear and fixed, while coherences are decidedly not. This is not always the case, however. While some prototypes are clear, fixed, and definite, as is often the case with color, prototypes need not be so. Often, the fixity of a prototype depends on how closely that category sits to basic-level categorization and how singular the central ideal may be. Chairs have a fixed, clear ideal prototype, and this is mainly because our physical bodies have a distinct interest in cataloguing or identifying things that can easily be used as chairs, and because chairs are singular, discrete items. If, however, I call upon the category “natural numbers,” we have a *group* of numbers, generally single digit integers greater than zero, which generate the category and which serve as the prototype standard (Lakoff 1989, 88). In the natural numbers category, the fact that it is a group of instances, each of which is equally valid as a prototype diminishes the fixity and clarity of the prototype. There is also not a particular action (or any specific embodied data) associated with natural numbers. The single digit natural numbers are prototypes because they are more easily experienced than double or triple digit examples, but two is

as much a prototype as is four, or seven. I would suggest the same applies to categories like “Confucian exemplars” which is generated from a number of equally valid examples.⁵¹

Thus far, I have highlighted the resonances between prototype theory and Confucianism. The first section of this chapter showed that the converse argument also holds—that commonality-based attempts to characterize classical Confucianism generally fails at all but the broadest of levels. Given those arguments and the arguments outlined above, I would suggest that prototype theory offers the most reasonable alternative.

1.3 Confucianism Through the Lens of the Prototype Theory of Categorization

Following this, if we begin from prototype theory, a number of questions about Confucianism as a group become immediately easier to grapple with.

Thought of in terms of prototypes, we can say that Confucians are those who use the particular Way highlighted by Confucius and his heroes as their prototype—

⁵¹ We can also note that all but the simplest, most biologically fixed ideal prototypes will vary between people largely due to salience and encounter bias. When I think of the category “tree,” my ideal prototype is the oak in my parents front yard. Tree prototypes for suburban children living in arctic or tropical zones will likely be very different. This also introduces ambiguity into the ideal of any prototype category.

their cognitive reference point and ideal. This vision of “Confucians” has the advantage of allowing a very wide range of people into the group with very little difficulty. Some Confucians may emphasize the aspects of the Confucian way addressing social order while others emphasize and prioritize the development of virtue. Both are equally Confucian under this rubric. It also unites beginners and sages; discussions concerning the level of moral development Confucians must have attained to be counted Confucian (ritual fluency, for example, or as is often stipulated, a commitment to the Way) no longer need stipulate an arbitrary, minimum level of development.⁵² Even a reprehensible human being who, for the first time, thinks that Confucius might have gotten it right without even committing to following the Way could theoretically be considered Confucian, albeit as an exceedingly poor representative of the tradition as a whole and one

⁵² We might be tempted to draw the line at those the master chose not to teach (7.8), but this would prevent us from being able to definitively judge anyone living after Confucius himself. Would Mencius have passed Confucius’ mark? Would Xunzi or Wang Yangming? Perhaps, but perhaps not. When we consider the tradition as a whole, this standard is an impractical one to impose. We might also remark that even the strongest disapproval that Confucius expresses, that Zai Yu is unteachable (5.10), does not seem to result in Zai Yu’s ejection from the community. Confucius does disavow association with Ran Qiu (Zi You) (11.17) for behaving improperly in a government position. Given that Ran Qiu was responsible in part for Confucius’ return to Lu, and that he and Zai Yu are both currently enshrined in the Confucian temple as “wise disciples” we should perhaps take 11.17 as a qualified disavowal, perhaps for effect, or perhaps as an outburst.

who fits the prototype not at all. Prototypes do not prevent us from drawing boundaries, but they do allow us to be about as inclusive as we like.

The prototype view thus allows a wide variety of Confucian foci and allows us to unite a number of different views of the Confucianism. This aligns well with current scholarship on the tradition — Xinzhong Yao, for example, considers Confucianism to be a family (*jia*) of people playing roles, a form of learning (*xue*), an ethical system, an official orthodoxy, and a religious tradition all at once. At the same time, such a broad brush does not make much of a statement about the nature of Confucianism as a corporate identity, nor does it necessarily help those who are Confucian to form bonds of empathy or solidarity with each other.

Nevertheless, I see this as being entirely appropriate for the classical period, because it allows us to consider the development and emergence of the tradition naturally, without requiring an artificial standard of similarity. Given that no word for “Confucianism” existed to differentiate proponents of Confucius’ Way from the greater category of *ru*, it is unlikely that the early disciples of Confucius adopted “Confucian” as an explicit identity-bearing category. *Ru* likely remained the primary identity-bearing category under which they held themselves, with Confucius’ teachings highlighting the prototype

exemplars they saw themselves as following.⁵³ The fact that the term *ru* later comes to be associated with what we now call Confucianism may simply point to the fact that Confucius' disciples were successful enough that the experiential cases of *ru* generating the cognitive prototype for the term all included people that followed Confucius.⁵⁴

Regardless of its later development, the fact that *ru* remains the categorical identity of the first few generations of the *ru* who learned from Confucius makes it difficult say anything definitively characteristic about Confucianism *as a factor*

⁵³ Prototype thinking is often structured metonymically, with one instance or subcategory standing in for the whole. The name “Confucianism” here is case in point—it was formulated by the Jesuits because Confucius was the paradigmatic teacher representative of the tradition when they encountered it. As has been pointed out many times before, the group name “Confucianism” for the early tradition only fits with difficulty when we view it against the background of its Chinese language referents, adherence to the teachings of Confucius, or any other commonality-based way of organizing the tradition around the figure of Confucius. If we follow this naming schema, it perhaps makes more sense to call the earliest Confucian disciples (and Confucius himself) “Duke of Zhou-ists” or “sage king-ists.” We do, however, see Confucius set apart as a primary paragon of the tradition in many of the early texts we properly read as Confucian—the Mencius, Xunzi, and *Liji* foremost among them.⁵³ If we classify Confucianism as a prototype group, it then makes perfect sense to call these texts and the bodies of students that arise around their authors “Confucian” despite the fact that there were a great number of differences that separate these schools and the fact that the general tradition within which Confucius saw himself ante-dates him by several hundred years.

⁵⁴ This is different from the way Confucius' own teachings prompt a prototype shift in the conception of the 君子 *junzi* from a member of the ruling, blooded aristocracy to that of the “worthy man” who rules through ethical behavior. While Confucius changes the term by intentionally keying it to a different prototype, I am suggesting that the term *ru* changed not because someone intentionally tried to change the term, but because followers of Confucius became the only type of *ru* worth mentioning. Given that this change begins to take place in the Xunzi, we can assume that the shift in meaning was not a Han dynasty fiat (though this association was undoubtedly cemented in the Han).

in identity in its first generation disciples without reading in future trajectories. Though a commonly shared identity may have existed, it is just as likely to have been defined by bonds of concrete relationship as pinned to any particular intellectual, philosophical, religious, textual, or even prototype-based stance. For the first while, particularly before the *Analects* were standardized, there were likely aspects of both. Confucius disavowal of Ran Qiu in 11.17 likely gives us reason to think that there were indeed lines being drawn in terms of what was appropriate to disciples of the Master and what was not, but it is unlikely that anything approaching consensus on this point was made concrete.

For this reason, I tend to disagree with scholars who essentialize specific aspects of the tradition. Needham, for example, considers the ethics of the system to be of foremost importance: "Confucianism... was essentially a system of ethics." (1970, 24-25) This view prioritizes conceptual knowledge as formative of group association to the detriment of concrete bonds of association for the first few generations of disciples. My above analysis inclines me toward views similar to those espoused by Eno and Nylan over those like Needham's: Eno sees the early Confucians as being composed of study groups primarily concerned with moral self-improvement (1990, 53), while Nylan sees them as a group dedicated to learning the skills required for government service (Nylan 2001, 3). Both of

these views take the category *ru* (as opposed to specifically “Confucian”) as an identity more seriously. According to these views, in Confucian communities it was not doctrine that drove identity or association, but common commitment to a particular course of study.

What unites all three of these representations, however, is that all of these views are similarity-based views which require the identification of a pan-communal commonality. Though Eno and Nylan avoid placing undue emphasis on doctrinal unity, we can also note that their theories concerning early Confucianism are mutually exclusive, with Eno arguing that early Confucians were actually interested in avoiding government involvement, and Nylan claiming that it is their primary concern. If, on the other hand, we view Confucianism through the lenses of prototypes, we can create subcategories of *ru* for government-centered, Confucian *ru* and cultivation-oriented, Confucian *ru*. Given the fact that Confucius purportedly taught over three thousand students, many of which had conflicting views, I find it unlikely that there were not at least some students in each of the camps highlighted by Eno and Nylan.

All of these viewpoints also ignore the early fact that there were those who were Confucian by concrete participation—a direct teacher student relationship. From this point of view, the only way to become a Confucian *ru*

would have been to have been taught by the Master or one of his disciples.

Reference to Confucianism as a 家 *jia*, a family helps. Families can have multiple criterion for membership. Blood, marriage, and adoption are the most common of these, but families can also identify themselves along class or ideological lines.

What I suggest is that the early Confucian community probably worked its identity out along similar lines. The first generation Confucian *jia* probably included all three-thousand or more recorded disciples, as members of the *jia* with his seventy-two best students serving as the most representative members of the family.

Yuet Keung Lo's (2014b) excellent discussion of the likely living situation of the Confucian disciples provides a large justification for highlighting the importance of direct association with the master in the construction of Confucian identity. He suggests that Confucius probably supplied a dormitory for his students' use, and it was at this place that he was able to observe the exemplary private (私 *si*) behavior of his student Yan Hui, and, I would add, also fits in with his knowledge of Zai Yu's sleeping habits (84). Lo's gloss of 朋 *peng* in *Analects* 1.1, following Han exegete Bao Xian's 包咸 (6 B.C.E.–65 C.E.) interpretation, as *those who share the same gate* rather than *friends* is also thought provoking (82-83). In sum, his argument is that personal contact and comradery played a large part

in creating the first Confucian community. While this aspect of the tradition may have attenuated over the course of history, it does not disappear completely for several hundred years.⁵⁵ We can cite the production of texts like the 孔叢子 *Kong Cong Zi* as a reference point for this latter claim. The text purports to be a record of debates between members of the Kong family and representatives of other warring states schools. Regardless of whether or not Yoav Ariel's (1989) conclusion that the text is a third century C.E. Han forgery is correct, we can note that the text's primary claim to authoritativeness relies upon a direct family lineage and the implicit understanding that members of the Kong family itself hold a strong claim to being authentically "Confucian." If Ariel's claim is correct, it would mean that the idea of a "blood-lineage Confucianism" persisted for at least seven centuries after Confucius himself lived.

From this blood lineage standpoint we can suggest that in some group instances, similarity of doctrine in such a community would be a function of family relationship, not vice-versa. In other words, group members may have similar thoughts because they know each other or are engaged in a teacher-

⁵⁵ See also Creel (1948, 78) and Eno (1985, 53-54).

student relationship, rather than it being the case that people are admitted to the group on the basis of agreement.

Given these arguments, I see “Confucian” as a subcategory of *ru* but structure the “Confucian” category radially—Confucius himself becomes the prototype with variations on Confucius appearing as types of Confucians below him, some of which may share commonalities with each other, but some of which may not. We thus arrive at least two subcategories of Confucian—those who are Confucian by a lived master-student association, and those who are Confucian by intellectual stance. As was the case with mothers, the ideal is that they are members of both subcategories, but we can still include as Confucian both those who lived with and were taught by the Master and those who are intellectually or spiritually associated with the Master’s viewpoints. This should also underwrite my use of the word Confucian in this study as a category name rather than an identity.

Both of these understandings of the Confucian group are alternative ways of drawing group boundaries. Note, however, that these two visions of the Confucian group prioritize knowledge at different cognitive levels. In the second view, drawn partially from *Analects* 11.17, what serves as Confucianism is a particular lineage of thought—commitment to a particular line of conceptual

knowledge is the determining factor behind where group boundaries are built.

This tends to lend itself to a center-periphery model of grouping, the center being the “true” or “orthodox” teachings of Confucius, and the edges being woven with teachings that do not quite match the true Way.

In the first view, however, conceptual knowledge is only tangentially involved. This view defines Confucianism not according to what one taught, but according to one’s relationships. For example, we can say that one is Confucian first because one knows and learned from Confucius, or perhaps learned from someone who learned from someone who learned from Confucius. Mapping the Confucian group from this angle thus works better in terms of a family tree—a network rather than a circle. We should also note that group boundaries in networks are descriptive rather than prescriptive in this model, a facet we will return to later in this chapter.

These two viewpoints thus briefly sketch the models of Confucian grouping that I have chosen to examine in this chapter: the circle and the network. Though both are eminently applicable to Confucianism, I have chosen to highlight the importance of the network model for a two reasons. First, network models are strongest when we consider the modes of relation that occur organically—ties that occur due to proximity, voluntary choice, or embodied

interaction for example—rather than those explicitly governed by Confucian ethical norms.⁵⁶

Lu Xiufen corroborates this harmony-based view of friendship, stating that mutual compatibility is the key to Confucian friendship (2010, 229).

Criticizing King's brief comment that friendship is based on the family, Lu also further expands the voluntarism of friendship into the context of the family by drawing on King's discussion of the elasticity of the family in Chinese thought. If the common phrase *zi jia ren* ("our family people") can refer to anyone of the speaker's choosing, and if the family can theoretically be extended to all the world (*tian xia yi jia* 天下一家) (King 1985, 61), then, Lu argues, an element of choice is at least as if not more important than biological ties in determining what the *family* actually is (2010, 229). While Lu's point may have been made only rhetorically to demonstrate a weakness in King's argument, Lu's point does

⁵⁶ Aristotle's three types of friendship—friendships based on benefit, pleasure, and the good—all accord with this model of friendship, with each type representing a different end around which a friendship might cohere. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1156a16-b23) In each case we see friendship presented as moving toward some end or other, and though the first two are seen as being shallow, the third is not. On this third type, Aristotle writes, "each party is good both absolutely and for his friends, since the good are both good absolutely and useful to each other. Similarly they please one another too; for the good are pleasing both absolutely and for each other..." (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1156b) Mencius makes a similar distinction in 5B:3, though he denies that Aristotle's friends of benefit are truly friends at all. For Mencius then, the only goal worthy of the name friendship is mutual growth in the Way.

again remind us that solidarity can be absent or present in gradations even within ascribed bonds, and that people can take actions to either draw closer to or distance themselves from people whom biological ties disallow dissociation.⁵⁷ This reminder reinforces the fact that harmony is as logical a dividing line for early Chinese associations as constitutive commonality.

Second, circular models already tend to be the dominant way in which the Confucian tradition is imaged. Sometimes, the idea of commonality as the outer boundary is forms the basis for this model, and I will consistently oppose this mode of categorizing the collective classical, pre-Han period. Other times, particularly because of the importance of ethical exemplars, we see prototyping as part of a center-periphery model. As I will argue, however, center-periphery models tend to be a natural outflow of conceptual knowledge and thus will also tend to emerge more clearly as a result of studying doctrinal, textual sources. This in turn masks the other dynamics that were vital to the Confucian group, particularly the importance of shared, embodied meaning in ritual practice. The

⁵⁷ This is also reminiscent of what Robert Weller observed in modern times: "The predominant place of gifts in household budgets shows the extent to which networks must be constructed and actively maintained. These may be 'personalistic' ties of family and neighborhood, but they must be actively nurtured. If being born to such ties was enough, people would not have to invest in them." (1999, 69)

natural fit between conceptual, propositional knowledge and center-periphery models tends to require abstract, “imagined” communities, with similarly “imagined” circles of empathy. These imagined communities generate real solidarity, but such an imagined solidarity is fragile, and is, more to the point, often unreliable when it comes into conflict with other forms of solidarity.

1.4 The Confucian Group – Who is a Brother?

All of this discussion thus far and the purpose of modeling the Confucian group as a whole has been in service to one core question of this dissertation—how do we understand who the various Confucians might see as insiders and who they see as outsiders? More specifically, to whom do they primarily owe their energy, time, and effort? Or, more succinctly, who is brother to the Confucian? This question springs from the tension created between Mencius’ famous argument against the Mohist doctrine of “impartial caring,” and the idea drawn from *Analects* 12.5 that for moral people, all men within the four seas are brothers. In the *Analects*, we find Si Ma Niu worried that he has no brothers. One of Confucius’ top disciples, Zi Xia responds thusly:

君子敬而無失，與人恭而有禮。四海之內，皆兄弟也。君子何患乎無兄弟也？

The worthy person is reverent and without transgression, respectful and decorous with people. All within the four seas are his brothers. How could a worthy person be worried about being without brothers?

Here we have an appeal to the global solidarity of those who are both moral and decorous, or in sociological terms, an appeal to the unity and brotherhood of a like-minded, moral community. If this was the only expression classical Confucians articulated concerning in-group boundaries, King would perhaps have had less of a case to make.

Mencius, however, makes an important point about the practicality of such a viewpoint. Part of Mencius' argument stands on the fact that we cannot ignore the thickness of our relationships and imagine the solidarity we actually experience with those closest to us also exists between us and strangers. There are gradations in the care we show others that ought to parallel our closeness with them. I theoretically stand in a one-of-a-kind relationship with my father, and to give others the intensity of care I owe my father ignores the special, incommensurable relationship I have with him and is thus to deny I have a father at all (3B9). The same applies to other family relationships as well, and then, I would argue, to close friends, acquaintances, people I recognize, then

finally, to strangers.⁵⁸ By the time we arrive at strangers, the duties attributed to need to be so atrophied as to be easily covered by basic etiquette. Though Xunzi does not explicitly address the issue of graded relationships, we do find him arguing against Mozi's knowing how to make things uniform but not knowing the use of differences in Chapter 17 (65/17/51-52).

We could, of course, suggest that the group ought to be given more importance, but this brings with it other powerful challenges. In *The Idea of Usury: Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood*, Benjamin Nelson tracks the breakdown of social Christian brotherhood through an examination of historical interpretations of the Deuteronomy's prohibitions against usury. A few lines from his poignant conclusion set the stage at the broadest level for my study of the generation of solidarity and the creation of Confucian groups in early China:

The road from clan comradeship to universal society is beset with hazards. When two communities merge and two sets of others become one set of brothers, a price is generally paid. The price, as this essay suggests, is an attenuation of the love which had held each set together. It is a tragedy of moral history that the expansion of the moral community has ordinarily been gained through the sacrifice of the intensity of the moral bond, or ... that all men have been becoming brothers by becoming equally others. (1969, 136)

⁵⁸ See Mencius 4A5, 7A45, and 7A46 for textual examples of inner scale versus outer scale.

In other words, the laudable effort to expand the circle of empathy to include more and more “others” in practice also dissolves the saliency of local solidarity. To put it even more simply, if everyone is my brother, brotherhood loses both special status and emotional influence. This is the heart of the Mencian argument presented.

Graded love thus protects against the “othering” of those closest to us by recognizing that actual connections have a thickness to them; the thicker and more entwined the relationship with our lives, the more duties and responsibilities we have to those connections. At the same time, however, Mencian graded love makes the proper boundaries of solidarity hazy beyond the immediate circle of the family. When someone is terrorized by a passing tiger, for whom should we risk our lives? Family members certainly, but what about close friends, the local baker, or a passing stranger? Is risking my life for these lesser relationships risking the loss of what rightfully belongs to my own family? Or to pose the question less dramatically and in the terms of Ben Nelson’s study, to whom ought we give, lend, or rent money? When resources are limited, whom are we obligated to help, and what would be rightfully considered an irresponsible expenditure of resources? From the local point of view, the

expansion of the circle of empathy—our in-group—presents enough challenges to offer serious pause.

At heart, this issue concerns the relationship between the salient, compelling bonds that actually hold groups together as a group, and the more abstract “circle of inclusion” (which is sometimes discussed as the “circle of empathy” and sometimes not) that might be professed. In some cases, these two categories are closely entwined; some tight knit, local groups—a unified, insular “small town” in which everybody knows everybody, for example—may feel that outsiders are risks too great to handle and encourage them to “move along.” Here, the boundaries of empathy, inclusion, and solidarity are all coextensive with group membership. If, however, we have a similar town whose general values state that outsiders deserve help and sympathy, empathy is drawn along different lines than inclusion: all humans are deserving of empathy, but not necessarily of inclusion, and strangers may thus not enjoy all the benefits of small town solidarity.

In the contemporary “global” society, boundaries can be much more complicated. Group solidarity is often experienced along very different lines from the putative boundaries of inclusion proposed by nationality, religion, ideology, moral community, or by the biological boundary of our species as a

whole. It is one thing for someone to profess membership in the Roman Catholic Church, but quite another for that person to assume that being a member and ostensibly sharing values creates a dependable solidarity with all billion members on a day-to-day basis.⁵⁹ Merely sharing values and membership is not enough; Nelson's conclusion reminds us that broader membership effectively *weakens* local connections if we do not employ other means of strengthening and differentiating those connections from the larger group. Empathy—seeing the self in the other—does not necessarily equate to solidarity. Unless there is another way of understanding the conundrum presented here, we could say the same about what is proposed in *Analects* 12.5.

We can also make a converse point: we can stand in solidarity with people whom we do not necessarily include in our in-group or circle of empathy. In the 1990s, an alliance formed between the Boston Police Department and the Ten Point Coalition, a group of black, inner city ministers. Though these two groups were initially at odds, they joined in a united front to combat youth violence in Boston. Berrien and Winship (2002), discuss the deep worldview differences

⁵⁹ Situations of emergency or threat are, of course, different. Such situations are indeed instructive of solidarity building, but as such situations are generally not the norm, I do not consider them in detail in this dissertation.

between the police and the Ten Point Coalition. These differences were not ignored, flattened out, or mitigated by their association; the alliance was formed only when there was a mutual goal, and this goal was pursued for different ideological reasons. Nevertheless, their dedication to a shared goal created a reliable solidarity that literally saved lives and contributed to the prodigious drop in youth crime sometimes referred to as the “Boston miracle.” Such cases of solidarity without inclusion (or even empathy, necessarily) are relatively rare, but not impossible.

This distinction between those we stand in solidarity with and those we extend empathy to has been remarked upon in other cases as well. We can see this in the Mencius, of course, but it is common to Western ethical discourse. To go back just a few decades, Nel Noddings, whose work is a pillar of care ethics, notes the difference between those we care *for* and those we care *about*. Those we care *for* are those with whom we share a bonded, emotional relationship, while those we care *about* tend to be unconnected strangers whom we decide deserve care from an abstract, ethical point of view. We do not feel the same care for those we care *about* as those we care *for*, and, according to Noddings, we thus need to tap into the well of emotion that exists for those closest to us in order to fuel and motivate our behavior toward those whom we merely ought to care

about.⁶⁰ (Noddings 2002, 22) Here the circle of empathy is much broader than the bonds of solidarity and depends on strong bonds of solidarity for its practical, emotional motivation. This parallels Mencian extension closely.

Large groups do, of course, exist. If we begin studying the issue of group membership versus solidarity from the group level, this discussion also recalls the old discussion of unities and diversities in Chinese anthropology, which explicitly examines diversities within a larger whole. The famous debate between Maurice Freedman and Arthur Wolf concerning whether China is united by the structural unity of diverse beliefs (Freedman 1974) or whether uniform beliefs are construed diversely across society (Wolf 1974) began as an attempt to address the above dilemma in a different context, by examining what it is that allows China, an enormous, multiethnic, multicultural, religiously pluralistic society to remain together. In other words, the question raised is what, beyond an abstract circle of inclusion, keeps China functionally unified? Freedman sees Chinese political unity as stemming from “a large measure of agreement on religious

⁶⁰ There are, of course, many others who make this distinction. Noddings is cited here because of her relationship to care ethics, an ethical system that has been compared with Confucianism in recent years. I tend to agree more closely with those that approve of the comparison between Confucianism and care ethics, such as Chenyang Li (1994), Henry Rosemont (1997) and others against scholars like Daniel Star (2004).

assumptions among its people... allowed ... to be expressed as though it were religious difference" (Freedman 1974, 38). A similar argument was rehashed later with James L. Watson (1988) citing orthopraxy rather than a belief structure as the unifying element, with Evelyn Rawski (1988) and others providing dissenting views.⁶¹

Both of these anthropological debates share the assumption that solidarity does not arise within a group merely because a political authority draws the boundaries of inclusion in a particular way. I agree with the scholars cited above that simple "moral membership" or an abstract circle of empathy is not enough to prevent a large, diverse group from splintering — this is, after all, precisely what we saw in the first section of this chapter. The work of Nelson, Noddings, and Mencius recognizes ethical and practical limits to solidarity that challenge the equation between membership in a Durkheimian moral community and salient "mechanical solidarity," to use Durkheim's own terminology.

⁶¹ Wolf claims that Freedman's thesis is untenable: "The fact that an idea was shared by people with such very different perspectives would suggest that it was relatively insignificant or that it was easily invested with very different meanings" (Wolf 1974, 9). Rawski (1988) and others show that the Neo-Confucians of Imperial China did actually care what people believed, and that, contrary to what Watson claimed, people did not actually do the same things. See *Modern China* (2007, vol 33) for James Watson, Paul Katz, Kenneth Pomeranz, Donald S Sutton, and Michael Szonyi's continued thoughts on the orthopraxy thesis.

As I have been arguing at for the duration of this paper, the status of Confucianism as a unified community of practice, doctrine, or anything else is questionable. This is partly due to the fact that in the absence of a central authority, which is the case for classical Confucianism, there can be no general standard to apply able to create unity. Any influential figure can create his or her own interpretive lineage of Confucian thought that can potentially conflict with other groups in both belief and practice. I explored this above in the differences between the philosophy of Mencius and Xunzi, but following Michael Nylan (2001, 25), we can also assume that such disagreement was common between less well-discussed, early Confucian scholars. Zi Xia, a first generation Confucian, may have made an appeal to the solidarity of all moral men in *Analects* 12.5 (cited above), but without consensus on who is or is not moral, this appeal loses a large part of its power.

To couch this argument in social scientific terms, with Arthur Wolf and Michael Nylan, I see in Confucianism an overarching but ambiguous set of teachings interpreted differently by different scholars in different times and communities. However, unlike Wolf, I do not locate the shared body of “Confucianism” at the group level, large or small. Rather, I follow Robert Weller (1987, 7) in his claim that in practice, religion (in this specific case, Confucianism)

is not just a mental object decoded differently by different groups, though that process certainly occurs. It is also a process of meaning making that takes place within social relations, subject to both institutional/traditional and pragmatic influences. Among other things, this means that every Confucian is potentially an interpreter of the tradition he sees as extending back to the sage kings and is also a possible source of not-yet-Confucian influences.⁶² This is part of the reason that prototypes are so useful as a categorization theory. All of these differences can be admitted of the Confucian group where they cannot under the rubric of essential commonalities.

⁶² Though I have chosen to focus primarily on the early Confucian tradition, we can see this interpretation and incorporation of external ideas into the Way of Confucius on display in force throughout its historical development, but particularly so in the work of the Han synthesizers like Dongzhong Shu (see Berthrong 1998 and Nylan 2001) as well as in the work of the Song Neo-Confucians (Berthrong 1998, Bol 1992, Tillman 1982, and many others).

This interpretive standpoint also signals my alignment with Confucian scholars who see Confucius himself as creatively reinterpreting the tradition he purported to transmit from the sage kings. I do not, however, intend to insist that Confucius or his followers actively set out to change or reinvent tradition, then cleverly masked their alterations under a façade of tradition. Rather, I merely mean that the process of “rekindling the old and thereby knowing the new” necessarily involves the interpretation of the old through the lens of current experience. We can only understand other times and cultures through analogy, and one half of an analogy is always grounded in the richness of a person’s contextually grounded experience. Thus what is true for scholars now was also true for Confucius; no matter how careful we are, any attempt to understand and transmit the ideas of past times will necessarily be flavored by meanings generated from our own context, understanding, and personal predilections or agendas that remain hidden to us. As I will argue in this first section, this is certainly true of Confucius’ most well-known classical expositors, Mencius and Xunzi, and I suggest that this is also true for each and every scholar, great or small, past or present, in his or her appropriation of Confucius’ Way.

In practice, what this spread of variation between Confucian scholars will mean is that so long as the Confucian tradition as a whole lacks a central authority, it will begin to look less like a moral circle with an established center and an outer periphery and more like a network of connections and influences. In other words, in considering the classical Confucianism, personal connections and affiliations are likely to be as or more important a determinant of Confucian inclusion as philosophical or moral standards.

This returns us to King's work. A network is exactly what Ambrose King's article seems to suggest the Confucian community looks like. In line with other scholarship on Confucianism, King notes that the group constitutes the individual. But he also asserts that the opposite is also true. Even while being constituted by the group, the Confucian person exercises his own agency and creates the boundaries of his group, which extends only so far as his own personal sphere of contact. Following Liang Shuming's prior observations, King thus claims that the Chinese group, insofar as it follows Confucianism, is neither individual-based (*geren benwei* 個人本位) nor society-based (*shehui benwei* 社會本位), but relationally based (*guanxi benwei* 關係本位). According to this theory, personal relationships and connections are the key to understanding Confucian sociality. The Confucian group can be classified as neither an individualism nor a

holism (which would require the formation of some intelligible whole that we cannot assume will emerge from the sum total of a person's personal contacts).

King may overstate his case, and he does not take into account the entirety of Confucian cultivation in his analysis. For example, though he discusses *shu* 恕, which he translates as "reciprocity," as a key to Confucian cultivation, he does not bring concepts of virtue as trained character dispositions to the discussion of how Confucians treat strangers, and while certain virtues may be dominant in governing particular roles, those virtues are not necessarily limited to that role. He also completely ignores references to proper behavior when abroad in texts like the *Analects*, particularly 12.2, in which Confucius tells Zhong Gong that when leaving the house the *ren* person treats everyone as if he were receiving a guest, and 1.6 in which a youth abroad should be respectful of his elders.⁶³ Nevertheless, his formulation points in the direction of a network model when we apply this type of sociality occurring between more than one person at a time. Here we effectively have the opposite formulation from what Durkheim describes as the moral community; rather than having boundaries of inclusion based on shared morals, we now have community drawn entirely through

⁶³ We will again examine these passages at the end of chapter 2.

networked individual bonds. Some networks of bonds may form recognizable wholes (the various levels of sociality mentioned in the Great Learning, such as the family and neighborhood, for example), but any set of people cared for by one particular person would not necessarily.

This formulation takes us full circle, for this is exactly the situation King is concerned about in his discussion of Confucianism's lack of the "stranger" role. In King's formulation, the issue is not that Confucians have posited an abstract empathy that dilutes the character of local relationships. Rather, the issue is that the lines of ethical responsibility are drawn congruently with the lines of personal connection (and thus roughly with solidarity). According to King, roles, which are all concrete relationships in Confucianism, are where the lion's share of Confucian moral guidelines speak their piece. These guidelines come in the form of setting the duties and obligations for the relationships they govern. Thus outside the rubric of particular, concrete relationships, Confucianism has little useful to say about proper ethical conduct. (1985, 63) The consequence of this is that strangers—those who do not practice ritual *and* those who do—are no longer our responsibility. To use Noddings' terminology to frame King's argument, he claims that Confucians *only* have people they care *for* and have no one they care *about*.

We cannot subscribe to King's position wholesale without disregarding the fact that classical Confucianism does, actually, envision a world in which all within the four seas are like brothers and sisters and everything is properly ordered. (See *Analects* 12.5, above, and the Datong section of the *Liji's* Li Yun chapter for the clearest formulations of this.) Confucianism is not exclusively a networked community. Nor can we ignore King's position for the reasons explored above. Ambiguously, the *Analects* and the *Mencius* place us squarely on the line between a plea for solidarity between all people (or at very least, all moral people) and the recognition that solidarity has its ethical and practical limits. How, then, are we to reconcile the dual claims within Confucianism that "all virtuous men within the four seas are brothers" with the understanding that our time, energy, and material resources are limited? Creating an ordered family may be participation in good government, but when is it appropriate for a person either with or without an official position to redirect his or her energies away from the immediate family toward the greater good? When *is* it that Confucians look out for strangers in a situation that requires more than the barest of efforts?

Prototype theory begins to help us cut through these issues. It fits the premises of King's theory of individual and group dynamics in Confucianism

while changing the logical outcome of his foundational assumptions. Following Barbara Ward, King notes that there is a lack of clear boundaries for defining an “in-group” (1985, 61). This fits perfectly with a prototype conception of the group—if we do not limit ourselves to commonality then what we have is precisely an amorphous outer boarder for the group, one that is as much a result of convention or individual decision as it is of “natural” typing. We can quite comprehensibly say “my nursemaid was a mother to me,” thereby changing the categorical boundaries of motherhood as given by conventional English through an appeal to one of the recognized social functions of motherhood.⁶⁴ An added, “She is family to me” follows similar logic. The less we rely on an essential commonality for in-group membership, the more amorphous the category becomes. This is precisely what we find for the Chinese term *jia*. When we say “*tian xia yi jia*” (all under heaven are one family), we make the same type of appeal as we do when we say that our nursemaid is family.

This variability is precisely what King identifies as part of the problem. If people in general can decide for themselves who is or is not included in the “in

⁶⁴ English has no specific term for a woman who provides nurturance for a child in lieu of the mother while the mother is still available to be the child’s legal guardian. To say a nursemaid is a mother is then to appeal to the central prototype and create an unspecified, ad hoc variation.

group” and Confucians define the in-group in terms of social function, then no one who does not play a social role will ever be considered part of any Confucian’s in-group. Given the Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names, particularly as espoused by Mencius, this criticism is not entirely without teeth. For Mencius, a large part of who a person is what he or she does. If the king acts like a robber, he is a robber, not a King. By analogy, if a person has never acted like a brother before, can he ethically be extended the same consideration as a brother?

Fortunately, prototype theory also offers a way out of this conundrum, again because commonality is not requisite to categorization. Social function is not the only determinant of brotherhood. I would suggest that “brother” is also a radial prototype category, like *mother*, and as I have suggested, the categories *ru* and *jia*. Again, radial categories result from a number of subcategories that converge on a model that is more cognitively basic than the subcategories that it is highlighted by. *Mother* as a category has a number of variants, like adoptive mother, natural mother, foster mother, and so on. Similarly, I suggested that the Confucian *jia* could be understood both in terms of intellectual ties and personal ties. There are also many variant brothers: biological brothers, brothers who fill the role of a brother, brothers-in-arms, sworn or adopted brothers, and as Zi Xia

notes, moral brothers. The *central* prototype is for brothers who stand at the intersection of all of those subcategories (even as the central prototype is generated only by the intersection of the other subtypes). Brothers who do not fit the central prototype are still brothers, but stand further from the clearest cognitive reference point.⁶⁵ My suggestion is that Confucianism's graded love works itself out along the same lines as is that our moral debt ought to be strongest with those brothers that match most closely with the central case and less strongly with those further out. When the two categories do not match, blood relations are given clear priority over moral brotherhood in Confucian thought. This does not mean, however, that moral brothers do not engage in the same flow of reciprocity that immediate family members do. We cannot extend the *same* consideration to strange men as we do to our blood brothers, *but this does not negate the fact that we do have obligations to moral brothers, even strangers conceived as moral brothers (or sisters)*, comparatively attenuated though the relationship with them may be.

⁶⁵ This is partly due to the requirements of reciprocity. Presumably, the brother who is both a blood brother and a moral brother has treated one better than one who is only a blood brother who has not lived up to his moral duties as a brother. He is still a brother to be cared for, but he has failed to develop the deeply reciprocal relationship that the moral brother likely has.

As we continue to explore Confucian thought in the following chapter, we will note that this obligation toward moral brothers actually extends to all people, contingent upon the amount of resources one controls. For now, however, we can state that there are ways that a stranger could be conceived to be a brother without endangering the priority of blood kin or others with whom we have developed thick bonds of reciprocity.

Moral family status is often a way that Confucius and his students were described, and this is clearly seen in the treatment of Yan Hui when he dies, with Confucius wailing disconsolately in 11.9-10, and stating his wish that he could have returned Yan Hui's father-like affection for him by giving him a properly ritual burial, a gesture denied to him when the other disciples buried him lavishly (11.11). This brief picture of grief reveals not only the deep kinship Confucius felt with Yan Hui, but the affection his fellow students felt for him. When Confucius passed away, one record shows that his disciples all observed the three-year mourning ritual for him, a ritual reserved only for parents (Takigawa 1977, juan 47, 746). Here again, we see Confucius treated as a parent. There are barriers to the interior family that cannot be crossed—only blood kin can sacrifice to ancestors (2.24), for example—but this does not suggest that Confucius' father-like love for Yan Hui (and vice versa) was inappropriate.

Given the frequency with which Mencius quotes or paraphrases passages from the Analects, and his direct reference to these events in 3A4, it is unlikely that he was unaware of these dynamics. This prototype theory gives a brief but clear explanation as to why Mencius may not have seen a tension between his teaching on graded love and the actions of Confucius and his disciples.

Confucius' disciples were not acting as if they had no father by performing the mourning rites, Confucius was an *actual* father to them, though not a blood father, and their fellow disciples were brothers. Given this, we can see Zi Xia's response to Si Ma Niu in 12.5 not only as a general statement concerning moral brotherhood, but as a personal reminder that Si Ma Niu is embedded in a community of brothers.

Prototype theory does not solve all of the issues raised. Most pressingly, while boundaries drawn around prototypes rather than commonalities are much more permeable and inclusive, they still do not solve the issue of the practical limit and local scope of personal solidarity. The fact that we acknowledge a stranger to be a brother does not mean that we have the resources to give him his due. It does, however, allow an inroad into a primary argument of this study. Classical Confucianism understands that all people, strangers and family alike are a constitutive part of who we are, and that developing civil relationships

with all people is a key element in flourishing and continuance. Simply and directly, what I argue is that Confucian ritual attempts to deal with strangers by trying to make them less strange.

To specify further, I stipulate that Confucianism's goal is ultimately to unite all under heaven in a society of structural *and* experiential harmony. I argue that the aspect of Confucianism that makes this even remotely possible is the ritual tradition's ability to quickly incorporate culturally proficient strangers into a local group and begin to build solidarity with that person regardless of what their particular stance on Confucius' teachings might be.⁶⁶ This dynamic is not just the vague expansion of the moral community to include more outliers. As Noddings and Mencius note, although we can extend empathy to strangers, strangers will always be on the fringe until they become less strange, more familiar. Rather, the claim made here is that Confucian ritual life is uniquely poised to make physically encountered strangers less strange and that the most

⁶⁶ Though our sense of morals might be a determining factor of our internal selves (see Taylor 1989, 23), morality is certainly not the only generator of solidarity that exists. Shared physicality, shared goals, shared responsibilities, and shared expectations can all generate solidarity, and all while our moral stance remains unknown. Given this, we might also pause to note that disagreement, even about serious moral matters, is not necessarily an impediment to intimate friendship or joyful companionship (though it certainly can help). See Robert P. George and Cornel West, "How Disagreement Makes us Civil." Presentation at Biola University, April 30, 2015.

powerful means by which it does this *does not rely on the sharing of propositional meaning*. Here, propositional meaning includes the sharing of value hierarchies, cosmology, other abstract, cogitative forms of knowledge, or a basic sense of “sameness.” Sharing prototype categories which rely on conceptual knowledge also falls into the category of propositional meaning, though basic-level prototypes (see above) are generally non-propositional.

Later chapters will argue that this is accomplished through embodied engagement which is simplified and made harmonious through ritual practice. Meaning arises through both cogitative and sub-cogitative levels, and according to some cognitive philosophers such as Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, proposition, cogitation, and abstract meaning are constructed from analogies that arise from embodied meaning. But not all meaning is generalizable or suited to abstraction, and as many have noted, the process of abstraction itself always leaves out a wealth of information. Embodied engagement allows the incorporation of other ritual participants into meaning generated on a non-cognitive level. This meaning in turn affects the basic ways in which we experience self and other.

I do not deny the importance of propositional meaning in Confucianism. I do claim, however, that sharing propositional meaning alone only tends to

generate a broad, diffused, and ultimately undependable empathy, while embodied meaning tends to generate salient bonds of relatively reliable solidarity. Ultimately, this means that I am arguing that classical Confucianism's primary mode of community building is to create strong local bonds of solidarity, not global bonds of empathy.

To foreshadow later chapters, I will note that the primacy of local community building in classical Confucianism will affect how we can understand the shape of the Confucian group as a whole: tracing bonds of solidarity generates an alternate model of social organization. Traditional sociological studies of the Confucian group tend to operate under both Durkheim's sacred-profane analysis of the moral community and the center-periphery expansions of this model for society.⁶⁷ This is a powerful and widely applicable model but is grounded upon a commonly shared worldview framed

⁶⁷ Weber's understanding of charisma, for example, is easily understood under the rubric of center and periphery. When we apply Weber's charismatic model to Durkheim's sacred-profane model of society, we see the model transforming from a similarity-based model in which change is problematic to a prototype-based model, in which the center serves as an exemplar and therefore a possible model for transformation. See Edward Shils' (1975) and Talcott Parsons' (1967) work in particular for the classical formulation of the center-periphery understanding of social groups. In philosophical studies of Confucianism, I would argue that this center-periphery/prototype-based model also appears in the presentation of Confucian relationships as a form of centric holism (Ziporyn 2000) or as foci within a field (Hall and Ames 1987).

around an inviolable sacred, the protection of which grants society stability and supports its continued existence. In the classical period, this remains a possible model, but only on a local scale, not on a pan-Confucian scale. This is partly due to the fact that Durkheim's study is geared toward understanding how and why a stable society is able to remain together. Spring and Autumn China, however, was anything but stable. We can read the classical Confucians as attempting to establish their vision and model of the sacred as the reigning social model, but history also shows that until the Han dynasty, they largely unsuccessful. Given that there was no stable society with stable taboos protecting the violation of an official Confucian sacred, we see the sociological stances of various Confucians changing to fit the needs and intellectual climate of their own time and place.

Moreover, as I have argued, solidarity, particularly embodied solidarity, does not naturally map onto a center-periphery model. Rather, groups that rely primarily on direct relationship bonds for their binding agent naturally form a network of association rather than a "circle" of inclusion. The network model is a natural outflow of the requirement that embodied meaning be shared through

physical co-presence, which in turn creates a personal connection.⁶⁸ We can find examples of networks illustrated in embodied natural associations between animals, who by nature are incapable of sharing anything more than embodied and rudimentary indexical meaning. Schools of fishes and flocks of birds are two examples of pre-conceptual grouping that I will briefly explore in chapter 5.

1.5 Summation

For now, however, we can sum the major findings of this first chapter. First, we have seen that prototype theory has allowed us to identify at least two lines upon which the Confucian group can be drawn, both of which are subtypes of Confucianism and which are both equally valid. We can follow the interpretation of Confucianism as a coherent system of propositional knowledge which dictates particular ethical stances and practices. In this view, anyone who approved of Confucius and his teachings might be considered Confucian. In classical Confucianism, at least, this is problematic because there was no way of

⁶⁸ In this study, I do not argue that Confucianism more closely follows one model or the other; both models are appropriate to Confucianism on different levels, and the dynamics of each influence the other. However, because the sharing of embodied meaning in Confucianism has not drawn as much attention, this study will tend to focus on clarifying and elaborating on this network model of association rather than on applying the center-periphery model.

settling on a true Confucian orthodoxy. This viewpoint is counterposed with a view of Confucianism as a network of associates—those who were taught by Confucius or his students, those who studied at the early Confucian schools, or members of Confucius' own family. These Confucians may or may not have agreed with the core teachings that we know as Confucian today. The adoption of Confucianism by the state in the Han has clearly favored the first subtype of Confucianism, but we can see the survival of the idea of the second in works like the *Kong Cong Zi*. As is the case with many prototype groups, the central case is someone who stands at the intersection of all of these Confucian subtypes.

Second, we can note that these types of Confucianism privilege at least two different types of knowledge. The idea of Confucianism as a coherent philosophical or ethical system is a clear appeal to a reliance on propositional knowledge as the key to group inclusion. The other modes described here are, however, not reliant on proposition so much as they are on personal bonds. This insight provides us with two possible directions to take in pursuing our characterization of the Confucian group. We can explore the group from the position of propositional knowledge, or we can explore it from the position of concrete relational bonds and the pre-conceptual knowledge that comes with it.

I have chosen to explore the latter, because in my analysis the Confucian community building process naturally proceeds from the local to the global. This is evident from at least the *Mencius* onward. Beginning by exploring the self and how the self builds concrete relational bonds allows me to follow what I believe to be a more accurate representation of how the Confucians themselves see human development. Creating good family relationships comes before creating a well-functioning society, and family identity, as we have seen, comes before more global identities. This ordering thus highlights the importance of local connections before global connections in a natural, uncomplicated way.

The drawback to this ordering is that it puts the cart before the horse, so to speak, in presenting a solution to a problem before the problem has been fully explored. Briefly, the unexplored problem is as follows: Historically, the sociology of religion has located the source of group unity in the realm of shared proposition. The collective conscience, Durkheim's moral communities, and Geertz's worldview definition of religion⁶⁹ all follow the assumption that

⁶⁹ Geertz's worldview definition is as follows: "Religion is: a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seems uniquely realistic." (1973, 24) Here Geertz describes the formation of a worldview which creates moods and motivations and which is accessed through symbolic reference. Again, shared propositions are ingredient as the bonding

structures of meaning (here defined as propositional ways of interpreting the world based upon certain foundational and coherent premises) give us our most logical place to draw the boundaries between self and other, thereby marking shared circles of empathy and trust. While I see the explanatory power behind such views, I believe that depicting social solidarity in this way simplifies and crystallizes a much more complex and ambiguous process. This simplification in turn changes the actuality of the ways in which empathy and trust are extended; it does this by hardening boundaries and focusing out other sources of solidarity less dependent on sharing propositions for empathy. However, in the contemporary world and, I would argue, in classical China, multiple systems of meaning and multiple worldviews need to exist in a shared public space, making a solidarity based on systems of propositional knowledge and empathy alone tenuous and problematic at best.

Furthermore, the sharing of propositions involves the sharing of concepts, another premise that I consider to be of limited helpfulness. While all publically shared concepts, such as those referenced by language, are socially standardized

agent in all of this, specifically found in the shared propositions concerning the “general order of existence” and the fact that emotions are created via symbolic reference to that general order.

to a certain extent, I will argue in chapter five that this very standardization results in concepts we encounter only in the abstract and have no experiential reference for. Because of this, shared propositions that rely on shared concepts that are not actually shared cannot help but be fragile. Thus I claim that while sharing propositions creates real solidarity, this solidarity is fragile, diffuse, and often undependable.

My focus on the pre-conceptual is, in part, a response to this issue as well as a response to King's attempt to emphasize Confucianism's resources. Though the full exploration of the problematic nature of sharing propositions will be delayed until chapter five (section 5.1), I do hope that this brief explication will also serve as background for the following few chapters. My argument for the next three chapters is that a large part of personal bonds are formed through pre-conceptual interaction. For the next chapter, then, I turn my attention to the foundations of the Confucian process of local community building.

Chapter 2: Building a Self on the Way: Harmony, Intersubjectivity, and Mutual Integration

In the previous chapter, I discussed prototype theory and its applicability to Confucianism and came to the conclusion that the vague outside boundaries of prototype categories such as *brother*, *ru*, and *jia* helped to cut away some of the issues worrying King. Specifically, viewing Confucianism through the lens of prototype grouping allowed us to see that there are multiple ways of understanding how categories can be constructed, and suggested that there are many types of family, many types of brotherhood, some that stand closer to the center prototype than others. Prototype categories give porous and mutable boundaries at best. Though amorphous boundaries may not allow a direct relationship between the individual and the group, as King was hoping, it also offers a potential inclusiveness, a way of bringing the other into the self that would not be available if boundaries were firmer or harder. As Seligman et al. (2008, 84) and Seligman and Weller (2012, 98) note, boundaries conjoin even as they divide and must be porous enough to breathe if that which they protect is

not to atrophy.⁷⁰ This chapter thus investigates under what circumstances those boundaries shift or open, and how those boundaries connect Confucians with others.

As often noted by contemporary scholars, this vagueness of boundaries runs all the way down to the layer of self. Brook Ziporyn highlights the primacy of intersubjectivity as a defining characteristic of Chinese understandings of personhood. In particular, he notes that if personhood is primarily intersubjective, “individual consciousnesses, in spite of their inner sense of being independent of one another, are actually co-dependent poles of the intersubjective relationship and come into existence only as a by-product of a prior proto-aware intersubjective relation.” (2000, 41) This implies that Confucians understand strangers as becoming related merely by encountering one another as conscious others; in a way, they are already partially integrated.⁷¹

⁷⁰ For analogies of these dynamics, we can think of national boundaries, which divide one country from another but also join them to each other in physical space, and in diplomatic agreement. In terms of having porous boundaries, the national example works well in terms of information and scientific exchange, trade, and other modern commodities but is not absolute. Here the analogy of biological cells functions better as an entity with boundaries that are selectively firm.

⁷¹ I look more closely at Ziporyn’s definition of intersubjectivity below in section 2.2.2. I have chosen Ziporyn’s definition for simplicity’s sake; it summarizes and touches on the aspects of intersubjectivity that are relevant to this discussion. Furthermore, Ziporyn’s definition is keyed to and influenced by the Chinese context.

Tu Wei-ming contributes to this discussion by articulating an understanding of the Confucian person as a focused nexus of relationships rather than as a discrete individual. This Confucian person is envisioned as an expanding, relational self, which moves in concentric circles outward from the individual to include family, community, polity and the greater cosmos. Drawing most visibly from the *Daxue* and *Zhongyong*, he thus formulates the ideal Confucian relationship between individual and stranger as one of mutual integration. Roger Ames, David Hall, and Henry Rosemont Jr. continue to refine the concept of the person as a “nexus of relationships” when they state that “we are not individuals in the discrete sense, but rather are interrelated persons living—not ‘playing’—a multiplicity of roles that constitute who we are.” They continue to state that though roles do “allow us to pursue a unique distinctiveness and virtuosity in our conduct,” we are still primarily constituted *relationally* as “the sum of the roles we live in consonance with our fellows.” (2008, 15) Later, Rosemont and Ames will further argue that there is no remainder for the self outside of role-relationships—that we are solely the sum of our relationships. Though I will dispute this last claim, given all of this scholarship together, it would seem the boundaries of the Confucian self are just as vague and expandable as the boundaries of family and

group. In fact, we could say that self and group are two different ways of bringing the same thing into focus.

King is not the only scholar to note the possible limitations of a Confucianism whose ethics are articulated solely or primarily in terms of concrete roles. Ames' portrayal of Confucianism as a role ethic also encounters the same issues, as he acknowledges. Role ethics tend to locate the primary normative standard in specific, canonically governed role-relationships. If ethical decisions are indeed primarily determined by roles, then studying the conceptual tradition alone will reveal exactly what Ambrose King feared—that Confucian ethics, at least insofar as its conceptual system is concerned, is insufficient to the task of dealing with strangers without engaging with them as if they were some form of kin. Given the limited resources of a single person, this is not only impractical on a large scale, but inappropriate from the Mencian point of view. Without falling back on a “pan-human” or even “pan-Way bearer” role (which is not discussed in Confucian texts to any meaningful degree), strangers *by definition* have no concrete relationship with each other, and therefore no function to play that would necessitate the creation of a role. Ames thus cites King's issue as a possible limitation for a Confucian role ethic.

In addressing the overall issue that King raises, then, we will first need to address whether or not the early tradition is truly shackled to the medium of concrete relationships as its primary mode of ethical guidance, or whether the remainder of the tradition offers possible alternatives. In doing so, we will bring King's understanding of Confucian sociality into full dialogue with current Confucian philosophy to determine whether or not his conclusions concerning Confucianism's inability to link strangers are indeed merited. The brevity of his chapter means that King makes his claims without much support from canonical texts, and the intervening thirty years of scholarship have also introduced a number of concepts that might be helpful. I will thus delve into the Confucian process of self-formation and self-cultivation in order to explore this issue further for the remainder of this chapter.

2.1 Self as Contextual and Constituted

Several assumptions about the nature of self and identity are implicit in most current considerations of Confucian personhood and thus will guide our approach toward exploring how the Confucian self is constituted. First, and most basic is the fact that self and personhood are depicted as being culturally variable

and largely socially constructed.⁷² Second, most contemporary considerations of Confucian personhood tend to eschew a stance close to Rawls' "unencumbered person" (which itself is grounded in the Kantian autonomous self) in favor of Michael Sandel's constituted person. This is to say that Confucian scholars tend to emphasize the aspects of personhood constituted by social attachments and statuses, either ascribed or achieved to use Ralph Linton's anthropological terminology (1936, 115).

Following this lead, I follow three figures in my exploration of the aspects of Confucian personhood derivable from the current scholarship. Very broadly, I follow consensus scholarship's alignment with Michael Sandel's concept of the human person as constituted by connections, obligations, and allegiances, many of which precede and thus are ascribed to any particular person. Because of the nature of Confucian cultivation, I understand Confucianism to be a tradition that is concerned primarily with relationship and takes relationship to be the basic unit of personhood. For the most part, Sandel's portrayal of the constituted

⁷² Though I agree in part with this assessment, it should be clear from the introduction that I do believe that there are factors to our physicality that are pan-human and must be taken into consideration when considering any purely conceptual understanding of personhood. The physical limitations placed upon the experience of the self will be mentioned in relevant places in this chapter and explored in greater depth in section 3.3.

person fits this baseline criterion better than most other major theories of personhood. Second, as discussed last chapter and following the lead of other scholars before me, I follow Charles Taylor's discussion of the self as arising from values, particularly those values that serve to orient us toward particular conceptions of the Good.⁷³ Third, in corollary with Taylor's work, I follow Adam Seligman, who is much less widely considered in Confucian studies, in his assertion that authority, agency, and group are all subordinate to morality. To recap, Adam Seligman explicitly links Taylor's moral orientations with sociologically-based scholarship when he applies Taylor's work to the idea of community. He writes the following concerning the constituted self: "This self finds its realization only in the matrix of social relations and so also in the proper fulfillment of the laws and rules or regulations that define such relations ... the self is realized through the acceptance of heteronomous imposed laws rather than through the workings of a self-actualizing will." (Seligman 2000, 37) Here, Seligman asserts that the moral self does not arise solely out of a solitary process of valuation; rather, Taylor's moral frameworks are communally given and

⁷³ See in particular Stalnaker (2006, 45-47).

embedded in social structures such that the internalization of society's regulations is the means by which the self finds its moral orientation.⁷⁴

For now we can note that all three of these authors present understandings of self that *at least* lend themselves easily to being socially determined. Seligman and Sandel state explicitly that group is a component part of self and identity, while Taylor's theory allows for social determination, even if it does not theoretically require it.

What this means for our discussion of the Confucian person is that in order to understand the formation of a Confucian self, we need to understand the moral orientation that the Confucian tradition asks its followers to adopt. Happily, as Confucianism is a strongly moral tradition with a specific path of cultivation, these values are easily identified (though not so easily ranked, as we discussed in the last chapter. In order to explore the self formed by Confucian canonical values, we will examine, step by step, the values instilled in the process of self-cultivation.

⁷⁴ Taylor also acknowledges that moral orientations and frameworks are passed down through tradition. The salient difference here lies in the how moral orientations are embedded within the social norms that constitute the fabric of society.

2.2 Starting at the Beginning: Harmonic Reciprocity and Filial Reverence

This section is dedicated to the Confucian word *shu* (恕), here translated “harmonic reciprocity,” and sometimes referred to as “Confucian reciprocity” for the sake of variation. “Harmonic reciprocity” is slightly more cumbersome than the traditional “reciprocity” but emphasizes key aspects of the term I wish to highlight that might be lost in the single English word. “Harmony” brings with it concepts of attunement, order, and resonance; this translation thus seeks to highlight the fact that *shu* requires personal transformation in the course of both responding to the kindness of others and learning to build others with one’s own benevolence. Perhaps idiosyncratically, I thus understand *shu* as being a specific mode of harmony. More recently, scholars have been translating the term as “sympathetic understanding” or a similar variation. While this is also a strong translation, it does not highlight the dynamic, *interactive* nature of *shu*, and seems to place the concept purely within the private, subjective activity of the individual. Part of what I hope to demonstrate is that this is not the case; *shu* happens between people, not just within the individual person. What I see as the full dynamic of *shu* requires its playing out over an entire stimulus-response

(*ganying* 感應) scenario.⁷⁵ In other words, I see *shu* as actively transformative of a relationship, not merely an exercise in imagination.

With a handful of notable exceptions, *shu* as reciprocal obligation has been studied primarily as an aspect of roles or as a cognitive ability; in addition to demonstrating how this principle relates to the constitution of the Confucian person, I hope this section will help to further color to our understanding of *shu*'s place in Confucian cultivation as a whole. I also argue that although *shu* is perhaps best known as a component of *ren* because of its mention in the "one thread" discourse, Analects 4.15, it is also deeply a part of the virtue *xiao* 孝, translated here as "filial reverence." The development of filial reverence as described in Confucianism requires both the analogical thinking and the harmonic adjustment of the self that are the primary constituents of *shu*. Thus,

⁷⁵ This formulation also draws inspiration from the passage from the *Xing Zi Ming Chu*, a text excavated at Guodian, and also found as part of the collection known as the *Xing Qing Lun*, which is contextually similar enough to the *Liji*'s 中庸 Zhongyong chapter. In this text we have the following phrase: 金石之又(有)聖(聲)也 弗鈎(扣)不鳴 "(A metal [chime] or a jade [stone] has a particular sound, but if they are not struck, they do not call out." Given that the conclusion to the passage includes the phrase, 故見賢者而不聳 "therefore those who sees a worthy but is not aroused" we can draw an easy analogy between the responsive activity of the gentleman and those he wishes to attune. Mark Czikszenmihalyi glosses the passage thus: "It argues that action and the cultivation of moral behaviors may only be understood as a combination of natural propensities in combination with external influences." (2004, 171) This is the theme I take up in this chapter, the resonance and reciprocity of moral cultivation.

just as I see *shu* as a mode of harmony, I see filial reverence as a context-rich expression of *shu*.

The placement of filial reverence (*xiao*) at the foundation of the Confucian cultivation process is a marker of how important the concept of reciprocity is to the process of self-cultivation. Filial reverence governs the first relationship that all people enter into—the parent-child relationship. This kinship bond not only includes what Tu Wei-ming refers to as “primordial ties” (1989, 41), which he uses to signify biologically ingrained tendencies toward affection, they also provide the given space within which people begin lives of relationship. Moreover, as Analects 17.12 suggests, early Confucians viewed our birth into the world as bringing us into a world of moral obligation. In 17.12, Zai Wo asks if it would be permissible to abridge the three year mourning period for his parents. While Confucius suggests that Zai Wo should follow his feelings, Confucius also criticizes him, citing the three years his parents took to raise him as the reason for three years of mourning. Though the gift of life and the three years that parents raise their children are not *repaid* in the three years of mourning, per se, they serve as the basis for the moral obligation to observe that rite for three years; the two periods are periods of mutual resonance, the first setting the pattern for the second. Zai Wo’s failure to feel the need for this observance serves as the basis

for Confucius' criticism of his character, though whether this is because of a failing in Zaiwo himself or whether it is a result of poor upbringing as suggested by Ziporyn is unclear (2012, 108). We are born into relationships and the concomitant obligations that arise as a result.⁷⁶

Note that in 17.12, it is not sacrifice, but reciprocal affection that drives the three-year observance. The later written *Classic of Filial Reverence (Xiaojing)* codifies this specifically.

There is no bond more important than the father and mother giving life to their progeny, and there is no generosity more profound than the care and concern this progeny receives from their ... parents. It is for this reason that to love others while not loving one's parents is depravity (*de*), and to respect others while not respecting one's parents is a sacrilege (*li*). To base the norms to be followed (*shun*) upon such perversity would leave the people without any standards. No decency is to be found in this—only decadence (*de*). Even though such persons might enjoy a measure of success, exemplary persons (*junzi*) would not esteem them. (Chapter 9)

⁷⁶ Much has been made of the fact that Confucianism is not a coercive tradition, particularly in regard to the voluntaristic nature of ritual. Analects 1.3 also states that punishments and laws do not lead to a self-regulated state, but to the generation of cunning. Nevertheless, I believe that it would be foolhardy to assume that Confucian moral life is absent obligation—there are still things people can, should, and must (to use Dahrendorf's formulation of role expectations) do in their particular roles. Sanctions such as exclusion do follow, and these sanctions point to the normative side of the Confucian tradition.

As mentioned in the introduction and demonstrated by the above quotation, the need for harmonic reciprocity is what powers the normative, obligatory side of Confucian moral life.⁷⁷

Analects 15.23 gives the strongest statement of this from the authors of the *Analects*: “Zigong asked, ‘Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one’s life?’ The Master said, ‘Is not reciprocity [*shu* 恕] such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.’”⁷⁸ While this understanding of reciprocity may not initially seem to have much to do with reciprocity as responsive, I view these two concepts as being two sides of the same coin. Here, Confucius’ formulation only emphasizes one side of the term’s implications in the *Analects*. If we take the visual appearance of *shu* as being “like-hearted” with those whom with we interact, the word implies an empathic connection that responds to the kindness of others with kindness, affection with

⁷⁷ In “Filial Piety as a Virtue,” Philip J Ivanhoe (2007b) rightly points out that such a formulation may not actually be logically sustainable, and that filial piety should not be considered a “repayment” of parental care. While I agree with this, Ivanhoe acknowledges that he is picking and choosing from the currents in filial piety in order to formulate a version useful for contemporary ethics. In response to a possible criticism of my formulation along these lines, I would merely emphasize the fact that regardless of the specific terms of the obligation, a filial response is both obligatory and desirable in the Confucian tradition.

⁷⁸子貢問曰：「有一言而可以終身行之者乎？」子曰：「其恕乎！己所不欲，勿施於人。」

affection, and the desire to sacrifice for the other with a similarly strong sentiment in a stimulus-response schema.⁷⁹

In a well-ordered relationship, affection given by the parent resonates with the child and produces the proper affectionate response. We can see this dynamic further at play in *Analects* 6.30: “Desiring to take his stand, the humane (*ren*) person helps others to take their stand; wanting to realize himself, he helps others to realize themselves. Being able to take what is near at hand as an analogy could perhaps be called the method of humanity.” Here, we have the “sympathetic understanding” aspect of *shu* standing at the fore, but attached to an active, reverberative process. As opposed to the formulation in 15.23, in 6:30 we see the other half of the concept of harmonic reciprocity at play—the side of the initiator, the one who begins the action to harmonize the relationship by creating the positive stimulus that is returned. This understanding of harmonic reciprocity is on display most simply in *Analects* 5:26:

Yan Hui 顏回 and Zilu 子路 were in attendance. The Master said, “I suggest that you each tell me what it is you have set your hearts on.”

⁷⁹ We might even go so far as to say that the negatively formulated “silver rule” and the positively formulated “golden rule” imply each other to a limited extent, as both include both active and passive demands. One who does not do unto others as he would not have done unto himself cannot ignore others in need.

Zilu said, "I should like to share my carriage and horses, clothes and furs with my friends, and to have no regrets even if they become worn."

Yan Hui said, "I should like never to boast of my own goodness and never to call attention to my good deeds."

Zilu said, "I should like to hear what you have set your heart on."

The Master said, "To have the old feel at ease in my presence, my friends find me trustworthy, and the young embrace me in affection"⁸⁰ (5.26)

Here we are given a clear hierarchy of cultivation and understanding. Zi Lu is still occupied with material things, Yan Hui is still attempting to subdue his own ego, but Confucius' desire is to be someone whose positive presence brings harmony and wholeness, helping him to bond with those around him.

The early Confucian treatment of reciprocity thus contains at least two dynamics. There is, of course the injunction to respond to the kindnesses bestowed upon one by another, whether those kindnesses be material, emotional, spiritual, or otherwise. This dynamic has been clearly documented in the study of Confucian roles—all roles come with reciprocal obligations and mutual responsibilities. In addition, however, there is also an element of harmonization embedded in the term *shu* that should not be overlooked, and I would argue that

⁸⁰ Translation by Yuet Keung Lo (2014, 67), whose gloss is slightly different, but who is similarly adamant that Confucius "obliterates" difference between self and other in this passage.

the second of these dynamics is as important as the first in Confucian self-cultivation.

Children learning to love their parents is, again, the oft-discussed and obvious case study for the responsibility of beneficiaries. As a child learns to respond to his parents' love, he is cultivated into someone who naturally resonates with the affection of the parent and responds appropriately. This then serves as the foundation for their future relationship. Mencius 1B3, on the other hand, gives us a concrete example of how this transformative understanding of reciprocity might play out in action from the benefactor's side. In this passage we see Mencius urging King Xuan of Qi to take his own basic, human delights and satisfy those desires in a way that allows all of his people to benefit and therefore to respond harmoniously. King Xuan cites loving being courageous on the battlefield as a reason he is unable to govern in the way Mencius urges. Rather than censuring the king, Mencius rather asks him to "expand" his love of fighting so that it benefits all people. He urges King Xuan to take King Wu as a model to satisfy the desire for battle.

If one person in the world made trouble, King Wu was ashamed of it. Such was the courage [valor] of King Wu. And King Wu also brought peace to the people of the world with one burst of anger. In the present case, if Your Majesty also brought peace to the people of the world with

one burst of anger, the people would only fear lest Your Majesty not be fond of courage.

Here we have an instance of the king taking his love of courage and satisfying it in such a way that the people benefit from it and thus respond to it positively. In other words, we have Mencius recommending that the king tune his actions in such a way that the natural reciprocal response from the people is a positive one. The king and his people are thus attuned to each other and their relationship is thereby strengthened. Furthermore, where the king may previously have seen others as a means to quench his love of fighting (this discussion takes place in the context of diplomatic relations), this way would force him to see others as people to be protected, thus changing the nature of his relationship with them from objects to responsive agents.

Put another way, *shu* as a mode of harmony causes people to *cohere*. This phrasing owes a debt to Willard Peterson (1986) who first introduced the term into Confucian studies, and then to Brook Ziporyn's recent championing of coherences as groupings that are a source of value and intelligibility. (2012, 89) The heart of King Wu's valor is that it is "expansive" —it includes (groups) the people within its purview and thus becomes a source of continuance and pleasure (Ziporyn's understanding of value in early Confucianism) for everyone.

In establishing others, King Wu is established himself, and we see *shu* as not only an internal act of sympathetic reasoning, but as an active force leading to the kingdom cohering as a whole.

In different, non-harmonic conceptions of reciprocity, it might be conceivable that fulfilling a reciprocal obligation necessitates no further contact and could potentially mark the end of relational ties. Rousseau's civil society is conceived as a gathering of independent actors who agree to work together, temporarily or not, for the sake of furthering their own individual interests is one such model. While such a society's rule of non-harmonic reciprocity might dictate that favors be returned, once this has occurred, there is nothing in the interaction that ties the involved parties together beyond familiarity — paying one's debt ends the connection. Confucian reciprocity, on the other hand, is meant to construct the beginning of a relationship. By harmonizing the relationship involved and helping it to *cohere*, Confucian reciprocity attempts to build connections between people by attuning the people involved to the subjectivity of the other. At very least, as seen in the example of King Xuan cited in the section above, Confucian reciprocity and filial reverence in particular aim to move people from seeing others as objects to harmonizing with them as fellow humans, or as ends themselves rather than as means to an end. Because of this,

shu in its complete form cannot be properly used as a mode of clever self-service (i.e. the attitude that “I’ll do for someone else so that something I can’t do myself is returned to me”).⁸¹

2.2.1 Modes of Relationship

As we have seen, the Confucian self is contextual and thus highly ambiguous. This means the boundaries of a contextual self are continually drawn, blurred, and redrawn, and the boundaries between self and other are no exception. We can understand what has been described in the above section on harmonic reciprocity as the beginning of a movement along a theoretical spectrum of relationship, a spectrum which I see as ultimately representing different ways of representing a spectrum of separation, overlap, and unity in relationship and meaning.⁸² I see Confucian self-cultivation as navigating the ambiguity of self by guiding a person from complete separation toward unity. Every relationship has the potential to move along this spectrum, and our

⁸¹ The relational rather than the *do-ut-des* mentality comes with its own form of abuse. For example, someone could begin a relationship in order to bind someone else to them against their will through obligations that cannot be paid back; in China, this concept of the unpayable debt has been used to rationalize the absolutism of parental authority and a lifetime of subservience. Nevertheless, this abuse highlights the point that I make here: even if it is unwanted, reciprocal obligations force unwanted *connections*.

⁸² As I will also discuss in chapter 3, meaning is a particularly localized form of relationship.

relationships often occupy multiple places along this spectrum simultaneously. What has been described above introduces some of the ways Confucianism attempts to resolve this ambiguity in favor of intersubjective relationship and occasionally the experience of unity.

This tri-modal spectrum appears in a wide range of scholarship discussing meaning and relationships. Martin Buber's classic *I-it* and *I-thou* relationships serve as an excellent starting point. *I-it* relationships are described as subject-object relationships, in which a subject evaluates someone or something in terms of their instrumental value (i.e. as a means to an end). Because of this, *I-it* relationships are completely without empathy, as one does not attribute even the barest level of agency necessary to the other. As Buber notes, this is not a true personal relationship; the complete lack of recognition afforded the "*it*" in the interaction prevents any real relating (1947, 6). *I-thou* relationships, on the other hand, are relationships between two agents who mutually recognize each other. If *I-it* relationships are subject-object relationships, *I-thou* relationships are *intersubjective*. In this, there is an analogical comparison between self and other in which we recognize some aspects of the other as being the same as those of our selves. The other is still other, but the baseline agency of the other is recognized affording a basis for true relationship.

In Buber's *I-it* and *I-thou* relationships, then, we have the first two marks on the aforementioned spectrum. As mentioned, *I-it* relationships are not true relationships and thus represent complete separation between self and other. *I-thou* relationships, on the other hand provide at least a basic analogy between self and other, and thus represents at least the barest of overlaps. The stronger the analogy, the greater the theoretical overlap. I would thus propose that the strength of intersubjective encounters can be characterized along lines of depth of attentiveness and thickness of connection. On one hand we can have the minimal amount of awareness of others as others, and this might pull us to be courteous to those we meet along the streets or give a little of our time or money to the homeless we pass. We may be peripherally aware of their subjectivity—just enough so to make a minimal gesture—but it remains largely obscured to us. On the other hand, we have the neigh rapturous experience Buber describes in the beginning of *I and Thou*: "If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things. ...with no neighbor, and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heavens...all else lives in his light." (1923, 8) There is obviously a spectrum to be found between these two points, and I would suggest that movement along this scale has to do both with the empathic capacity of the parties involved and with

the attention given to that particular person.⁸³ Whether it is that we simply lack the energy and personal resources to confront the immensity of the *Thou* of everyone we meet or whether we have other reasons for avoiding this level of connection with random strangers, the fact is that our experiences of others often have marked variances in the intensity of our awareness of how deep their *Thou*-ness goes.

Keep also in mind, however, that intersubjective relationships do not just happen between people; it also occurs between people and objects or deities. Buber, after all, was primarily writing about relationships between man and God. The analogy in that particular relationship is limited because of the deep, ontological disparity and difference in capacities between God and man. Though the analogy exists (through free will, agency, or man as the *imago dei* perhaps) God is irreducibly Other and ultimately mysterious. Shinto *kami*, as particularly arresting instances of nature, are also helpful points of reference. In addition to being drawn from the ranks of animals and people, *Kami* can be trees, mountains,

⁸³ I also offer the reminder that when dealing with other people, we often slip back and forth not only between relative depths of intersubjective interaction, but between *I-Thou* and *I-it* relationships over the course of our days. Reynold Gregor Smith notes this in the introduction to *I and Thou*, "Indeed, it is true that even when a *Thou* is truly confronted it becomes an *It*. Nevertheless, to speak of and to act towards another person as if his reality consisted in his being simply a *He*, that is, an *It*, is disloyalty to the truth of the meeting with the *Thou*." (1928, vii)

storms, and other things that are normally understood to lack agency yet are experienced as *thou* rather than *it*. Similarly, we often attribute human attributes to animals, and to things as well—almost all of us can remember wanting to talk to or yell at a piece of malfunctioning equipment.

These two marks on the spectrum have analogues in Roy Rappaport's low and mid-level discussions of meaning. Low level, or discrete, semantic meaning derives its ability to convey information by creating ever-finer distinctions. Thus, as he says, the classic philosophical sentence "the cat is on the mat" relies on distinctions in meaning between "cat" and "mat." Intersubjectivity finds an analogue in Rappaport's mid-level meaning: analogy. Here, it is not the object's discreteness that is conveyed, but their areas of mutual resonance. Note, however, that difference is as important to analogy as similarity—no one finds a simile between two identical objects meaningful. Rather, the power of analogy is the identification of similarity in two readily different objects or events. Meaning in this case is thus dependent upon both difference and similarity. Similarly, while there is always that underlying subjectivity that is mutually recognized in an intersubjective interaction, as we have seen, subjects can be radically different in spite of that basic, shared presence. Intersubjectivity is predicated on the otherness of the other.

This is not so for the final mark on this spectrum. At the far end of the spectrum then, lies the pole we have not yet discussed: unity. This is a state in which the boundaries between self and other disappear entirely, and one's environment and others within it are experienced as a part of the self or the self is subsumed into it. Experiences such as this are often found in descriptions of mystical experiences. Take for example an account of unity with God documented in William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

Into this pervading genius ... we pass, forgetting and forgotten, and thenceforth each is all in God. There is no higher, no deeper, no other, than the life in which we are founded. 'The One remains, the many change and pass;' and each and every one of us *is* the One that remains.... This is the ultimatum... As sure as Being—whence is all our care—so sure is content, beyond duplexity, antithesis, or trouble, where I have triumphed in a solitude that God is not above. (2009, 350)

In such a state, other and cosmos merge into and are experienced as self. Here, if separation is experienced at all, it exists only as that separation that happens between two parts of a whole. There is no *I-thou* relationship because no other exists. Only *I* remains, or beyond that, pure, global experience, without *I*.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Note that this type of state as I describe it can come either in a transcendence of differences and mutual presence, or by a descent into the chaos of non-differentiation. Georges Bataille's *Imminent Immensity*, for example, discusses this state as a pre-individual, pre-personal, pre-social state outside of conceptual distinctions (1992, 18, 27). While it does not share characteristics with classical unity as described above, we can understand *imminent immensity* as a loss of self and a mergence into the undifferentiated flow of the world's push and pull. Given

Rappaport's high-level meaning places *participation* as the basic foundation of meaningfulness at this level, and that I believe helps the understanding of how unity is engaged in. On the simplest level, participation means being an active part of something, though it says nothing about how much one's own will directs the action. Much of the time, participation can take place only in the surrender or circumscription of one's own will to a larger set of rules or roles. A child who runs around the baseball diamond kicking the baseball can hardly be said to be participating in a baseball game—he's actually playing a different game entirely. Similarly, the experience of unity involves being fully present to the moment, but allowing oneself to be carried by the flow or structure of the event to some extent.

2.2.2 Intersubjectivity and Reciprocity

Given this theoretical model, what we see in the section on harmonic reciprocity is the navigation of the Confucian person away from the relation-less I-it mode of seeing the world toward the I-thou mode of seeing the world. This is the beginning of the process of humanization—the recognition of others as

its similarity to certain naturalistic conceptions of the Way in early China, like the Way of the *Daodejing*, I include both the “sublime” and “pre-self” versions of unity here.

others. In Charles Taylor's scheme, the value of the other as other would be the first of the set of values that serves to create a set of morals for strong evaluations and thus provides the first locus for the emergence of the Confucian moral self. Harmonic reciprocity is not, of course, a fully developed moral hierarchy of worth; rather, it represents only a single moral principle, albeit one that Confucian ethics, however conceived, emphasizes heavily as an integrated component. Given that it does not provide a full-blown ethical stance, we should not expect that it alone is able to constitute a full moral identity in the way that Charles Taylor describes.

What it does do, however, is to suggest one of the underlying ways the Confucian self is constructed. If, as I have argued above, we take reciprocity to have the goal of harmonizing two or more people so that interactions between them create a mutually resonant "like-heartedness," and if this is understood to be the *root* of the Confucian cultivation of the self, then it naturally gives rise to a self that is experienced strongly as *intersubjective*. Infants and children grow into their potential and actualize their full humanity by learning to recognize other subjects, namely their parents. This takes place primarily in the course of learning to reciprocate their parent's affection and thereby learning what is necessary to enter into true relationship. Confucian reciprocity functions so that

relationship (rather than the discreteness) is experienced as the fundamental and primary unit of humanity. This is a strong reason why harmonic reciprocity leads to a Confucian self that is first and foremost experienced intersubjectively.

Taylor's theory of self-formation adds weight to this understanding of self. If Confucianism is understood to place foundational value upon filial reverence (and thus harmonic reciprocity), then the tradition as a whole flags connectivity as a basic element of self-worth. In this view, the worthier person is one who is contextually constituted rather than the one who is independent and discrete; the ambiguity inherent in being contextually determined (rather than the fixity of being independent and discrete) is that connections formed run deeper, and the self is more able to harmonize and cohere in disparate situations with a variety of people. Simply put, someone who views themselves purely as being formed from relationship would value connectivity more than those who consider themselves individual and whole in themselves. Thus for the Confucians, an intersubjective self would be a worthier self than a discrete self.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ One does not, of course, expect to see this explained explicitly within Confucianism itself. This is nevertheless derivable from the discussion of harmonic reciprocity given above.

How, then, should we portray the Confucian self as intersubjective, and what are the possible ramifications of intersubjectivity on the process of extending empathy to strangers? Summarizing and condensing the views of the scholars who have elaborated on intersubjectivity, Brook Ziporyn defines intersubjectivity thusly:

The intersubjective relation might include such things as the apprehension of being apprehended; the sense of being seen, challenged, confronted, and judged by an independent, unpredictable other with an unseen interiority like one's own; and the desire to impress, inspire, intimidate or please. (2000, 41-42)

According to this theory, this apprehension gives rise to the second order self-awareness required to understand the existence of other like minds and relate to them as fellow humans. Returning to Martin Buber's concepts of *I-it* and *I-Thou* relationships is helpful. Again, *I-it* relationships are described as subject-object relationships in which a subject evaluates someone or something in terms of their instrumental value (i.e. as a means to an end). As Buber notes, this is not a true relationship; the complete lack of recognition afforded the "*it*" in the interaction prevents any true relationship (1937, 6). True relationship, according to Buber, can only come about by the recognition by a subject that he or she is being addressed by something capable of addressing him or her at a level at least

analogically comparable to one's own (Ziporyn's "unseen interiority like one's own").

Ziporyn continues to clarify the picture when he asserts the *primacy* of intersubjectivity as a defining characteristic of early Chinese understandings of personhood.

When I speak of the primacy of intersubjectivity [in Chinese thought], I mean the idea that in an important sense, intersubjectivity is in fact prior to, and more fundamental than, subjectivity per se, that is, the inner sense of a given individual consciousness taken in isolation, without explicit reference to other consciousnesses. ...we may say that intersubjectivity changes mere unreflective awareness of the kind assumed to exist in animals into self-consciousness of the type we generally mean when referring to human subjectivity. (2000, 41-42)

In other words, if intersubjectivity is prime, then the self-awareness that is a constituent part of human personhood can *only* arise in relationship. According to Nicholas Crossley, this recognition of being recognized (or apprehension of being apprehended) provides a "sense of the perspective of the other" which *allows* the self to conceive of itself as another would (1937, 55).⁸⁶ In this process

⁸⁶ For contrast, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9:9 Aristotle notes that a good friend is requisite for happiness because we are constitutionally designed for company. Moreover, friends provide aid in recognizing the self. "The good man feels towards his friend as he feels towards himself, because his friend is a second self to him. ... what makes existence desirable is the consciousness of one's own goodness, and such consciousness is pleasant in itself. So a person ought to be conscious of his friend's existence...." Aristotle here describes the intersubjectivity, but does not include the primacy of intersubjectivity.

the subject simultaneously becomes aware of the self as a self and the other as other, and thus becomes aware of awareness itself.⁸⁷ In short, intersubjective primacy challenges a discrete and atomic conception of the human person by asserting that many qualities seen as essential to personhood—the capacity to relate to others foremost among them—can arise *only* in relationship with others. Building on this, Ziporyn notes that if personhood is primarily intersubjective, “individual consciousnesses, in spite of their inner sense of being independent of one another, are actually co-dependent poles of the intersubjective relationship and come into existence only as a by-product of a prior proto-aware intersubjective relation.” (ibid.) The primacy of intersubjectivity, then, is the notion that this mutual apprehension is in fact prior to any individual self-reflectivity; in effect, this apprehension *creates* self-reflectivity and is thus the birthpoint of self-consciousness.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Crossley glosses Mead: “conceptions of self and of other are formed at the same time by the same process.”

⁸⁸ Here I use intersubjectivity as a term for what Nick Crossley (1996) defines as “egological intersubjectivity” or the intersubjectivity that deals with self-consciousness arising as a result of the interaction between two subjectivities. This is not to be confused with “radical intersubjectivity,” the notion that *perceiver* and *perceived* arise in relation to each other noted by Merleau-Ponty. Radical intersubjectivity is significant to this project, however, because it suggests that what arises from contact with alterity is insufficient to bring about self-awareness. This becomes significant later when discussing egological intersubjectivity’s correlation to boundaries and group constitution.

At this point, it should be clear that intersubjectivity is a relatively basic form of empathy—it requires recognition of one’s own awareness in another. This empathy, the co-arising of self and other, is what I suggest the harmonizing aspect of harmonic reciprocity brings to awareness. Beneficiaries in a relationship are urged to learn how to respond with gratitude, and in time, with reciprocal actions of their own. Filial reverence is the prime example of this. In learning to be filial, children as beneficiaries of their parents are slowly taught from birth how to see their parents as more than suppliers of their needs and desires. As their filiality matures, parents become full people. In other words, reciprocity attempts to lift the child from relating to her parents from an I-it schema to that of an I-thou schema and into an awareness of the subjectivity of another person. In this process, children become aware of themselves as more than their needs and satisfactions—they gain awareness of themselves as people like unto their parents.

Note also that even when it is considered prime, intersubjectivity depends on the recognition of at least some sense of separation; in this conception there is still an “I” which relates to a “thou.” Thus, while I agree with the claim that this “I,” cannot be understood in its *fullest* sense without attending to a sense of how the self is constituted by its relationship with the “others” which it encounters, self is still distinguishable from other if not separable.

On the other side of the relationship, benefactors are forced to empathize with others as they attempt to avoid treating others in a way they themselves would dislike being treated. In addition, they are confronted with the free will of their beneficiaries; though reciprocity urges an appropriately positive response, what form that response will take and whether or not this response will actually come is another matter. When both parties are finally acting in accordance with *shu*, their actions and emotions are also placed in harmonious alignment, and they are poised for the further building of their relationship.⁸⁹ Reciprocity conceived in this way and intersubjectivity thus fit hand-in-hand; in fact, as has been demonstrated in the above paragraph, Confucian reciprocity *requires* an intersubjective framework.

⁸⁹ Even when it happens exactly as expected and the appropriate reaction comes, we should not overlook the basic agency of the responder. Even if the overarching cosmological structure is that of a “cosmology of resonance,” one of Erica Fox Brindley’s suggested ways in which the Chinese correlative cosmology was conceptualized, this resonance between people is not an inert stimulus-response as might be observed in the natural world. The best type of response comes in the form of *suidong*, translated “movement with,” “following” or “compliance,” as Brook Ziporyn translates it (2000, 49), not to be mistaken for being passively moved, *bei dong* in the Chinese. The fact that one dancer in a pair might lead while the other follows does not mean that the follower has no choice of his or her own; rather, he chooses to follow because doing so helps to create a moment of beauty. Similarly, the responder in the above situation responds appropriately of his or her own accord because doing so helps to broaden both parties. For a more complete discussion of *zhudong* (leading action), *bei dong*, and *suidong*, see Qian Mu (1988, 20).

We can easily find Confucian selves framed intersubjectively in contemporary scholarship. The most extreme example is stated in the scholarship of Henry Rosemont (1997) and continued by Ames and Rosemont (2008) and Roger Ames (2011). In his groundwork piece, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary*, Ames makes the claim that we are no more than the sum of our relationships — an intersubjective understanding of the self, par excellence. Though this particular understanding of the person will be explored in more detail below, the point I wish to raise here is that such a view of personhood is readily available. My contention is that just as reciprocity is the root of Confucian development, intersubjectivity undergirds the Confucian construction of the self. This means that intersubjective interaction is the base component in the construction of the self, and that role-relationships are just particular instances of mediated intersubjective interactions.

There are two further relevant implications of an intersubjective understanding of Confucian personhood. First, it implies that the experience and definition of self is not and cannot be understood as being within the sole provenance of one subject. If awareness of our own subjectivity arises from the recognition of being recognized, the nature of how that second subject — the other being — understands us becomes a constitutive part of ourselves. More precisely,

if the process by which the subject becomes a self is created through another's perspective, this means that to a certain extent, the self is defined by the perspective of the other as well as its experience of itself. Every other perspective "X" (particularly if it is an agent of power in the subject's life) "creates" a version of the subject (the "self" that is seen by "X") that enters a dialogical, perhaps conflictual, relation with the subject's experience of himself. This "self" exists both in the mind of the subject and the perceiver.

Thus, if the intersubjective self is ambiguous due to its dependence in part on its relationships and its context, the constituting, intersubjective gaze is one means of reducing the ambiguity of self in a particular situation. The intersubjective gaze, replete with its judgments and classifications, both gives rise to and forms the self along its lines. Sometimes this takes a raw form, in which the subjects are free to make their own judgments regarding the other considered; in other cases, intersubjective interactions are mediated by ritual, role, or other socially given form of normativity.

Because of this and the fact that many social distinctions come with valuations, any intersubjective encounter is not without risk. Each encounter within the intersubjective field prompts a possible negotiation or struggle for control, what anthropologist Michael Jackson refers to as a struggle for

“intersubjective control” (1998, 18). As noted above, this struggle takes place between the world one calls and experiences as one’s own, and the world of the other. Complete self-definition or self-determination is only possible in extreme situations of social disconnect, in which there is no one whose will can overpower the subject and in which there is no one the subject “deems worthy” to recognize itself. (As noted before, this would describe an *I-it* scenario rather than a true relationship in which *the I-thou* is the key.) In other words, complete self-definition can only be attained by the utter and complete dominance of the subject’s-world against the other world, implying a complete breakdown of dialogue between self and other, a drastic, perhaps delusional estrangement. In common parlance, it requires “being caught up in one’s own little world” away from and outside of social reality. In order to participate in social realities, no one can ever be completely closed to the other. Jackson thus claims that our experience of engaging with the other is always fraught with “ontological risk.”

In his whimsical novel *The Last Unicorn*, Peter S Beagle illustrates this mutual permeability by placing the helplessness possibly experienced in the face of other subjectivities in the mouth of his bumbling magician Schmendrick:

“I know I am your friend. Yet you take me for a clown, or a clod, or a betrayer, and so must I be if you see me so... the enchantment of error that you put on me I must wear forever in your eyes.” (1968/1994, 29-30)

Here Shmendrick's inner emotional world, his self-definition, what he experiences himself to be, is far from being insular, hidden away, disconnected or protected from the outside world; despite the fact that he knows himself to be otherwise, Shmendrick still finds his self-definition crippled by the gaze of his conversant. This is a situation not uncommon in experienced life, and it becomes particularly acute when those struggling for control of their subjective worlds are in positions of social or economic disadvantage. Conflict is not, of course, the only the possible outcome of an intersubjective encounter. The opposite can also be true—the intersubjective gaze can potentially be as constructive as it can be destructive.

Jackson claims that self-definition is not the main stake in this game. Rather, in his words, “the critical issue is always whether a person is in control of this switching and oscillation between his or her own particular world and the world considered not-self or other.” (1998, 18) The above example is poignant not because Schmendrick is being defined by someone else (if she were an adoring fan, the above passage would have a different valence), but because has no *control* over an aspect of himself. The only recourse he has to avoid this is to negotiate with his companion in order to change her opinion of him, or to isolate himself from her so as to avoid the shaping gaze of her subjective world. This

process is what Jackson means by *control*, the process by which both parties fight for the sense that they retain some control over their own worlds in the face of another (an-other) subjectivity rather than being swept away in the imposition of another's will on one's own life. Conflict, of course, is only one possible outcome of an intersubjective encounter. Should the encounter be harmonious, it can be a powerful tool in helping to confirm and inspire both parties. A mother who sees strength in her son and a son who sees his mother as wise will both shape the other accordingly. Intersubjective control thus touches on a powerful form of personal agency I call "intersubjective agency." It not only represents the ability to define one's self, it includes the ability to help shape the selves of those around us.

Harmonic Reciprocity is thus a key component in shaping and protecting the Confucian self-in-relationship. Reciprocity requires and harmonizes intersubjective interaction, and it does so by limiting the ways in which intersubjective actions can proceed. Harmony is achieved in part by means of limitation. Harmony can be guaranteed only when certain possibilities are selectively allowed in a given context. The pentatonic scale that is dominant in Chinese music is a perfect cultural example of this — while the number of possible musical tones within a single octave is effectively infinite, music

requires the orderly limitation of those notes to a portion of that. Western music generally limits this infinite number of notes to the eleven-note chromatic scale, and the pentatonic scale reduces this number further to five. By doing this, the chances that the outcome will be harmonious are greatly improved. In a similar way, *shu* is a means, though minimal, of mediating social, intersubjective responses and guiding them toward a harmonious outcome. Part of the way it does this is by mandating that both parties relate in an at least a vague *I-thou* manner, thus removing *I-it* relationships from the social equation and forcing those governed by it to relate to each other in an I-thou manner.⁹⁰

Mediated or not, intersubjective interaction creates social reality and is *constitutive* of subjects. If a thirteen year-old child believes himself to be an adult but no one in society sees him as an adult, he is likely to remain a child until he can learn to assert his own sense of adulthood over and above the intersubjective control of others. If on the other hand, all of society treats him as an adult, he is likely to experience at least some aspects of adulthood regardless of whether he is three or thirteen years of age. More interestingly, if half of society treats him as

⁹⁰ This principle may be part of the reason why the golden rule is presented in its negative formulation (the “silver rule”) in *Analects* 15.23; the negative formulation helps to limit particular outcomes rather than opening up even more, possibly disharmonious ways one might approach the situation from the active golden rule.

an adult and the other half treats him as a child, his experience of being an adult or a child and thus his socially informed sense of self might shift depending on who is in the room at the time; the gaze of the other makes it so. Though it might be argued that the process of maturation involves the ability to filter the effect of intersubjectivity, as noted above, we can never completely escape its influence. If this theory is correct, and Confucian persons are understood intersubjectively, then Confucian persons are also responsible, in part, for their part in creating the character of the people around them, just as they are in part dependent upon others for their own self-definition. Thus every Confucian self can be considered created in tandem with the people around them; according to this theory, we are all products of co-creation.

Further references for this relational understanding of personhood can be found fairly easily in the *Analects* themselves. In 14:42 we see a passage in which Confucius asserts that true self-cultivation cultivates others as well:

Zilu asked about the gentleman.

The master said, "He cultivates himself in order to achieve respectfulness."

"Is that all?"

"He cultivates himself in order to bring peace to others."

"Is that all?"

“He cultivates himself in order to bring peace to all people. Cultivating oneself and thereby bringing peace to all people is something even a Yao or a Shun would find difficult.”

14:42 demonstrates the mingling of self and other; when one person cultivates himself, he cultivates everyone around him. In *Analects* 6:30, which we have seen before in our exposition of harmonic reciprocity, we see that benefactors in relationships also are transformed by their helping others.

子貢曰：「如有博施於民而能濟眾，何如？可謂仁乎？」子曰：「何事於仁，必也聖乎！堯舜其猶病諸！夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人。能近取譬，可謂仁之方也已。」

Zigong said, “If there were one able to broadly give to the people and bring aid the masses, what kind of person would this be? Could such a person be called *ren*?”

The Master said, “Why stop at *ren*? Such a person must be a sage! Yao or Shun would find such a task difficult. Those who are *ren*, in wanting to establish themselves establish others; in wanting to arrive at their goals, help others to arrive at theirs. Being able to make an analogy from what is near at hand can be called the method of *ren*.”

Both of these passages are thus read in a way that relies upon an understanding of the self that is open and interdependent rather than discrete and atomic.⁹¹

⁹¹ Robert Eno (1990, 72) states that the Confucian self as open system is a consensus position. See also Sor-Hoon Tan (2003, 197), Tu Wei-ming (1985, 124), and Ames (2011) among many others. For a specific reading of this passage with such an interpretation, see Slingerland (2003, 66)

This also means that the term “self-cultivation” is a little misleading. As noted above, the term “self” often connotes a sense of psychological interiority that is singular and independent. This is not entirely true for Confucianism. The first aspect of Confucian personhood is its intersubjective nature as mutually created. This mutuality of creation in turn implies the second relevant aspect of Confucian personhood. So long as they remain in relationship with others, (which, as just noted, is all the time) Confucian persons are *always* under the process of mutual co-creation. Confucian selves have a dynamism to them in part because of the dynamic nature of relationships themselves. Since intersubjective interaction continually creates and re-creates self-reflectivity, the character of that apprehension also continually alters the way in which the apprehended subject experiences itself over time.

In sum, the claim that I make in this section is that harmonic reciprocity represents a key moral principle that drives the social efficacy of Confucian ethics. Without appealing to harmony in general, Confucianism would theoretically be capable of generating virtue within individual actors but could not be credited for its ability to harmonize particular relationships on an internal as well as external level. Confucian reciprocity, as a modality of harmony, participates in and promotes this process. Harmonic reciprocity is also a

fundamental moral principle of relationship and the one that dictates that the Confucian, cultural self should be understood intersubjectively.

2.2.3 Strangers and Reciprocity

As noted in this chapter's introductory section, part of the challenge to Confucianism that King highlights is Confucianism's supposed sole reliance on concrete roles for moral guidance. This serves as its primary challenge concerning providing guidelines for dealing with strangers. Harmonic reciprocity, unfortunately, seems to be one of the factors limiting Confucian ethical guidance to concrete relationships. The priority of reciprocity as a motive force is ultimately what blunts the force of many Confucian responses to the issue of strangers. For while the extension of analogical thinking may help to cushion some of the aggressive excesses King worries about, harmonic reciprocity also imposes a hierarchy of ethical priorities that prevents the general silver rule from being applied to strangers over and above one's own connections.

Perhaps the most famous and quoted of means of overcoming is the principle of extension, the seeds of which can be found in the *Analects* and which is developed further in the *Mencius* (specifically 1A:7, 2A:6, 7B:31, and 7A:15) and further emphasized in the *Xiaojing*. Extension begins with "proceeding by

analogy from what lies nearest by" (*Analects* 6:30, Eno translation), which in this case means to use that which is experienced in immediate contexts as a guide for behavior in situations further from home. As discussed in Chapter 1, however, in the *Mencius* this extension is tempered by the doctrine of graded love and was never meant to take on the attention or consume the amount of energy that caring for one's own family does. If we were to take that step, Mencius would accuse us of "having no father," or to be more specific about his criticism, of giving to others what rightly belongs to our own parents because of our obligation to be properly responsive to their gift of life and the sacrifices they endured to raise us. Mencian graded love recognizes that we live in a world of limited resources and proportions those resources according to the thickness of one's pre-existing connectedness.

We should also note that much of Mencius' discussion of extension is oriented toward rulers, who have extension analogically built into the role that they carry. Though a strong case can be made that extension should be practiced by everyone, I would suggest that there is also a sense built into Confucian roles dictating how necessary it might be for one to engage in the process of extension. For a ruler, extension is an imperative given by his pre-existing, thick relationship to the kingdom and its people as a whole; the parent-child analogy

serves well to illustrate this. For a starving peasant family, the achievement of extension would be admirable, but from the Confucian standpoint it is hard to imagine how extension could be considered a moral imperative. It may be the duty of all to engage in self-cultivation, but Mencius himself notes that certain standards of material goods must be enjoyed for a commitment to *ren* to be effective (1A7, 3A3). Following this, Benjamin Schwartz notes that Mencian moral imperatives seem to apply more to the gentleman and sages than to the common man. (1985, 280)

Thus while extension may be an advanced stage on the path of virtue's cultivation, from the Confucian standpoint, caring for blood kin—those with whom we've likely developed the most complexly layered bonds of material, emotional, and otherwise binding reciprocal obligations—should take the lion's share of our energy until it runs easily and harmoniously. (This is something common experience shows is not always an easy task!) While not so light a priority as the Confucius of the *Analects* paints the six arts to be in 9.2, Mencian extension seems to lack the moral imperative that relationship and the resulting obligations that arise from it holds. The reciprocal obligations that arise from direct relationship thus represent both the beginning and core imperative of Confucian moral life—the fewer the personal ties that exist between two people,

the weaker each person's motivation to spend energy caring for the other ought to be. Since strangers lack the personal connection that fuels reciprocal obligations or social functions, reciprocity seems to mandate that for most people, the effort spent on caring for strangers will be minimal at best.

Might this minimal effort, however, not be enough? Even if Confucian ethics does remain focused on steering immediate, concrete relationships, given that the time we spend interacting with strangers is minimal compared to the time we spend with those we are connected to, should not a minimum of empathy be sufficient to guide us through our interactions with them? Though this seems like a reasonable reaction on the surface, it does not take into account the nature of our interactions with strangers. Even a brief, commonsense examination of the contexts of interactions between strangers will reveal why this simple rule is inadequate without having to involve the vast literature written on relations with strangers.

Historically, strangers have represented an unknown, and therefore are a source of unpredictability and risk. Sometimes, strangers can be safely ignored, thus eliding the problem completely, but this also implies a strong confidence in public protection, as one might expect to see in places with effective authorities. In these cases, there is no significant interaction between strangers. In cases

where safety and predictability cannot be guaranteed, strangers represent as much of a possible threat as they do an opportunity for growth (both personally and communally speaking), and it is the need to determine which of these possibilities a particular stranger represents that prevents empathy from being the likeliest response. In a word, we have no confidence that strangers will not be a threat, and without some sign of that stranger's aims and allegiances, we have no basis for confidence in them. In other words, strangers force the extension of trust, which always involves risk.⁹²

Furthermore, both risk and connection always involves a consideration of costs, costs which can and will drain resources from family, friends, and other connections. This presents dangers in two forms. First, the stranger could simply be dangerous without benefits, a cheat, thief, robber, or worse. Second, and perhaps just as likely, the person could offer some reciprocal benefit, but be more of a drain than a boon. Engaging the person thus offers a risk being tangled in a

⁹² The distinction between trust and confidence used here is made in Adam Seligman's *The Problem of Trust*. Briefly, trust occurs when the aspect of the person trusted that we need to rely upon is unknown or at least untested. Confidence is built over time through observation and experience (1997).

connection that one and one's family can ill afford.⁹³ The ignoring of strangers recalls the lament of the lone wanderer in Ode 119 of the *Book of Odes* (cited at the beginning of the introduction).

At the same time, ignoring strangers who wish companionship along the road does not actually cohere with the silver rule. What is needed in relationships with strangers is a mechanism for allowing safe connection with the unknown, a way in which opening up to the other is mediated. In a later chapter, I suggest that a Confucian worldview provides this safety through the mediating factor of ritual, which provides the dual protections of predictability and distance while opening the performer to the other through an embodied exchange of meaning. In the meantime, this point returns us to the chapter theme of intersubjectivity and thickness of connection.

2.2.4 Strangers and Reciprocity-mediated Intersubjectivity

In the section on three modes of experiencing self and other at the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the concept of the "thickness" of intersubjectivity, the extent by which we are aware of the depth of the other's

⁹³ Robert Weller's work again provides a contemporary touchstone for this point: "The Chinese talent for the market lies less in their ability to draw on social networks than in their ability to prevent those networks from bleeding them dry." (1999, 65)

subjectivity. Building on this concept, Confucian reciprocity not only forces intersubjective empathy, it strengthens the ability to access a deeper awareness of others' personhood. At the same time, given the notion of graded love, it also follows that in Confucianism, the relationships within which the deepest awareness of the other's unique subjectivity occurs should be with those closest to us. Just as family members should be those to whom we first owe our time and energy, it also stands to reason that under the Confucian rubric, those whose subjectivity we engage with most fully should be family and those to whom we owe the most. Strangers, then, remain on the outside, their subjectivity acknowledged, but only thinly so.

To summarize, reciprocity and intersubjectivity are promising tools to link strangers, for two main reasons: first, because of the way that the selves constituted by valuing harmonic reciprocity are selves that are naturally open, and secondly because harmonic reciprocity provides a general ethical guideline that is theoretically applicable to everyone. Ultimately, however, though reciprocity and intersubjectivity represent the inception and roots from which relationships spring and thus are powerful tools for the extension of empathy, under the restraining factor of Confucian graded love (which is a product of reciprocity-driven appropriateness itself), it is difficult for them to serve as

avenues to connect strangers in meaningful way without moving beyond what Confucianism explicitly specifies in its canon. Rather, what we have in the canon are guidelines for specified roles and rituals for more generalized interaction, ritual practice providing the opening for intersubjective connection while the canon serves to protect the important local groups.

2.3 Confucian Ethics and the Conceptual Self: Ritual, Role, and Virtue

The above section addressed what I consider to be a key, if not the most important concrete moral guide in Confucianism. As noted, harmonic reciprocity both requires intersubjective interaction and functions as one means by which the ambiguity of intersubjective interactions might be resolved. As I argued above, part of what harmonic reciprocity requires is engaging with the other as an “other” rather than as a means to an end, and this mandate itself limits the range of formative intersubjective outcomes to the range of I-thou relationships. It thus undergirds all relational action and is a “lane marker” which other Confucian moral guides incorporate and build upon. This does, however, leave a very broad range of ambiguity for selves cultivated within that range. This section of the chapter examines how this ambiguity is registered, reinforced, and contextually resolved in a more fully explicated Confucian system.

I briefly consider here three overlapping resources in Confucian self-cultivation that both serve as its normative backbone and contribute to the formation of the Confucian conceptual self: ritual, role, and virtue. I see these three resources as forms of socialization that help to shape the self in part by mediating the way in which intersubjective interaction unfolds. Furthermore, though these resources largely speak to individual relationships, their normativity also offers possible grounds for construing group membership. Following the trend of this chapter, I consider them in a reasonable order of practice and development—beginning with ritual, moving through roles, and finally discussing virtue.

This process is obviously not singularly linear; all three of these aspects of Confucian cultivation will be practiced and developed over the course of one's life. Nevertheless, I use this order for two reasons. First, following Antonio Cua, I hold to the view that social roles are developments of ritual and thus occupy a higher place on the ladder of development. One first learns individual interpersonal skills before being able to weave them together into a fully developed social role. Similarly, individual rituals teach the basic physical and emotional movements that eventually cohere into a whole Confucian role-relationship. Both rituals and roles are thus inherently interpersonal. The

constant practice of rituals and roles will eventually form the character dispositions that constitute virtue.

The second and more immediately pertinent reason for this order can be derived from the formulation above: this order proceeds from being most strictly choreographed to being least choreographed. When people need the most direction (when they are young, for example, or when there are more moving parts to a situation than can easily be kept in mind), they draw upon on ritual to offer a deeply formal guide to the situation. Notated ritual cannot, however, choreograph all of life. While roles build from and include rituals, they also begin to take over what ritual notation cannot possibly begin to choreograph in the form of expectations, and thus necessarily present a lower level of specified direction. While rituals tell one exactly what to do, exactly how to do it, and the emotions appropriate to the process, roles give more general guidelines. The injunction that a son must offer respect to his elders (a role expectation) offers far more flexibility and variation than the script for how to burn incense at the ancestral alter. In a word, roles are less *formal* than rituals proper, in the original sense of the word as “holding to a fixed form.” Roles thus build upon and are non-choreographed extensions of the interpersonal lessons ritual attempts to inculcate.

As is often noted, ritual also directly influences the formation of virtue, and virtues in turn affect a person's ability to ably carry out his roles. In a certain sense, then, virtue and roles operate at a similar level; both are generated directly from ritual and each plays an important part in the practice of the other. I have chosen to place virtue at the end of this chain because of its special place in the overall dynamics of this study. Virtue is the least formal of the three resources mentioned here and thus the first of the three that comes to mind when considering the treatment of strangers. As noted in the section on reciprocity, this may be complicated by one's duties to those to whom one shares closer bonds, but virtues offer a built-in failsafe for behavior in situations where one has no immediate obligations or conflicts with strangers encountered — when one is abroad, for example. Where roles govern particular relationships, virtues are instilled in only the agent himself and thus are theoretically applicable no matter the relationship or situation.

Role and virtue are two of the different standards for ethical formation and decision making that Confucianism has been cited as heavily relying upon. Each of these particular standards comes with its own benefits and drawbacks. Though a full treatment of this subject is beyond the scope of this study, I will touch on some of these briefly at the end of this chapter and discuss what I see as

the trouble with establishing one form or another as the primary mode of Confucian ethical decision making.

2.3.1 *Li* (禮): Ritual, Scripted Physicality, and Joy

Li 禮 is one of the cardinal Confucian concepts. Traditionally, it has been translated as “rites,” “ritual,” or “ritual propriety,” and this range of translations gestures toward the broad range of concepts that are indexed by this term. On one hand, “rites” points toward a highly choreographed set of formal actions that are liturgical or ceremonial in character. “Ritual propriety,” on the other hand, seems to point toward a sensibility, a feel for how ritually appropriate action unfolds. Given that “ritual” threads a middle path between the two, it is my favored translation. Furthermore, “ritual” also invokes the valences of many of the anthropological studies of ritual that I will also call on. According to the anthropological writings of Roy Rappaport, ritual is “the performance of more or less invariant actions or utterances not entirely encoded by their performers.”

(23) As will be explored, *Li* exhibits all of these characteristics, thus making “ritual” a good candidate for translation. Ritual as a class of action (within which *li* is included) receives its own detailed treatment in chapter four (section 4.1). That chapter will be aimed at bringing the Confucian characterization of ritual

discussed here into conversation with the broader field of ritual theory. For now I seek to explain Confucian *li* as a concept of self-formation.

I will thus also focus particularly on *li* as the performance of a ritual script. This is in part due to the obvious fact that formation begins with the basics. Before one can learn to create alterations to standard rituals, one must master the standard rituals themselves. I will, however, later also argue that the ritual script represents the heart of the Confucian tradition. When I refer to a ritual “script,” I point to the socially normative form for a ritual performance. This may or may not be written down, and in many cases may have been passed down purely through practice and supplemental oral instruction, as is often the case with modern hand-shaking or lay performance in liturgy or ceremony. There may or may not be an a written script for hand-shaking, but most contemporary people generally manage to get it right through mimicry, practice, and possibly the occasional pointer rather than through conscientious study of a written form. There is, nevertheless, a general “scripted” form that they follow and which is generally recognized. There is much more to be said about the topic of a ritual script and its existence as a form of text, but this will be addressed in the final chapter, when I attempt to construct a picture of ritual practice in the Confucian historical context.

It has been noted that following ritual scripts helps people to develop a particular “sensitivity.” Much scholarship has been devoted to this aspect of *li—li* is both the ritual itself and the sense for how that ritual be performed in cases where the original script is either inapplicable or inappropriate to the circumstances.⁹⁴ I seek in no way to detract from the power and richness of these accounts. At the same time, I would like to refocus attention upon the script itself as both the foundation and ultimately, the best representation of the *pinnacle* of ritual cultivation, for the harmony and synchrony represented by the ritual script is that which the extensions of ritual seek to mimic. I will return to this latter argument later in this section.

For now, we can examine how the ritual script contributes to self-formation. The most remarked upon aspect of *li* has been its scripting not only of external actions but also of internal motives. A set of passages in the second chapter of the *Analects* demonstrate this most easily, beginning with *Analects* 2.5:

⁹⁴ This usage is particularly common in the *Mencius* and occurs often in the *Xunzi* as part of the phrase 禮儀 *liyi*. This usage of the word, however, requires that a particular practitioner be at a relatively developed along the path of cultivation, mature enough that he or she be able to recognize how to extend the spirit of choreographed rituals beyond their immediate dictates. This aspect of *li* will be discussed further in the section on virtue. Here I have bifurcated a single principle to place emphasis on the set nature of ritual dictates.

孟懿子問孝。子曰：「無違。」樊遲御，子告之曰：「孟孫問孝於我，我對曰『無違』。」樊遲曰：「何謂也？」子曰：「生事之以禮；死葬之以禮，祭之以禮。」

Meng Yizi asked about filial reverence. The Master said, "Never disobey." Fan Chi was driving the Master's chariot, and the Master told him, "Meng Yizi asked me about filial reverence and I replied, 'Never disobey.'" Fan Chi said, "What did you mean?" The Master said, "While they are alive, serve them according to li. When they are dead, bury them according to li; sacrifice to them according to li."

Here, we have filial reverence constituted by ritual practice. When his pupil asks how to participate in the aspect of human flourishing that is filial reverence, Confucius directs his pupil to serve them according to ritual. The obvious implication here is that ritual contains the directives that allow development on these lines. Analects 2.7 and 2.8 give us specifics as to what filial ritual here entails:

2.7 子游問孝。子曰：「今之孝者，是謂能養。至於犬馬，皆能有養；不敬，何以別乎？」

Ziyou asked about filial reverence. The Master said, "What is meant by filial reverence today is nothing but being able to take care of your parents. But even hounds and horses can require care. Without respectful vigilance, what is the difference?"

2.8 子夏問孝。子曰：「色難。有事弟子服其勞，有酒食先生饌，曾是以為孝乎？」

Zixia asked about filial reverence. The Master said, "It is the expression on the face that is difficult. That the young should take upon themselves the hardest chores or that the eldest are served food and wine first at meals – whenever was that what filial reverence meant?"

Note that although Confucius sees filial reverence as being constituted by ritual practice, in these passages he specifically points toward the appropriate internal motivations that make up correct ritual and appropriately communicated filial reverence. In 2.7 he cites respect as being key to filial reverence (and by corollary to the rituals by which one serves the parents), and the reference in 2.8 to one's facial expression also points us toward the inward, emotional motivations that are key both to filial reverence and to ritual. Thus becoming a filial person requires internalizing the ritual—shaping oneself so that one embodies both physical and emotional prescriptions of the ritual. Should one's feelings or dispositions fail to spontaneously align with those ritually prescribed, one is enjoined to take the necessary steps so that they do. If properly undertaken, the ritual becomes truly expressive, without leaving the socially recognized means of expressing and demonstrating filial reverence. In Michael Ing's helpful terms, *li* has "pressive" elements; they both seek to impress values and forms upon the performers and simultaneously should ideally be expressive of a person's actual feelings (2012, 28). These three passages thus provide us with a brief but clear window into the process of ritual cultivation.

As noted, it is the script that plays the key role in this process. It is so key, in fact, that it becomes clear why *Analects* 2.5 and several other scholars, such as

Kwong Loi Shun (2002), portray the ritual as being constitutive of the Confucian virtues and human flourishing. For those on the Confucian Way come to conceptualize filial reverence and other Confucian virtues primarily through the dictates of the ritual script. In fact, because of the relational nature of Confucianism, discussing virtue and ritual represents a tautology of sorts. In this formulation, filial reverence is not just an internal state; it is a child's active communication of honestly felt gratitude and respect for a parent. I stress the communicative aspect here; all communication requires mutual intelligibility. One cannot greet a neighbor with a scowl and expect him to feel welcome (at least, not without some prior norm or communication on the point). Similarly, one must follow the accepted norms for intelligible communication. Absent successful communication, which includes the parent's ability to recognize the child's sincerely felt gratitude and respect, *there is no filial reverence*.⁹⁵ Ritual is the means by which expression can be made intelligible and thus is that which transforms expression into communication and the feelings of respect and

⁹⁵ Or, at very least, one's filiality is severely crippled. There are duties to the family line that one might perform filially without communicating respect to one's parents, such as Shun's taking a wife without first speaking with his father. Nevertheless, I assert that connectedness is the essence of virtue and without connection, Confucian virtue is hobbled.

gratitude for parents into true filial reverence.⁹⁶ *Li* is thus both the marker by which Confucians guide themselves toward flourishing and harmony and is simultaneously flourishing and harmony itself. Even if the ideal synchrony between the felt and the norm has not yet been achieved, the practice of ritual is still part and parcel of this process of self-development, and performance of the rituals themselves ostensibly signify social acceptance of ritual's moral normativity, marking at least the first steps toward self-formation.⁹⁷

Filial reverence is, of course, only one flavor of virtue at which ritual cultivation aims. The canon of other virtues—*ren* 仁 (benevolence, humanity), *yi* (rightness, appropriateness), *li* (propriety, sense of ritual), *zhi* (wisdom), *xin*

⁹⁶ Though I follow Chenyang Li's later interpretation of *li* as a grammar (2007) more closely than Shun's constitutive understanding of ritual (2002), I think this aspect of the marriage of communicability and values is the heart of where Shun's insistence on the linkage between *li* and the other virtues, such as *ren* lies. Li's grammatical explication addresses this issue in a neat package. Nevertheless, Shun's point on this is well taken; even if we do not bind virtue to one particular form, some form is necessary if we are to avoid the process of verbally explaining the meaning behind each and every one of our expressive actions.

⁹⁷ This also means that Confucian cultivation is subject to a certain amount of "moral luck" as outlined by Bernard Williams (1981) and Thomas Nagel (1979). That is to say, morality and the development of virtue in Confucianism are not entirely controllable by a single person. It might be the case, for example, that a parent might be incapable of comprehending the filiality of a child due to mental illness, inveterate perverseness, or other constitutive or circumstantial factors. Mencius' recount of Shun's family story demonstrates exactly this—even though Shun attempted to be as filial a son as possible, it could not be communicated because of his family's obdurate hatred of him. Shun recognized this by weeping (*Mencius* 5A1). In the Confucian version of the story, Shun's family is eventually converted by his virtue and repent, which I would suggest is an important outcome for the Confucian ideal of cultivation. The concept of irresistible virtue, as described in *Analects* 12.19, can be seen as a mitigating factor to moral luck.

(truthfulness, trustworthiness), *zhong* (loyalty, wholehearted effort), *gong* 恭 (reverence), *kuan* 寬 (magnanimity), *min* 敏 (diligence), and *hui* 惠 (kindness) among them—are all aspects of human flourishing which ritual norms and ritual practice help to cultivate. I will discuss these virtues in greater detail in their own section below; for now, it suffices to say that Confucianism places the cultivation and embodiment of all of these virtues within the framework of ritual, and the ritual script serves as the most potent crystallization of these virtues. Given the importance of communicativeness to virtue, all of these virtues are practiced and developed socially.

This discussion also brings another aspect of ritual to the surface. In many cases, ritual scripts give prescribed, ritualized roles. Like social roles, ritual roles help to build predictability by standardizing the behavior one can expect from the role bearer. Unlike the familial social roles that King and Ames claim represent the heart of the Confucian tradition, ritual roles are not necessarily stable aspects of a person's self.⁹⁸ In other words, many ritual roles are

⁹⁸ Even if we grant that they are “lived” rather than just “played,” a claim that I hope to nuance in section 6.5, claiming the “guest” or “host” role as a part of identity because it has been lived out a few times would dilute the explanatory power of the concept of role in the formation of self.

transposable onto a number of different people. Take the following example of a hosting ritual from the “Qu Li Shang” chapter of the *Liji*:

凡與客人者，每門讓於客。客至於寢門，則主人請入為席，然後出迎客。客固辭，主人肅客而入。主人入門而右，客入門而左。主人就東階，客就西階，客若降等，則就主人之階。主人固辭，然後客復就西階。主人與客讓登，主人先登，客從之，拾級聚足，連步以上。上於東階則先右足，上於西階則先左足。

Whenever (a host has received and) is entering with a guest, at every door he should give place to him. When the guest arrives at the innermost door (or that leading to the feast-room), the host will ask to be allowed to enter first and arrange the mats. Having done this, he will come out to receive the guest, who will refuse firmly (to enter first). The host having made a low bow to him, they will enter (together). When they have entered the door, the host moves to the right, and the guest to the left, the former going to the steps on the east, and the latter to those on the west. If the guest be of the lower rank, he goes to the steps of the host (as if to follow him up them). The host firmly declines this, and he returns to the other steps on the west. They then offer to each other the precedence in going up, but the host commences first, followed (immediately) by the other. They bring their feet together on every step, thus ascending by successive paces. He who ascends by the steps on the east should move his right foot first, and the other at the western steps his left foot. (1.17, Legge Translation)

In this case, this ritual guides the behavior of a host and a guest, a relationship that is contextual and fluid and can be performed between people with no prior connection. All that is required for harmonious progress is for both participants to be familiar with the motions of the ritual script. These roles are contextually limited and very specific. Every participant knows exactly what to expect from all of the other participants, down to which foot will land on which stair at what

time. Familiarity with the script replaces familiarity with a person, thus allowing harmonious interactions between complete strangers. More importantly for the larger questions of this study, it also builds a confidence in the predictability of other participants, a predictability that includes both actions and aims. Because of this, in time ritual co-participation can coalesce into solidarity.

This brings us to the first of the major challenges I offer to King's claim that Confucianism holds no guidance for the treatment of strangers. If we focus on Confucianism's heavy reliance on ritual, what we find is not that Confucianism lacks guidelines for the treatment of strangers, but that strangers who share a context with each other will have ritual roles that are able to guide their interactions with the other. This means that these interactions are not actually open-ended. Quite the opposite is the case—these interactions are guided by the *strictest* of requirements. This makes perfect sense; formal rules of conduct are established precisely because we need guidelines for how to deal with unfamiliar people. Familiarity with others due to frequency and length of interaction provides us with all the expectations necessary to know how to navigate relationships with that person. In these cases, contextual modifications of ritual scripts can be performed with greater ease simply due to the fact that personal familiarity will lend knowledge of how a particular person will modify

a particular ritual script. The less familiar a person, the more closely the script needs to be followed to ensure harmonious interaction. In the above example, the required treatment of host by the guest and the guest by the host is very clear.

In addition to generating a deep ritual familiarity provided by the intricate coordination of action between strangers, the ritual also provides a personal, intersubjective connection between two participants in the ritual. The greeting ritual above gives clear clues as to the attitude between the two participants; this interaction is steeped in a sense of respect and reverence. Some form of yielding appears no less than five times in such a short ritual, taking the form of either the asking of permission or the yielding of the higher place to the other participant. Given the fact that Confucian rituals are to be performed with integrity—that is, with a wholeness that ideally disallows a disparity between action, emotion, and intent—we can easily fill in the character of the intersubjective action between these two participants. Both will view the other as a person worthy of deep respect. This short ritual interaction thus also creates a personal, positive, intersubjective connection between strangers that serves as a foundation for a new relationship. When we further consider that the ritual remains the same for people who actually are close, we can easily see how

ritually scripted interaction can serve as a medium for the forging of new relationships.

It is true that in comparison to the listed rituals governing familial relationships, the extant rituals governing this type of transposable role are relatively few. Nevertheless, if ritual truly was to extend to all aspects of interpersonal interaction, the conjecture that there were also scripts that may or may not have been formally recorded is not terribly far-fetched. We do have recorded instances of ritualized behavior that do not appear in the *Liji*. The tenth chapter of the *Analects*, for example, presents an illustration of Confucius' own ritual behavior.⁹⁹ *Analects* 10.25 gives a less comprehensive but nevertheless suggestive picture of interactive rituals:

⁹⁹ Hagen (2010), following A.C. Graham (1989, 12), Slingerland (2003, 98) and Ames and Rosemont 1998, 134) portrays chapter 10 as being *descriptive* of Confucius' "sense of ritual" rather than as Confucius following a pre-ordained external script. I do agree that this is a strong interpretation of chapter 10, and support their reading of chapter 10's contents, but would also remind that a "sense of ritual" arises from scripting. Observant Catholics may have the unconscious, instinctual sense that when a priest ends even an unfamiliar passage with the phrase "where he lives and reigns forever and ever" the proper response is "Amen," but only because they have seen or performed that bit of script over and over again. Thus, although the sense of ritual may point directly to a cultivated disposition, the cultivated disposition depends upon following ritual scripting, regardless of whether or not that ritual script has been codified or is merely passed along "intercorporally" through either mimicry or a self-conscious effort to learn them. I would suggest that the Confucius of *Analects* chapter 10 is likely descriptive, but that it must bear resemblance to and draw inspiration from scripting that was already well-determined in other contexts. This in turn requires far more scripting than we have available in extant texts.

見齊衰者，雖狎，必變。見冕者與瞽者，雖褻，必以貌。凶服者式之。式負版者。有盛饌，必變色而作。迅雷風烈，必變。

Upon seeing one in mourning dress, even if it were someone familiar, the Master would change his expression; when he saw any one wearing the ceremonial cap, or a blind person, though lowly, the Master would invariably express his respect through his presentation of himself. To people in mourning he bowed forward to the crossbar of his carriage; he bowed in the same way to any one bearing the tables of population. When at an abundant feast, he would change his expression and rise up. With swift thunder or a violent wind, he would change countenance.

Given that the Confucius of the *Analects* was strict about acting in accord with ritual at all times (12.1), we can assume that these actions have a basis in some ritual script.

In tying this all together, we can see that what the ritual script does is to create familiarity and predictability in relating to people in which neither of those characteristics has yet been formed. It does this by creating localized, transient, and highly choreographed roles relevant only to the immediate context. These roles, rather than being inhabited long term, like social roles, are donned and doffed as the circumstance warrants. They are nevertheless formative of people because they create formative relationships. The thicker the length and complexity of the ritual, the thicker the relationship formed. This is due in part to the intersubjective nature of Confucian ritual, and in part to the sharing of physical, pre-conceptual, embodied meaning, a concept I will return to

in a later chapter. In effect, what ritual scripting offers is a highly controlled space that guides and forms new relationships according to social norms.

This form of relating is, of course, only viable with strangers within the Confucian ritual community. Nevertheless, for those to whom it applies, it is a far cry from the absence of ethical guidelines that King claims is the case. Ritual is an ethical modality for the Confucians, and its form is required most when the least familiarity is present. Understood in this manner, we can see that interactions between strangers are those interactions that are *most* highly guided rather than the least. Again, this accords with a certain strain of common sense; even in contemporary society, new relationships are almost always more formal than older relationships; formality helps to create predictability and harmony.¹⁰⁰

Ritual is also meant to be an activity of shared joy. Confucius notes on several occasions that the performance of ritual should be joyful. Here I do not mean to imply that all rituals should leave one with a smile on the face. As noted above, one should feel the emotion appropriate to the situation — mourning

¹⁰⁰ Note that formality is not mutually exclusive with familiarity. Deep, intimate relationships can develop and be conducted in highly formal terms. Alternatively, new relationships can develop in a completely informal manner. I would argue, however, that the latter of these two situations offers far more opportunities for things to go wrong than the former, which is why Confucianism favors the former over the latter.

rituals create sadness, serving at court requires a grave, reverential countenance. Nevertheless, there is an aspect of what I am referring to as joy in the rituals, which I feel can be accessed through two lines, both of which reflect certain assumptions about beauty and joy.

What I see as the reigning sense of Confucian joy and beauty can be termed a *participatory* aesthetic. This is to say that I believe the primary modality of the appreciation of beauty and joy in the Confucian tradition lies not the enjoyment of novelty but in the act of engagement. I see Confucian engagement as having two wings: first, the pleasure of challenge, control, and mastery, and second, the pleasure of integration, of becoming part of a whole. Both of these are present in the greeting ritual above. The first is what marks Roger Caillois' *agonic* category of play, that which encompasses skill and competition. The pleasure of a well-executed chess game, well matched competition, or even a perfectly played piano recital all exemplify this type of joy, and some of these activities are often engaged in specifically for that joy. These activities all require focus, concentration, and the application of learned skills. Ritual, like all of these examples, is a particular skill, and the consummate execution of that skill brings this same joy. It bears mentioning that in regard to ritual, *agon* as mastery can also include the skill necessary to read a particular situation and give the most

fitting response. The first line of the *Analects* is an encapsulation of this: "To learn, and at the appropriate time practice what has been learned, is this not a pleasure?"

The pleasure of integration is the process of becoming whole, which in Confucianism usually involves becoming part of a fitting, larger whole. In some cases, this may involve the resolution of a tension, but more than anything else, this pleasure is exemplified by the pleasure of participation and connection with others. Consider *Analects* 11.26:

「點！爾何如？」鼓瑟希，鏗爾，舍瑟而作。對曰：「異乎三子者之撰。」子曰：「何傷乎？亦各言其志也。」曰：「莫春者，春服既成。冠者五六人，童子六七人，浴乎沂，風乎舞雩，詠而歸。」夫子喟然歎曰：「吾與點也！」

[The Master asked Zeng Xi"] "Dian, how about you? [What are your heart's aspirations?]" Having been lightly playing the zither, Dian set the instrument aside while it was still humming. He responded, "My wishes are different from those of these three gentlemen." Said the Master, "What harm is there in that? Each has only spoken of his aspirations." Dian then said, "At spring's end, when the spring's clothes already finished, along with five or six capped young men, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze on the rain dance terrace, and return home singing." The Master heaved a deep sigh and said, "I am with Dian."

Here we have a picture of engaged connection with the cosmos in the form of the seasons, with the local weather, and with others of varying age groups. The inclusion of the rain altars implies communal ritual practice, as does the road home, livened by song. Note that we do not have specific identities for Zeng Xi's

proposed compatriots—the exact identities of these youths does not seem to matter as much as their ability to play a fitting role in this joyful pageant. Ritual thus becomes a mode of sharing joy, of connecting to others with whom one shares ritual and perhaps only ritual. Note also how embodied and visceral this passage is—this is a theme we will return to in later chapters.

This scene is opposed to the desire of the other three disciples of Confucius, all of whom have the worthy goal of governing a state as their desire. Despite his own desire to participate in state affairs, Confucius nevertheless gives his approval to Zeng Xi's local vision of the joy of ritual practice and communal life. This is due, in part, to the fact that the others seemed to lack the ritual deference (*rang*, yielding) appropriate to those who can effectively run a state from the Confucian standpoint. There is, however, more to the point that Confucius makes here; the true core of the ritual that is to govern all under heaven is a shared joy in becoming connected to and participating in the ritual life of one's *immediate* community. This seems also to be a theme that connects with other passages in the *Analects*. Take 7.32, for example, which records Confucius waiting until singers have finished before asking them to repeat the song and joining in with a harmony. This expresses deference, but just as importantly, it also demonstrates the importance of harmonious participation.

Again, Confucius may or may not know who these singers are. Nevertheless, familiarity with the script (in this case, a musical script) allows people to engage joyously with each other without the benefit of prior association. This joyful co-participation in ritual is, at the same time, a mode of ethical co-formation, both intersubjectively and intrasubjectively (as a person attempts to shape themselves to participate with integrity). All of this means that ritual forms new bonds.

For all of the above reasons, we can and should understand ritual to be the basic building-block of Confucian culture. It is that foundation upon which the remainder of Confucian culture is built, and the framework that allows the development of roles and virtues. Rituals begin with and govern the immediate context, and as such are the most particular of the three levels I have suggested here. Roles and virtues, to which we will soon turn, are less bound by context and are thus naturally more “abstract” than rituals, particularly in the sense that roles do not provide the same sort of “physical context” that rituals do. Roles rely on the ritual scripting of even the most basic movements, such as how to walk when approaching parents, how loud to speak, whether to bend at the knees, waist, or other such background physicality that is presumed known when roles are explicitly addressed.

To sum up the claim of this section on ritual thus far, then, I have suggested that ritual practice is one possible answer to King's worry that the Confucian ethical system lacks guidelines in dealing with strangers. In spite of the Confucian focus on direct relationships, which are largely limited to the sphere of a person's immediate contact, the ritual tradition offers a viable means to connect with strangers through the medium of ritual roles. These ritual roles in turn serve as a stepping-stone to create more permanent, lasting connections. In spite of this, scripted ritual roles cannot serve as the equivalent of ethical maxims even though they are deeply ethical. They are not easily transposable, and they cannot be distilled into a simple principle and still function in the way that they were intended to. Ritual scripts also require being deeply rooted and trained in a ritual tradition in a way that ethical principles do not require. Nor should ritual be reduced in such a fashion; the compelling way in which they govern local contexts is precisely where its genius lies, and this would be lost in any attempt to globalize that which is local by need and design. The most compelling way of extracting a "code of ethics" from ritual, as noted above, is by focusing on its two outgrowths—social roles and virtues—and neither are close to maxims or principles in form or method of guidance. Nevertheless, to argue that Confucianism has no ethical guidelines that can serve to guide interactions

between strangers is to overlook the vast richness of the embodied, Confucian ritual tradition.

King's statement should be understood in the context of the modern face of Confucianism as an intellectual tradition rather than a tradition of deep practice. With such an outlook of Confucianism, it is easy to understand how the paucity of the Confucian conceptual system can come under fire. Concepts are abstract by nature, and Confucianism makes an effort to ground itself in the lived realities of daily life. The creation of a "sixth role" is indeed one way forward. However, it is my contention that to continue to intellectualize Confucianism in such a way is to tear it from its very foundations; this move ultimately results in the impoverishment of a tradition whose deepest ethical convictions are scripted into an embodied, relational practice. Ritual scripts allow ritual familiarity to stand in for personal familiarity, thus jump-starting the formation of ethical connections between strangers.

2.3.2 Roles

Roles are socially defined, and they present an intersection between the individual and the group of which they are a part. Roles thus naturally help to resolve the ambiguity of the self by allowing social sources of meaning to inform and mediate how the self is conceived. Roles define the selves that inhabit them

by locating them in a network of values and relationships. From the angle of social organization, they represent a particular aspect of the division of labor, which imposes values in terms of the ends toward which they are oriented, such as survival, nurturance, progress, or other goals. These values in turn dictate the expectations as to how a person must, should, and can act that are concomitant with those roles. Thus the nature of roles in any society reflect the values that it hopes will constitute its people.

Studies of roles and role ethics in Confucianism often focus on stable social roles, particularly on the five relationships outlined in many of the classical texts, and this set of stable, social roles is what this section seeks to address. As King and Ames have pointed out, however, stable social roles exclude the stranger by nature. The section of this chapter dedicated to roles will thus be brief; I will limit myself to two points. First, I will indulge in a brief discussion of the connection between ritual and role, largely to emphasize the fact that the difference between rituals and roles in Confucianism is merely one of immediacy. Second, I will touch upon one influential understanding of personhood that arises from role. The previous section of this study demonstrates that focusing only on constant social roles obscures a plethora of

other rich, transient ritual roles in the Confucian tradition.¹⁰¹ This in turn points us to the fact that roles are not easily divisible from the greater realm of ritual, and we can see this correlation through a brief examination of the historical development of *li*.

Though ritual was initially a form of communication with the gods, early on, ritual comes to be associated with social order. In “Between the Heavenly and the Human” Yü Ying-Shi (2003, 64) recounts an early Chinese myth of the “Separation of Heaven and Earth.”¹⁰² Antiquity began with period of purity, in which man and gods respected their proper places in the cosmic order. Though they had immediate access to each other, men respected the gods, and the gods for their part occasionally descended through the appropriate intermediaries of shamans (*wu*) to bring blessings and prosperity. This was followed by a “time of decay” in which gods and men intermingled and order was overturned as each household took ritual upon itself, arbitrarily performing ritual as it pleased.

¹⁰¹ All roles, are, of course, social roles. In this section and this study, however, I will use the phrase “social roles” to discuss the more stable, permanent roles that we can comfortably think of as constituting us rather than roles we play and then leave. The only real difference is that the connections guided by social roles are seen to be stable (father and son, for example), while ritual roles may or may not be (third baritone on the road home from the rain altar).

¹⁰² Though Yu does not provide a date for the origin of this tale, he understands this tale as a pre-Confucian justification for the shamanistic and imperial monopoly on religious power in early China, thus implying its origin during that period.

Because of this, Heaven and earth were separated by the sage king Zhuanxu, and access to Heaven was granted solely to the emperor and the *wu* shamans through canonical ritual (64). Even in this tale, religious observance (the precursor of *li* as a category) is a means of relating to the gods, but causes chaos when individual preferences overtake social standards. Thus, the individualization of the rituals that will become *li* was depicted as leading to a breakdown of the cosmic order. As Yu reads it, this myth folds the cosmic order into a social order within which both gods and humans participate, and *li* thus becomes not only a mode of communication, but a normative method of ordering both social interaction and the cosmos. It further justifies hierarchically differentiated ritual roles by giving them the same sacred character. Just as the gods were served, so too are people served.

This trend continues so that by the time of Confucius, this relationship between a ritual order and social order had been made all but explicit, though the means by which this happens is less than clear. Shirakawa and Akatsuka are convinced that at least as early as the Western Zhou period, state institutions were complexes of sophisticated ritual; ritual was bound up with and partially constitutive of state order. While rituals began addressing *Tian*, they increased in number, some began developing into ritual that established Zhou state

institutions. "Attestation rituals," for example, gave witness to the succession of rank and government position. Thus ritual continued to develop, becoming more and more a part of the Zhou state apparatus and emerging in the form of a set of systematic court rituals, which Sato describes as the "perfection of an orchestration of the government of Zhou as a 'ritual state.'" (M. Sato, 184-186)

This trend illustrated by the development of the Zhou court marks the beginning of a shift in *li's* application; what was once a medium of relationship to the divine has now become definitive of *human* social relations. I understand the aforementioned attestation rituals as marking a beginning in the integration of *li* with general social roles.

This in turn evolves further into specific and detailed roles over the course of interpersonal interaction in court ritual. Drawing upon different sources, Patricia Ebrey writes that during the late portions of the Western Zhou period, writers began to use *li* to refer not only to grand ceremonies and liturgies, but also to "routine protocol for greeting, presenting gifts, and expressing deference" (1991, 30). Thus, *li* expanded from ceremony to the realm of civility and etiquette. In time, the more formal ritual and procedures of etiquette began to influence each other and eventually flowed together into one concept that encompassed all aspects of human interaction, and trickled down from the court into at least elite

standards for daily life. Through this process, the character of *li* rewrites the nature of all Confucian social relationships, including roles.

Given this, we might question if it even makes sense to study the formative aspect of roles apart from the rituals from which arise. After all, rituals contain all of the moral and ethical content of roles. My brief answer to this is that roles represent one level of extrapolation from heavily scripted, immediately contextual rituals. They impose fewer limitations, and leave much more leeway in the method of carrying out one's duties. Role expectations are expressed in general terms, though they may be constructed from and co-extensive with ritual mandates. As a result, an examination of roles shows us how the contextuality of *li* is generalized, which in turn shows us how the lessons of ritual play out in a less restrictive form. Social roles thus also represent a broadening of social and temporal scope. Where ritual roles are immediately contextual, giving instructions for how an interaction ought to play out in a delimited space and time, social roles are understood to be held over the course of a longer time. If what we do is part of who we are, it makes sense that the things we do most have the greatest formative impact. Social roles also have the ability to hold people in networks of relationships for longer times than do ritual roles.

Contemporary scholarship has thus begun to examine role ethics as a possible classification for Confucian ethics. This theory, most famously made by Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames, makes some of the same claims I have made above: that we are contextually constituted and formed most deeply by our relationships, and that personal formation happens in an intersubjective space. Rosemont and Ames' formulation further takes role-relationships to be our *only* constituents:

In reading Confucius, there is no reference to some core human *being* as the site of who we *really* are and that remains once the particular layers of family and community relations are peeled away. That is, there is no "self," no "soul," no discrete "individual" behind our complex and dynamic habits of conduct. Each of us is irreducibly social as the sum of the roles we *live*—not *play*—in our relationships and transactions with others. The goal of living, then, is to achieve harmony and enjoyment for oneself and for others through behaving in an optimally appropriate way in those roles and relationships that make us uniquely who we are. (Ames 2011, 96; emphasis original)

While I feel that their formulation goes too far in insisting that we are the sum of our roles without remainder, their point is well taken. The level of role makes this formulation easy. As Rosemont commonly explains it, we cannot be daughters without fathers, teachers without students, husbands without wives, subjects without kings, or citizens without nations. Who we are is thus a function of who and what we are related to. Without relations, we are reduced to nothing, or so goes the theory. Since social roles are what govern our constant

relationships over time (as if they were long-term rituals), they are the greatest constituents of our selves, and the most lasting means by which we are elevated from being economic “simple weighers” to being selves of worth. As noted, the governance of stable social roles receive the lion’s share of attention from the Confucian tradition. Even from a ritual point of view, a majority of rituals are geared toward the governance of family relationships, and beyond that the analogized ruler-subject/minister relationships.

Unfortunately, this is as far as this discussion of roles can take us in this particular context. As strangers by definition have no stable social role to play, they are unable to influence or enter personal formation on this level. Roles may position us within a group, as is the case in families, but it does not relate us to those outside a particular division of labor. To specify my criticism of roles as the primary determinant of a person, I believe the issue with making a person solely a product of his roles is that roles run into issues of “granularity,” to borrow a term from the worlds of physics and computer science. Following these disciplines, I use the term “granularity” to refer to the level of detail accounted for by a particular system. While Ames, Rosemont, and others have identified a key dynamic within Confucian ethics in their classification of Confucianism as a role ethic, this classification risks obscuring two things. First, it masks the true

nature of relationships, both in Confucianism and in general by reducing the entirety of interpersonal interaction to that of stable social roles. As we have seen, this is not the case—temporary, ritual roles like that of host and guest play significant parts in Confucian development but are not stable parts of our identity in the same way that family relations or other stable relationships might be. This is even more the case in instances where novel contexts require interactive “ad-libbing,” which is generally the case for any content-driven (rather than role-driven), informative conversation. Second, the focus on roles fails to account for many actions that are not easily or primarily understood in terms of role. Take, for instance, Confucius’ refusal to sit on a mat without straightening it first (*Analects* 10.9), or his refusal to eat foods that were improperly cut (*Analects* 10:8). Both of these behaviors make sense when we consider them from the point of view of the cultivation of virtue, discussed in the next section, but require what feels like an unnecessary amount of roundabout explanation if we attempt to describe them as part of a specific role-relationship.

2.3.3 *Virtue*

Virtue is also a well-treated topic in Confucianism. As discussed, Confucianism’s conception of human flourishing is bound with its concept of

virtue. Of the grouping of ritual, role, and virtue, virtue is the most nebulous and least scripted in terms of its effects on behavior, and it thus serves as one further level of removal from the strict dictates of the ritual script. Socially speaking, virtue is that which takes over once the ritual script has failed completely. When neither role nor ritual has a specific, local injunction, Confucianism relies upon the ingrained dispositions of virtue to extend the spirit and aims of Confucian cultivation to order relationships ethically. Thus on the one hand, roles and rituals are immediately formative of virtues, and one cannot arrive at Confucian virtue without this particular path of formation. On the other hand, virtues represent the full internalization and the full maturity of rituals and roles.

As I portray it, then, virtue is an aim of human life and coextensive with social harmony. Harmony and flourishing can be separated conceptually, but not practically. Confucius' claim that virtue must be developed with other people is well known, but I would further emphasize that his thought and that of his expositors indicates that harmony is ingredient in *all* of the virtues, from filial reverence to trustworthiness to the virtue that Confucius presents as the keystone of the tradition, *ren*. In fact, *ren* is often translated *co-humanity* to signal exactly this. One of the means by which *ren* is recognizable is the fact that one who is perfectly *ren* knows exactly how to act virtuously in all relational

situations, regardless of context, which further means that they know how to harmonize with everyone.

Building upon this, in some later interpretations of the Confucian Way, such as those found in the *Zhongyong* and *Daxue* chapters of the *Liji*, the cultivation of virtue is seen as a process of ever-growing contextual integration, where one harmonizes with ever broader contexts—the self, family, neighborhood, kingdom, and cosmos. In this process of integration, each level is understood to be made *whole* or complete. This is to say that upon integration, each level will function harmoniously within itself and as a part of a larger, coherent whole. The mark of the complete sage, then, is that all under heaven becomes integrated into a harmoniously functioning, joyful whole.

Such a sage is, however, the fabric of myth. Virtue more often admits to varying degrees of actualization. Though sages are said to be virtuous in all times and places, most people are not and cannot be virtuous all of the time. I would argue that lapses in virtue take two forms. First there are flaws of character, which have to do with the dispositions themselves. Cruelty, lying, brashness (to make random specific examples), and other failures to be motivated by the Confucian virtues would fall into this category. I would also argue that there are flaws of communication—giving an incomprehensible gift,

even from a place of good intention, for example—would also be a violation of virtue as understood by the Confucians. Both of these flaws are disruptive of smooth social functioning on the physical and emotional levels.¹⁰³

The first of these flaws represents insufficient development of one's moral character. The second, however, is not so simple. Again, notation can extend only so far; beyond this is the realm of interpretation. Even someone who is a master of the ritual script can make alterations to the script that would be appropriate in most circumstances but not in the current one. This could be due to lack of knowledge about the current situation rather than a character flaw, but this in itself also represents a disjunction between the performer of the ritual and the circumstances of the people around him. Such a disjunction is inimical to the connective aspects of Confucian virtue. The extent to which one has cultivated the virtues, then, is also the extent to which one is able to make alterations to ritual scripts and role requirements without rupturing the fabric of social harmony. As noted in the section on ritual, virtues, in being connective, must

¹⁰³ This further means that virtue is, to a certain extent, culturally specific. This makes sense to a certain extent; virtues as articulated here are a concrete articulation of Confucian values. They are not, however, culturally limited—there remains the potential for Confucian values to be translated into the customs of another culture so as to be equally integrative and intelligible, so long as the values integrated into that culture's own social "grammar" are not at odds with that of Confucianism. I will speak more on this point in chapter six of this study.

also be *intelligible*, and this is the point on which the ethical efficacy of virtue hinges.

Because of this, much scholarship has been done analogizing *li* and language. This analogy is further beneficial not only because it emphasizes the same communicative nature of *li* that I have been discussing, but also because it provides many parallels. For example, Chenyang Li (2007), building on but diverging from Kwong Loi-Shun (2002), has made a provocatively strong case comparing *li* to a grammar, albeit a grammar of behavior. Like a grammar, *li* is a sign of learning and culture (or lack thereof if improperly executed) and is normative of communication (it determines correct and incorrect communicative structures). Virtuosity in both grammar and *li* allows meaningful communication in ways that are both novel and comprehensible. Like a grammar, *li* is seen to be flexible, evolving, and “living,” in that new situations call for novel expressions of traditional patterns. He thus talks about sages as ritual virtuosos, much in the same way as we might discuss linguistic virtuosos, as masters of a flexible system. Similarly, Michael Ing (2012) discusses the ability to ably make recognizably *li* modifications to ritual scripts as “fluency,” a metaphor that easily finds an analogue in language. What these analogies reveal is that Confucian virtue is not virtue if it is not properly connective or communicative in some

way. Even those rituals that are practiced alone express, to some extent, an orientation toward actualizing potential connectedness.

Chenyang Li's grammar analogy is particularly helpful to keep in mind also because it stands closer to the understanding of ritual as a virtue, as a "sense" of how to express one's self understandably and appropriately. This disposition serves as a means by which we determine the forms of communication in situations where none exist. The remainder of the virtues function in much the same way but are content driven; if *li* is akin to a sense of how to communicate intelligibly in novel ways, the rest of the character-driven virtues can be likened to the content of the communication — to be respectful rather than rude, benevolent rather than unkind. The virtues together create a character that instinctively seeks to work integratively with others.

Virtues thus may also offer a means by which relationships with strangers can be approached ethically without relying on particular guidelines, rules, maxims, or roles. For strangers familiar with Confucian ritual norms, ritual scripts work much better because they provide a formal means for the expression of virtue that is easily recognizable. The virtues, on the other hand, are better for interactions with strangers outside the Confucian tradition. For while they may not instruct a person on exactly how to proceed, they provide a character

foundation that would push them to interact with them *ethically* as opposed to economically or through an *I-it* relationship. Though issues of translation would delay the connectivity and harmony that is the marker of complete virtue, the impetus to create that connection would remain.

Given what we have said about the process of self-cultivation so far, one possible objection to this option is to claim that Confucian selves are thickly formed in such a way that ethical action is necessarily filtered through a film of role-based appropriateness. According to this view, virtue would not be free-standing; rather, virtues would be bound to the role-relationships that require and exemplify that particular virtue. Thus one is filial to a parent but not a ruler, deferential (*ti*) to older siblings but not spouses and so on. Furthermore, the other virtues that seem to be less firmly tied to a particular relationship, such as *li* and *yi* are generally those virtues that give a sense of what virtue is appropriate in which concrete relationship and a means of expressing that virtue, and thus do not actually give a constructive guidance on what exactly to do in the case of a stranger. In the most extreme articulations of this view, *ren*, as the capstone, cardinal virtue, would require instantiation through one of the secondary virtues that compose it. Since each of those in turn requires contextual knowledge about the status of the “other” and their possible standing in relation to oneself,

knowledge of the other would be required to understand which virtue is appropriate in which situation.

It is true that virtues are often offered as a guiding star that is exemplified by one particular relationship, and it is true that not all virtues are appropriate to all relationships. If we narrow our band of virtues to the most preeminent of the virtues (*ren*, *yi*, *li*, *zhi*, and *xin* for example) and hold our discussion of relationships to the five primary relationships, this criticism might hold more weight. If, however, we expand our horizons, include the lesser virtues that Confucius claims are part of the overarching pattern of *ren* (reverence, magnanimity, diligence, and kindness for example), and consider the number of roles available for consideration outside the major five, it becomes clear that such a thickly specific channeling of virtue is both impractical and unnecessary. *Yi* as appropriateness provides the sense of which set of virtues are appropriate to which relationships in what situations; this is not the work of role.

One further element of virtue aids its ability to help forge meaningful connections with strangers: *de*, or the charismatic, attractive power that Confucianism claims adheres to people who are morally developed. Theoretically, at least, *de* could help this process by helping attract and convert others to the Confucian Way. This is illustrated by *Analects* 9.14:

子欲居九夷。或曰：「陋，如之何！」子曰：「君子居之，何陋之有？」

The Master wished to dwell among the uncivilized tribes. Someone said, "What would you do about their crudeness?" The Master said, "When a junzi dwells among them, what crudeness could there be?"

In other words, the attractiveness of the Way embodied would cause a spontaneous conversion to the values and methods of Confucian culture. In actuality, the efficacy of this attractive power is probably overstated here, and as Michael Ing (2012) points out, the authors of the *Liji* seem aware of the fact that ritual and virtue always seem to fall short of properly ordering the world. Nevertheless, it plays a strong part in the Confucian understanding of how Confucians should ideally interact with strangers: hold fast to the Way by connecting as harmoniously as possible without doing violence to oneself.

2.4 Conclusions

As the above three sections have demonstrated, there is a progression in Confucian cultivation beginning from rituals and flowing into roles and virtues. Though I have spent relatively little time discussing roles, I would argue that as the level at which extrapolation of ritual first takes place, roles probably do play the largest role in character formation. It is in integrating roles that a person begins to be able to make strong evaluations for themselves, without the constant ritual script to fall back upon. To be sure, the performance of and commitment to

ritual is also highly formative. Roles, however, are the level at which things can go wrong most easily, and thus the level at which the most formative cogitation on the spirit of rituals must take place. If we consider the time spent interacting in relationship, social roles are also probably the most relied upon level, as that level that stands between the scripted and the completely new context.

In spite of this, however, Confucianism cites *li* and the attractive power of *de* as the proper means by which the world is to be governed. *Analects* 2:3 states

子曰：「道之以政，齊之以刑，民免而無恥；道之以德，齊之以禮，有恥且格。」

If you lead the common people with coercive regulations and order them with punishments, the commoners will avoid them and will have no sense of shame. If, however, you guide them with Virtue, and order them by means of ritual, the people will have a sense of shame and will fall in line.

Here Confucius directly links the running of a country to ritual and virtue, the beginning and end of self-cultivation. This is brought to its pinnacle in *Analects* 15:5, which shows the sage king Shun taking the ritually correct position and all of society following suit, ordering itself around him. “Was not Shun one who was without contrived action and yet governed? What did he do? He was

reverent himself and faced directly south [in his proper ritual position as a ruler], that is all."¹⁰⁴

I would argue that the focus on *li* and virtue's attraction in this passage represents a key understanding in how Confucianism deals with those relationships that cannot be carefully scripted or given concrete expectations. At this point—the boundary of the immediately familiar—a major challenge to ethical action arises, and it is at this point that ritual and virtue take up their social responsibilities. Stable social roles are the least helpful at the fringes—in cases where there are no established expectations such as is the case with either fellow Confucian strangers or people who share nothing except a common humanity. In this case, ritual and virtue are the most helpful resources for finding ways of mediating intersubjectivity so that any particular interaction contributes positively to one's self as a nexus of relationships. Ritual represents a return to the formal basics. Just as we tend to rely upon easily agreed upon topics of conversation with unknown people—the weather, sports, or well known, non-controversial current events, for example—I would suggest that the Confucians

¹⁰⁴ 子曰：「無為而治者，其舜也與？夫何為哉，恭己正南面而已矣。」

relied upon ritual to provide highly structured, familiar contexts within which to build new relationships. The intensely layered levels of meaning occurring during ritual thus serve as substitute for familiarity and a springboard to establish new connections. This only works, of course, when a particular stranger is part of one's own cultural group.

When fully developed, virtues are not deliberative or reasoned ethical guidelines; rather, they are habitual and spontaneous. This is part of the reason why they seem to serve poorly as guidelines in cases of moral quandary. Confucian virtues do not tell us what to do. Instead, they ground a person in the Confucian good and allow them to use their sense of how that good is to be enacted in order to feel their way through the situation according to that set of values. In other words, virtues do not tell us what to do, because someone who is sufficiently virtuous already has the tools to figure out what to do. Those who are not yet there, on the other hand, cannot rely on virtue. Rather they must rely on direct, rationalized extrapolations of existing rituals, roles, and examples given by the sages.

Virtue, being located in disposition, offers the best avenue for ethical dealings with strangers not a part of the Confucian ritual world. It would, of course, need to be translated into a form that is intelligible to others, and that

formal translation would also need to confront differences in values that may be a part of other social systems. Nevertheless, the fact that virtues are habitual dispositions ingrained into a person's character means that even in situations where only the vaguest of moral guidelines are present, the Confucian person will still interact with others ethically, rather than in the aggressive way that King suggests might be the case. Analects 12.2, in which Confucius suggests that when the *ren* person is outside of his doors he treats everyone as if they were honored guests, likely references this last level rather than the level of ritual scripting because ritual scripts from the *Liji* and *Yili* involving guests tend to be very location specific (see section 6.5.2) and are not suitable for casual use. In this case, Confucius suggests we must adopt at the disposition appropriate to receiving a guest to treat with others.

For those within the Confucian cultural sphere, co-participation in scripted ritual practice is that which mediates new relationships, thus providing a measure of predictability and appropriateness to the relationships. It is to an analysis of intersubjectivity and ritual practice that I now turn.

Chapter 3: Meaning and Pre-conceptual Meaning in Classical Confucianism

How do we come to know the meaning of a dance? ... Our eyes not seeing for themselves, our ears not hearing for themselves, we look down and up, we curl and stretch, we advance and retreat, we quicken and slow—in all we are strictly ruled. We exhaust the strength of muscle and bone, constraining ourselves to the converging rhythms of gong and drum without the slightest deviation—and gradually the meaning becomes clear.

-Xunzi (77/20/39-40)¹⁰⁵

In the last chapter, I discussed a spectrum of normative restriction in the process of Confucian self-formation spanning ritual, role, and virtue going from most restrictive to the least restrictive. I arrived at the conclusion that scripted ritual and developed virtue are the levels of this process that equip Confucians most ably with the ability to deal with strangers, with the ritual script for in-group strangers, and virtue for those outside the Confucian tradition. The benefits of virtues have been fairly well rehearsed in Confucian scholarship, particularly because of the recent scholastic efforts to demonstrate similarities between Confucian cultivation and virtue ethics. Moreover, the primary texts are

¹⁰⁵ Eno translation (1990, 180).

fairly explicit in their treatment of virtues and strangers—the *Analects* for example notes that those who have cultivated dispositions of filial reverence and fraternal respect are unlikely to overturn their superiors, and have never been recorded to sow chaos (1.2). The following chapters will thus leave the discussion of virtue to the ample scholarship on the subject, and instead attempt to highlight the specific advantages of ritual scripting in the cooperative process of ritual cultivation.

I begin with the claim that local interaction is the ideal place for the generation of empathy and solidarity. To a certain extent, this is commonsense; the more personal contact one has with a stranger, the more opportunity there is for him or her to become less other (though perhaps no less different). For the Confucians, the fact that everything begins in the family is a nod to this point as well—growing up in a family means that you share a context over time. The Chinese adage “远亲不如近邻” *Yuan qin bu ru jin lin*—distant relatives are not as good as close neighbors—is a telling one, however. While the bonds of blood (or race, religion, nationality, or other group) are important, closeness and sharing a context is also vitally important.

There are, however, different levels of context sharing, and the above common wisdom only scratches surface possibilities in terms of empathy and

solidarity generation. What I aim to demonstrate over chapters three, four, and five is that when context is shared on multiple levels of experience and cognition simultaneously, it builds both empathy and solidarity has the possibility to create a state of radical unity in which self and other are nearly indistinguishable for a time. I will further suggest that Confucian ritual scripting offers one possible method of generating such a state. Moreover, unlike other documented ways of accomplishing this state, which often require years of familiarity with one particular context, Confucianism approaches the process in a way that is transposable between people and places (though not cross-culturally).

The experience of such radical empathy is not foreign to Confucianism. Scholars in the New Confucian movement have noted that the mutual integration that is Confucian self-cultivation may eventually result in the expansive experience of “co-presence.” Tang Junyi (唐君毅, 1909-1978) writes about the experience of co-presence, which is described as a state in which one directly and simultaneously experiences another’s experiences. In other words, the empathy experienced in co-presence is not understood to be generated by relating to the other through the analogy of one’s own past memories. It is rather

understood as simultaneous, direct access to another's experience.¹⁰⁶ This study will not argue for the physical or metaphysical possibility or impossibility of such a state. Rather, I will seek to explore how a similar experience might be generated within the resources of the classical Confucian tradition.

My argument for the remainder of this dissertation is that following an interactive ritual script, such as the greeting ritual cited in the first chapter, creates meaning that incorporates the other into the self on multiple simultaneous cognitive levels, and that it is this mode of ritual interaction allows strangers to quickly move from being unknown to being intensely familiar. This specific chapter aims to specify what I mean by "meaning," then the next few chapters walk through the multiple levels of meaning that are crafted by the ritual script. My hope is that by the end of this study, it will be clear how scripting can be at least partially responsible for the creation of a co-presence-like experience, and how that experience functions to bolster both the linked projects of self-cultivation and community creation. I will thus demonstrate that there is a powerfully integrative dynamic that arises from following a ritual script, an integrative familiarity that can only be recreated or surpassed by years of direct

¹⁰⁶ See for example, Tang Junyi (1972, 106-107, 331-333):

interpersonal experience. My contention is that this highly embodied dynamic plays a large part in the Confucian means of dealing with strangers.

3.1 Meaning

This section is not meant to present an all-inclusive theory of meaning or to exhaustively investigate all theories of meaning, an endeavor that would take multiple volumes. Rather, I intend to foreground a narrow band of the term “meaning” that will aid in my discussion of empathy and solidarity. This band of meaning is particularly revealing about Confucianism and has been indexed most clearly by the embodied metaphor school of cognitive philosophy. These theorists in turn often rely upon the work of American pragmatists to describe their findings philosophically, and it is thus to the pragmatists whose work I turn to in order to set the stage. For the remainder of this chapter, then, when I use the word “meaning,” I intend to refer only to this particular theory of meaning.

John Dewey refers to the process of building meaning as a process of taking objects or events “out of their apparent brute isolation as events, and finding them to be parts of some larger whole suggested by them, which, in turn, accounts for, explains, interprets them; i.e. renders them significant.” (1909, 117-118) Part of what meaning entails, then, is that we understand how an object

“fits” into a larger context. A bell ringing is not meaningful until I place it in a larger explanatory context. I might be opening the door to a store, for example, which would tell me the owner has placed a pleasant system in place to alert him to the presence of customers. Or I might be a butler, and the bell tells me that my employer has a request. In either situation, context gives the meaning of the bell. Without these greater contexts, the significance and intelligibility of the bell is lost, and thus its meaning is obscured as well. This is to say that meaning in this context is not about gaining simple knowledge of attributes, it concerns the relationships between things and the “wholes” that they form together.

Meaningful wholes can be greater or lesser in scope. The bell example above is an extremely local example, but it in turn fits into a larger whole. If the person who has employed me as a butler is an English Nazi sympathizer, that has further meaning and further explanatory power. That portion of the picture may explain why the bell is ringing at three in the morning and bears further ramifications for what my performance of my duties as a butler would mean for my place in the greater world. We can continue to scale our scope outward to include more and more. This can happen spatially, temporally, relationally, and it can include objects, events, ideas, and ideals. The inclusion or exclusion of God, spiritual realms, or other religious ideas within the frame affects and

informs the frame and the meaning of things within it—the meaning of a world with God and the meaning of a world without God are completely different.

Learning about the world allows us to assemble these wholes. As Dewey puts it, “To learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy and suffer from things in consequence.” ([1916] 2004, 134) If I am a butler and do not respond to the bell because it is my first day on the job and I do not understand its meaning, I will quickly learn the consequences of leaving that event unmarked, and in the process learn how to place it in its appropriate context. Learning, in other words helps us to grasp meaning by expanding the ways in which we can put things in relationship with their context (including ourselves as a part of that context) to form greater wholes. In turn, when we grasp the meaning of an object, we understand what made it what it is, and we understand further what to expect from context. Dewey continues, “Familiar acquaintance with meanings thus signifies that we have acquired in the presence of objects definite attitudes of response which lead us, without reflection, to anticipate certain possible consequences. The definiteness of the expectation defines the meaning...” (1909, 125) This further indicates that meanings are not only predicated on relationships, they arise from the stability of our expectations. Expectations in

turn arise from what we have learned about the consequences of interacting with that object. This is part of the reason strangers are difficult to deal with; how exactly they will fit into a larger whole—their meaning within the local context—is impossible to tell because there have been no prior interactions from which expectations can be formed. Expectations will become vitally important to this discussion—to a great extent, they help to set a standard for what we will call a person's equilibrium.

3.1.1 Expectations, Equilibrium, and Meaning

In Dewey's philosophy, equilibrium represents a balance, a confluence of interactions between various elements that generates or allows a particular thing to exist stably. This stability may be dynamic in the sense that changes in the various factors of the equation each continue to cohere in such a way that they continue to sustain that particular balance. Because it represents a balance, a static state of equilibrium is impossible to achieve, not only because of the countless number of different objects, events, and circumstances that affect one, but also because we engage with the world through time and its constant changes.

Every need, say hunger for fresh air or food, is a lack that denotes at least a temporary absence of adequate adjustment with surroundings. But it is also a demand, a reaching out into the environment to make good the

lack and to restore adjustment by building at least a temporary equilibrium. Life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it — either through effort or by some happy chance. ([1935] 2005, 13)

As humans, we are able to take action to adjust ourselves to our surroundings in order to maintain our physical stability. Unlike inert elements, the human form requires a delicate balance to achieve a stable equilibrium, a balance achieved only through great effort. Without this effort, it dies and falls apart, and our components achieve a relative equilibrium in a less energy intensive pattern. The delicacy of this balance also means that equilibrium can arise only once we have experienced enough of an object or situation that we are able to predict how it will affect our equilibrium. Or to phrase it more precisely, our stable and confirmed expectations provide the groundwork out of which equilibrium can emerge.

This is readily evident in the way Dewey and James both suggest meaning emerges from experience. They assert that experience first takes place in a mode of immediate sensation—the realm of pure, unmediated sensation, what Dewey refers to as “genuine immediacy,” (Dewey 1910, 82) and James as “pure experience” ([1912] 1943, 39). James famously creates a description of this by tracing experience back to a time before concepts, from a baby’s hypothetical point of view: “The baby, assailed by eyes, ears, nose, skin, and entrails at once,

feels it all as one great blooming, buzzing confusion." ([1950] 1980, 462)¹⁰⁷ There are two points in even this brief description that are helpful to consider.

First, we have a description of experience before it is divided by the focus and distinction of a directed mind striking the child as a whole—an undifferentiated mass. According to James, experience does not initially strike us piecemeal—rather it is experienced as a pan-sensory whole. The second thing to note about primary experience is that it is confusing—that is, it initially holds no discernable meaning. In fact, Dewey suggests that a large part of what makes confusion confusing (and ultimately meaningless) is the fact that it is experienced as inchoate and inconstant: “A diffusive blur and an indiscriminately shifting suction characterize what we do not understand.” ([1910] 1991, 121) Though concepts may change and grow with experience, once an experience alters their parameters, they must necessarily be maintained in a recognizably stable form. That which we have yet to conceptualize and ascribe meaning to, on the other hand, is experienced mentally as an unstable flux or flow. This unstable, flowing

¹⁰⁷ I do not take on the possible metaphysical aspects of primary experience possibly posited by James and criticized by Dewey. Following Richard M. Gale, I purely reference the experiential character of primary experience (1997, 54).

character of primary experience is the second important characteristic to which I would like to draw attention.

Both of these characteristics are vital to our discussion because they not only describe the world prior to concepts, they also describe what James and Dewey believe are default mental stances toward new experience in general. Experience comes first in whole impressions rather than being assembled from separate parts, and it is first experienced as a flow rather than as a series of static, stable impressions. For example, even when discussing experience undergoing conceptual reflection, Dewey notes that experience is characterized by a certain integrity:

An experience has a unity that lives in its name, that meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship. The existence of this unity is constituted by a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. This unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name the distinctions that reflection can make within it. ([1953] 2005, 38)

Experience comes to us as a whole package or gestalt, which we later deconstruct when we focus on one aspect of the experience or the other. This further implies that this “single quality” that Dewey refers to is pre-conceptual; it is the whole

sense of a situation, the given background from which concepts are then subsequently cut.¹⁰⁸

In other words, to recall Rappaport's scales of meaning, our fundamental, default setting is not to encounter a world of discrete objects, or to experience ourselves as "discrete individuals." Rather, our basic cognitive setting is actually to take the world in as an undifferentiated, unified whole. As children, we are natural solipsists who live in a world without boundaries- everything in the universe is experienced as part of us. The process of distinction and separation is the one that is learned, and this includes the separation of self from context. Discreteness is learned by having the world impose its discreteness upon us, as we experience the frustration of living in a world where the world does not bend itself to our will. When control does and does not happen is something we must then learn to sort through. We construct boundaries (the most fundamental of these being the self/not-self boundary).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Note the similarity to this and the concept of the uncarved block in the *Dao De Jing* as well. The uncarved block, as a metaphor for the Dao, is the background substance from which concepts and objects arise. As noted in the *Dao De Jing*, chapter 1, the Dao cannot be spoken of and is nameless precisely because it is the undifferentiated background from which specific objects and distinctions are taken, much in the same way that focus breaks down the experiential gestalt.

¹⁰⁹ See also D.W. Winnicott (1974) for his analysis of infants and boundary construction, cited at length in section 5.3.4.

The confusion of primary experience is thus tamed by deconstructing the wholeness and flow of primary experience—by breaking it into stable pieces upon which meaning can be imposed.

The problem of the acquisition of meaning by things, or (stated in another way) of forming habits of simple apprehension, is thus the problem of introducing (i) *definiteness* and *distinction* and (ii) *consistency* or *stability* of meaning into what is otherwise vague and wavering. (Dewey [1909] 1991, 121)

When children are attempting to pronounce a new written word, for example, they might attempt to create a sound from their overall impression of the letters (which may or may not be an accurate sound). Adults will often tell them to “sound it out,” a means of breaking down the totality of the word as a way of imposing control over it. As adults (or children), when we see a foreign script for the first time, there is nothing to which the attention can latch onto to provide constancy or distinction—a person may not know where one word begins and another word ends, and the entire block of script seems to swim together until, perhaps, we train ourselves to narrow our field of attention until we can find the level at which repeated symbols or patterns can be recognized.

For newborn babies, primary experience remains necessarily incomprehensible because it is experienced without discernable stability or distinction. Over time, however, Dewey posits that interactions within the field

of primary experience grants the familiarity that allows them to create distinctions and impose consistency. Over time, confusion gives way to familiarity, and memory provides a sense of continuity and constancy. Constancy then allows basic differentiation to occur. Dewey gives a brief suggestion as to how this might take place in regard to color:

Gradually, however, certain characteristic habitual responses associate themselves with certain things; the white becomes the sign, say, of milk and sugar, to which the child reacts favorably; blue becomes the sign of a dress that the child likes to wear, and so on; and the distinctive reactions tend to single out color qualities from other things in which they had been submerged. ([1910] 1991, 122-3)

In other words, gradually, certain aspects of the swirl of primary experience are matched and associated with others—white coincides with oral pleasure, blue with tactile comfort and meaning begins to develop. Even before the child knows what a dress is or has a concept of sugar, he or she knows that certain experiences go together; this is the beginning of constancy and distinction as understood by Dewey. This constancy and distinction is the seed of meaning; meaning that objects accrue is thus a form of expectation. The child in the example above will begin to expect sweetness with whiteness and comfort with blueness, and by means of these expectations, she will be able to situate herself in relationship to them to create or maintain an equilibrium.

Expectations thus serve as a basis of meaning, and meaning in turn is a basis of self. This is true for all selves in the sense that the values that self is built upon emerge (in part) from experience as discussed above. There is, however, another stronger, thicker layer for the self as understood as contextually defined. For attunement to meaning on the contextual level is an indicator for how well a person is able to integrate with his or her environment. For a contextually defined person, a stable equilibrium is a further indication of how deeply that person has allowed context to shape his or her person (either negatively, or positively). Deep, well-defined expectations (that is to say, well-developed meaning) allow for a more stable equilibrium. Conversely, lack of experience and meaning means a lack of reliable expectations. In the terms of this discussion, strangers are dangerous because they are unreliable and thus have the potential to be highly disruptive of any equilibrium.

To summarize our discussion thus far, learning about relationships creates particular expectations, which allows a person to reduce confusion and re-establish equilibrium. When we encounter something or someone that stands outside of our expectations, like strangers, it disrupts our sense of constancy and presents itself as an irritation until we can find some way to account for it and restore our sense of equilibrium. Because of this we can further specify meaning

as a sensitivity to consequences that flow from interactions with specific things or events (i.e. their significance) that allows us to establish an equilibrium with that thing or event. Though this meaning goes beyond what Dewey himself specifies explicitly, it seems to be a logical extension of the framework he has established.

What we have described above is the general outline of the pragmatist theory of meaning. Shortly, we will begin to explore the pertinent nuances of this theory of meaning. At this point, however, we can briefly begin to note that this theory of meaning has begun to receive confirmation in a number of neurological studies. The primacy of the perceptual whole in experience (as opposed to the construction of local items to form the whole) has been tested and documented by David Navon (1977) , who proposed what has since come to be called the Global Precedence Effect. His results showed that characteristics of global formations register before local characteristics do. This has been tested and explored in a fairly large body of literature.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ See Kimchi (1992) for a comprehensive review of the literature up to that point. See also Baumann and Kuhl (2005) and Gross (2005) for a brief selection among many studies. Some findings stress that global preference may be culturally shaped (Davidoff, Fonteneau and Fagot 2008). Even if this is the case, however, contemporary findings tend to bear out the idea that East Asian cultures tend to emphasize the global before the local (McKone et al. 2010, Chee et al, 2011) providing reasons to apply this theory to Chinese thought even if global preference is not a predetermined biological capacity.

Further studies show that this gestalt effect comes to be refined and developed over the course of experience and time. For example, a 2002 study by M. Haan, O. Pascalis, and M. Johnson notes that while newborn infants show a preference for human faces, adults have a directed specificity to recognizing upright human faces that newborn infants lack. Such studies demonstrate that the human process of differentiation is a process learned through experience and is one that actually develops parts of the brain to function more acutely. What these studies briefly tell us is that this pragmatic theory of meaning is not simply an abstract theory—it has a basis in grounded empirical fact. We will see much more of this in the section on embodied, pre-conceptual meaning below.

3.1.2 Meaning's Context Includes the Subject

If we follow Dewey in his contention that meaning is built from interaction and projected outcomes of future interactions, we should also note that meaning is also not entirely objective. It is built through interaction, which in turn implies interaction with a particular subject. Regardless of what larger context there is that gives an object or event meaning, the experiencing subject is always a part of the context. In other words, though relationships exist between objects and things, meaning does not arise until an event or object is related to a particular subject. In this way, Dewey's meaning is similar to what Brook

Ziporyn writes about 理 *li*, *coherence*. According to Ziporyn, a coherence is neither entirely given nor entirely created. A coherence must be intelligible to a human individual, and it must be related to a particular human value. This is to say that there is a constitutive human element in any given coherence—nothing can cohere without someone to bring the elements together around a human value in any particular *li* (2012, *passim*).¹¹¹

Similarly, meaning recognizes existing relationships but requires their assembly by and relation to a particular subject. A coconut falling from a tree on an unknown island in the south pacific has no meaning so long as it results in no significant consequences for anyone or anything. Conversely, that same falling coconut can be made meaningful by placing it in relationship with an actor and his or her ends—the need for sustenance or a bludgeon, for example. The dependence of meaning upon relationality also implies that the meaning changes with actors. For example, the meaning of a peanut differs between someone with a peanut allergy and someone without it. In one case, peanuts might mean “a

¹¹¹At the same time, things do not cohere as the result of a simple *fiat* on the part of a human agent—*li* also points to recognizable fault lines between things that human intelligence recognizes as logical places for grouping divisions. A more detailed comparison between Dewey’s philosophy of meaning and Ziporyn’s explication of early Chinese reliance on coherence as a basic mode of thought will be explored further below.

reasonable source of protein,” while to another with allergies, peanuts might mean “a quick and sure death due to anaphylactic shock.”

This further means that meaning is never purely objective. Pragmatists such as James and Dewey claim that qualities of experience do not reside only in a particular subject or object but organically and inseparably in both, in what Dewey calls a “situation.” Meaning, in this context, is thus a composite of at least three components: 1) a subject’s accumulated interaction with objects or events, 2) his or her intentions, and 3) his or her goals. If any one of these three components change, meaning itself changes.

This definition also means that to grasp the meaning of something is to understand an object’s significance in relation to one’s self and the ends that one posits for one’s self. We understand equilibrium as a state of rest, lacking irritation and, I would add, frustration. Thus being able to establish an equilibrium with something is also to know what consequences it has for the goals we set for ourselves. This is the basic sense of meaning that I wish to adopt for this dissertation because it meshes well both with what cognitive philosophers have written and, as we will see, with the Confucian understanding of facts as a subset of values.

3.1.3 Meaning Implies a Goal

The last thing to note about this understanding of meaning is that it has an end or a goal. As we have seen so far, meaning is built upon experience as accumulated interaction with objects or events. Direct experience is thus the first step in developing meaning in regards to an object or situation. Experience is what develops that sensitivity to consequences that flow from interaction with an object. As any scientist knows, however, the outcome of interactions depend highly upon contextual variables. In order to arrive at the complete meaning of a particular object or event, one would need to be aware of the consequences of interacting with an object or event in all possible contexts. This is, of course, impossible. Luckily, despite Hume's musings, instances of spontaneously exploding billiard balls are generally rare. Experience gives a working knowledge of interactions with objects in certain situations. We never need full knowledge of an object or event.

What we do need is the significance of an object in relation to a particular goal. As noted, our definition of meaning includes an associated end, and this is of critical importance for the understanding of meaning I seek to build here. The inclusion of a particular end indicates that meaning as I understand it is not merely a correlate of experience or intelligibility *simpliciter*. A particular meaning

implies *directedness*. The meaning of my kitchen table differs depending on what I am trying to do. If I intend to eat dinner with friends, it means “a good surface at the right height for sitting which has space for three more.” If, on the other hand, I am trying to hide from an intruder, it might mean “a place to hide” or “an obstacle between me and my desired hiding spot.” Aims are, in turn, ultimately given by our hierarchy of values, given socially, experientially, or biologically. Thus this type of meaning cannot be separated from values; values are a component part of it. Values direct experiential information toward a particular goal. Without values, experiential information becomes insignificant, *meaningless*. Meaning thus implies a set of values, and again those may be given externally or generated experientially.¹¹²

This same ambiguous contextual configuration allows meaning to be framed as broadly or narrowly as the goals that compose it require. Usually multiple goals and thus multiple meanings coexist at once. The selection of a particular goal thus selects for a particular frame, within which some things are

¹¹² This means meaning is not always affected by a top-down imposition of values upon experience. Values change as a result of experience—ritual cultivation as the shaping of self through ritual experience would be impossible otherwise. Experience and values are always engaged in a mutually transformative dialectic. Meaning, as the intersection between the two, is thus always changing, sometimes when values inform experience, other times when experience alters values.

given related meanings, and others are excluded. For a teenager fully absorbed in simply *hitting* a baseball, things that are not related to this goal become irrelevant. The girl blowing a kiss, the brewing storm, the position of the outfielders, and the foul lines may ordinarily be full of relevance to that person's goals and therefore full of meaning. However, within this particular frame, they are not relevant to the immediate goal. Again, per our definition, without relevance they are *meaningless* for the interim of the frame of action.

The advice "focus on the ball" is thus an attempt to isolate one particular frame of meaning to the exclusions of others by highlighting one particular goal. A less narrowly defined goal gives rise to a wider set of relevant meanings. If the batter's goal is not only to hit the ball, but to get on base, the field of relevant items expands. In addition to the previous concerns of the batter, the position of the outfielders as well as the foul lines become important. If the goal involves impressing the girl, that kiss accrues meaning as well. This short example shows how the frame of meaning expands with the breadth of the goal at hand. Note again that as the goal changes, the meaning of an object or event changes as well. Broadening the goals adds more meanings. In the above example, adding "marrying the girl" as a goal imbues "hitting the ball" with the meaning "a step on the way to a date" as well as "a step on the way to scoring a run."

Meaning can also be nested in the same way that goals can. In the above example, basic survival is probably a component aim inside all of the above goals. This means that the brewing storm is probably actually relevant to the desire to get on base and impress the girl, though perhaps not immediately so. In the other direction, the teen's desire to impress the girl may be nested inside a greater desire to join a particular in-group, experience a kiss, or any number of other goals that expand the frame of relevancy. If we push this nesting to its outward limit, we arrive at Tillich's ultimate concerns, aims so expansive that they color everything a person does. If the teen is a devout Catholic, for example, impressing the girl may be deeply nested in the loving of God (perhaps through a desire to co-participate in the communal, creative love of the Trinity). If he is Confucian, impressing the girl may be embedded within the desire for relational harmony and a filial desire to continue the family line. This definition of meaning thus allows us to draw a continuous spectrum from the most local concerns to the most global without changing our understanding of meaning as a sensitivity to the consequences of interactions with a particular object or event in

relation to a particular goal. Whether we are talking about the meaning of a pencil or the meaning of one's life, both fit tidily into this definition.¹¹³

For the purposes of this study in particular this understanding of meaning offers other advantages, because it fits hand-in-hand with the discussion of intersubjectivity and intersubjective control in the previous chapter.¹¹⁴ In terms of this definition of meaning, control of intersubjectivity is a form of controlling the flow of meaning from one person to another. The intersubjective "gaze" is representative of the meaning one person assigns to another. On the most general level, Buber's *I-it* and *I-thou* relationships are forms of this—in the former, a person is assigned an instrumental meaning (a means to an end), while

¹¹³ In chapter two (section 2.2.1), I also discussed three bases of meaning, which Rappaport identifies as discreteness (semantics), analogy, and unity (participation). This earlier understanding of meaning and meaningfulness is a part of the larger definition I have set up here. Though the mechanics of this will become clearer as the chapter progresses, for now I will merely point out the fact that all language is, to a certain extent, an abstraction that arises from interaction. The concept pointed at by the word "chair" comes from repeated interactions with chairs and our understanding of the consequences of interacting with them abstracted to form a single concept. Rappaport's semantic meaning highlights differences in objects, which is to say differences in the consequences of interacting with objects. For example, even though chairs and beanbags are both seats and thus are both relevant when we want to rest, chairs generally involve less acrobatics to get into and out of due to their raised and relatively inflexible nature, both of which beanbags lack. One can differentiate the two in part by the fact that they require different movements to interact with. Semantic meaning directs us toward these differences. Analogical meaning conversely directs us toward the similarities—the feeling of the seated position, etc. The greater the overlap, the more meaning shifts toward unity.

¹¹⁴ Given Herbert Mead's influential work on intersubjectivity and his arguable place as a later American Pragmatist, the correlation between the aforementioned definition of meaning and intersubjectivity is not coincidental.

in the latter a person is understood as an end rather than a means, and an agent rather than an object. More involved versions of intersubjectivity may involve more or less complex layers of meaning. Some of these attributions may be pre-conceptual—“feared,” for example, is one such pre-conceptual attribution. This will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

All of this thus far also accents the fact that meaning is deeply entwined with the process of self-formation. Building a life of meaning (that is to say, a life of consequence) requires coming to rest in the same kind of values that give rise to the self. Meaning transferred via intersubjectivity informs and shapes the self. And, as we shall see, experience itself creates meaning by generating its own values.

All in all, this band of meaning is broad enough to cover all of the different types of meaning I seek to address here while being narrow enough to fit comfortably into the current scholarship on Confucianism. The following sections are an attempt to parse different levels of meaning that contribute both to the development of the self and the means by which a person is able to navigate his or her own ambiguity of boundaries within the Confucian tradition.

3.2 The Meaning and Equilibrium of Early China: Coherence (*li*), the Greatest Coherence (*da li*), and Wholeness (*cheng*)

The view of meaning in the above section was theorized in a time and place alien to the early Confucian tradition. Theoretically, since the above theory of meaning is grounded in human biological processes or other natural sciences, its insights should be applicable in all human contexts. Dewey's discussion of equilibrium, for example, is meant to be an empirically grounded way of understanding environmental processes that are not subject to differences in human cultures. They are meant to explain even physical, inert processes. As he writes,

There is in nature, even below the level of life, something more than mere flux and change. Form is arrived at whenever a stable, even though moving, equilibrium is reached. Changes interlock and sustain one another. Wherever there is this coherence there is endurance. Order is not imposed from without but is made out of the relations of harmonious interactions that energies bear to one another. ([1935] 2005, 13)

Where before we discussed equilibrium as the aim and outcome of well-assigned human meaning, here equilibrium appears as an element of a natural process, one that is exemplified by basic atomic theory and cosmology on the level of natural physics, and borne out by findings in cognitive science and psychology on the human level. The human process of meaning-making is simply a more

sophisticated and, ideally, more effective and enduring a process of achieving equilibrium.

Nevertheless, even if we eschew the potential pan-applicability of the above theory for more careful comparative work, there are still several strong resonances between the theory of meaning discussed above and classical Confucianism that allow insights gleaned from this theory to shed light upon aspects of early Confucian practice. This section seeks to address this particular resonance by addressing what I will inelegantly call a “bridge concept-cluster.” This term takes inspiration from Aaron Stalnaker’s “bridge concepts” but seeks to identify not single concepts, but a single cluster of concepts in both traditions that offers enough similarities in content and structure that their juxtaposition is illuminating and useful, even when we allow for differences in cultural development. My suggestion is that the cognitive philosophical meaning-goal-equilibrium cluster of concepts discussed in the above theory is significantly similar to the Confucian *li-cheng* cluster of concepts.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ There is also a large body of literature comparing Confucian thought to that of American pragmatism, from scholars like David Hall, Roger Ames, Robert Neville, Sor-Hoon Tan, John Berthrong, and many others. This path is thus fairly well trodden.

I do not intend to suggest that there is a direct correlation between any two concepts given here, though coherence and meaning do echo aspects of each other closely. Rather I suggest that when the grouped concepts for each tradition are taken together as a functioning whole, they reveal enough conceptual and structural similarity between each other to suggest that the dynamics of bonding and empathy creation discussed in the cognitive philosophical tradition can be responsibly be said to have corresponding echoes in Confucian ritual practice.

I begin, however, not with the concepts themselves, but with the background assumptions of each of these traditions to show that the concept clusters in question are grounded in similar foundational sensibilities. Cognitive philosophy and American pragmatism note the general tendency to begin ordering our experiences by dividing down from the sensory gestalt (rather than starting with discrete units and building up), which echoes the early Chinese philosophical tendency to begin discussing wholes rather than individual discrete units. The similarity here represents a fundamental resonance between the approach toward cognition suggested by contemporary theories and Confucianism.

The most direct locale for this in the Chinese tradition can be found in Hall and Ames' discussion of Chinese thought as *ars contextualis*—the art of contextualization. An *ars contextualis*, in their words

seeks to understand and appreciate the manner in which particular things present-to-hand are, or may be, most harmoniously correlated. Classical Chinese thinkers located the energy of transformation and change within a world that is *ziran*, autogenerative or literally 'so-of-itself', and found the more or less harmonious interrelations among the particular things around them to be the natural condition of things, requiring no appeal to an ordering principle or agency for explanation. (Hall and Ames 1998)

Here, Hall and Ames see Chinese thinking as primarily concerned with the natural interrelations between existing objects rather than with essences or the characteristics of atomic units. This means that like the cognitive philosophical theory of meaning outlined above, an *ars contextualis* modality generates identity for a thing by placing it within a context.

Moving into more specialized comparison, we can also juxtapose Dewey's concept of equilibrium with the Chinese concepts of *cheng* and *li*. Ziporyn's explanation of 理 *li* as coherence bears the same characteristics of contextualization that we see in the Hall and Ames' *ars contextualis*, but like the cognitive philosophical understanding of meaning provided above, *li* as coherence bears the values of human subjects as a vital, constituent part. Again, a

coherence is 1) an *intelligible* grouping that is 2) *generative of value*, which Ziporyn glosses as ultimately being related to pleasure, sustainability, or flourishing.

These terms imply that a coherence is a grouping that is neither purely objective nor purely subjective. Both the terms intelligibility and value imply a subject, without which the grouping would not make sense. To borrow Ziporyn's own example, we need a subject with particular values to understand why a cigarette, ashtray, and lighter fit intelligibly together (2012, 69-70). Without a human subject (including that subject's given respiratory system and his physical and intellectual capacities and proclivities) such a grouping makes no sense. This is to say that without the human subject, this grouping is *incoherent*. Because human values are involved, coherences exhibit structural similarities to meaning as developed above.

Coherences are nested, measured in how significant or fundamental the ordering value is. Even if we limit value to the fields of pleasure, sustainability, and continuance, we can still note that some values — pleasure in the feel of silk, say — may be more or less significant than others. This means that certain coherences are of greater import than others. We can also note that some harmonic value groupings may or may not conflict with others. Smoking may produce pleasure in the moment, but it is generally considered incompatible

with broader human survivability, a value that most agree (at least on some level) is more fundamental than the pleasure garnered from smoking. This is perhaps why many consider smoking to be in incoherent choice — smoking does not “come together with” with the *li* of healthy living. Thus while cigarettes, a light, human lungs and human pleasure is a harmonic grouping, they would generally be excluded from the *li* that arise around individual and social health and would thus not be considered *li*.¹¹⁶ In terms of human relationships, the partnership of Bonnie and Clyde as an archetype serves to illustrate the same point- their pairing is a coherence that is incoherent with the broader objective of pan-human flourishing, and therefore also not *li*. Ziporyn is explicit about this point when he claims that “*Li* is a harmonious coherence, which, when a human being becomes harmoniously coherent with it, leads to further harmonious coherence.” (Ziporyn 2013, 25)

¹¹⁶ We could make a more complex consideration of smoking’s possible place within the greatest *li*, including its other possible benefits, particularly given the fact that Ziporyn’s formulation of coherence is inherently about including opposites within the same spectrum. My sense of the particularly Confucian take on this issue, however, would be that smoking is not incorporable because it is partial and incomplete, providing only pleasure without including continuance or flourishing in its purview, both on the individual and social levels. For example, on the social scale, cigarettes as *li* may provide economic benefits to one particular group of people, but it does so only at a detriment to a much broader group of smokers, and more diffusely to society in general.

A hierarchy of values is implicit in the above consideration. The *li* that Confucianism admits of, then, are those that can be included within or cohere with other *li*. In the classical period, Xunzi brings the connectedness of *li* to its logical conclusion. Sympathetic *li* ultimately cohere into one grand coherence, which includes all *li* that are amiable to all three of the aforementioned core values *and each other* at the same time. In recognizing this grand *li*, this great coherence, a person learns how to harmoniously cohere with everything significant to human continuance and flourishing, close friend and stranger alike.

Note the parallels we find to the above theory of meaning. Meaning allows people to establish an equilibrium with their environment. Equilibrium, in turn, is a way of framing the concepts of stability, continuance, and flourishing in a dynamic context:

Pleasures may come about through chance contact and stimulation; such pleasures are not to be despised in a world full of pain. But happiness and delight are a different sort of thing. They come to be through a fulfillment that reaches to the depths of our being — one that is an adjustment of our whole being with the conditions of existence. In the process of living, attainment of a period of equilibrium is at the same time the initiation of a new relation to the environment, one that brings with it potency of new adjustments to be made through struggle. (Dewey [1935] 2005, 16)

Though it may not last long, we can see that taken to its fullest extent, equilibrium represents a pinnacle of continuance and flourishing, couched in

terms of fulfillment and delight. And while Dewey's philosophy seems to avoid simple pleasure as a final value, I would nevertheless suggest that this pleasure can readily be folded into some understanding of flourishing, much in the same way that we see small pleasures contributing to the good life.¹¹⁷

Meaning for particular subjects is assigned by the way in which the contextual whole is focused down and grouped around that subject's given values. This means that meaning is just as dependent on a hierarchy of values. Just as we see *li* forming nested hierarchies, conflicting, and coming together to form the grand coherence, we also saw that meaning is similarly nested in terms of the breadth of the goal under consideration and that goals can similarly conflict or cohere. In fact, at the broad level Ziporn proposes for "value," the term becomes more or less interchangeable with our previous understanding of "goals." Though Ziporyn's framed values skew more toward Tillich's ultimate concerns than everyday goals in their breadth, *li* also subdivide down into more local goals that ultimately lead toward the attainment of a particular value. If,

¹¹⁷ Analects 1.1 remarks that it is a pleasure to receive friends visiting from afar, reminding us that many aspects of the flourishing life are themselves pleasurable. This draws us into the ways in which Dewey's "simple pleasures" may also flow into an understanding of equilibrium, much in the same way that more localized *li* can flow into larger networks of *li*. Note also that Dewey's description of equilibrium as perfect adjustment sounds blissful – this will become more important in the discussion of Czikszentmihalyi's flow concept in chapter 5.

following Xunzi, we see the whole of the ritual corpus as a major element in the grand coherence, we can also understand each ritual interaction as a minor coherence ultimately generative of pleasure, flourishing, and sustainability within the more local and pedestrian aims of how to give gifts, cap a young man, or comport oneself at an archery competition.¹¹⁸

Just as networks of *li* grow more and more comprehensive by adding sympathetic *li* and excluding groupings arising around conflicting values, meaning also grows to become more and more comprehensive. In order to create a world in which the meanings assigned to various things are consistent rather than conflicting, a similar winnowing process must take place.¹¹⁹ In both cases, this process of winnowing and aggregating raises the immediate salience of ultimate concerns and requires awareness of how the immediate desire under consideration does or does not nest under that concern. The more fully developed a person's set of meanings, the better his or her ability to achieve that concern in varied contexts. Similarly, a thoroughgoing recognition of *li* allows

¹¹⁸ This ordering is arguably chronologically backward; small rituals likely arose before being tuned to match a larger ritual corpus. The above order was merely used to demonstrate how the breadth of the values included within *li* theoretically subdivide into local contexts along the lines of particular goals.

¹¹⁹ This is not to say that this process always *does* take place—people are more than capable of living by mutually incompatible sets of meaning.

the Confucian a way to achieve the stated values of pleasure, continuance, and flourishing.¹²⁰ Simply put, meaning and coherence serve a similar function: *li* and meaning help a person accomplish a particular nested goal while drawing attention to the place of those goals in larger contexts and values.

Assigning meaning thus ultimately serves the same practical purpose as does seeing the world in terms of particular coherences. This similarity is due in large part to the fact that Chinese *li* and cognitive philosophical meaning share similar stances on the crucial role of humans and their values in the process of dividing the experiential whole down into stable, manageable units, units that are relevant to particular aims or values.¹²¹

Their crucial, parallel role in ordering experience is particularly clear when we note that *li* and meaning are also both integral in the formation of

¹²⁰ Here I use the term “recognize” as a facile compromise as it suggests the presence of the subject both following natural (“real”) divisions and re-cognizing what is there according to his or her values. Strictly speaking, according to Ziporyn’s description of *li*, they are truly neither plainly discovered nor invented—rather they dissolve the difference between subjective and objective by being both “in the world” and identified by humans. (Ziporyn 2012, 56).

¹²¹ We are, in fact, biologically inclined in this manner. As explored in section 1.2, biological ethnography has shown that humans have a tendency cross-culturally to be most familiar with categories of things with which we have an associated physical action—we scale up or pare down from there. When experience hits us as a whole, we most naturally focus our attention to the level at which we have an associated physical action to take. Given that actions are taken in order to make adjustments to our environment, we can say that we are biologically inclined to see the world cohere around our values. (Lakoff 1987, 51; Brown 1965)

identity, both of things and of observing subjects. Through the prism of *li*, Confucians create themselves by interacting and cohering with others in the relationships through which they come to know themselves. Remember that coherence in general (though not *li* as a specific type of coherence) is bound inseparably to the idea of intelligibility *and vice versa*. Any composite which is incoherent, which cannot be held together in an intelligible way, cannot be considered *a* thing. To be a thing is to cohere in a way that makes sense to us; this must be true of all singular concepts that we are able to hold in mind. In Ziporyn's words, cohering is "literally the holding together of the parts, their grouping with one another as a condition of their being as what they are." (Ziporyn 2012, 79) This is as true of people as it is of things; people are coherent groupings of parts, whether determined purely materially as composites of particular body parts, or as including coherent non-material segments like spirit and mind. Identity can also be informed by the *li* within which Confucians find themselves to be component parts, such as the five roles. Thus Confucian identity is drawn from broader *li* as well as from a person's interior component parts that cohere in a particular manner.

Similarly, in the pragmatists' tradition, a person who assigns meaning to a thing or event understands his or her own relationship to that event and his or

her goals. To assign meaning is thus not only to make a claim about something but also to make claims about how the self best interacts with that thing.

Meaning creation is thus also self-creation; it fills in information about one's own needs, desires, capabilities, and most of all, values. Conversely, in entering into relationship with a person, things gain their identities.

One of the helpful aspects about well-chosen comparisons is that we can see how aspects of one item of comparison highlights background elements of the other. If there is a strong resonance between *li* and this theory of meaning, we ought to see how understanding one helps contribute to the understanding of the other, and indeed, this is the case. The most immediately pertinent of these highlighted aspects is the pertinent way in which *li* plays a part in the way expectations are determined. Meaning is created almost purely for the sake of forming accurate expectations that allow us to anticipate the outcome of future interactions. So long as reality meets expectation, a person is able at very least, take steps to achieve some type of equilibrium, even if that equilibrium might be only a mental equilibrium in the direst of cases.¹²² Though expectations are not a

¹²² Inner harmony is attained only when, by some means, terms are made with the environment. When it occurs on any other than an "objective" basis, it is illusory — in extreme cases to the point of insanity. Fortunately for variety in experience, terms are made in many ways — ways ultimately decided by selective interest.

part of the native cluster of concepts surrounding *li*, we can see that they underscore the workings of *li*.

All *li* are centric groupings. The center is the identity by which the grouping is known, that “point” around which any coherence must remain in order to remain itself and not become something else. This point is not, however, an “essential characteristic” in which the center participates fully and in which the periphery participates only partially. The center is not a marker for “sameness.” Rather, the center marks the virtual center of motion, movement which instantiations of a particular *li* pass through given the variability of the world. Here the image of the *taiji*, colloquially known as the yin-yang symbol, is particularly helpful. The image is a recognizable whole comprised of two component parts balanced in a particular way, moving dynamically around a center point. The center is not a measure of similarity—it is a measure of a particular balance. We still can recognize the *taiji* even if the center of the “S” is off center, up to a certain point. After this point, we start to begin to wonder if this really is a *taiji* symbol rather than something else entirely, until the symbol is completely unintelligible as the *taiji*. (Think here of a circle that is completely black for the clearest example.) Rather than essential similarity, the center

represents a balance, that ideal which mediates between the cycling elements of any particular coherence (Ziporyn 2012, 79-80).

To illustrate this in less obvious cases, Ziporyn invokes Qian Mu's metaphor of the pendulum, noting that a pendulum swings through a given range, turning back when it reaches its limit. The movement of the pendulum is "governed" by the center, even if the pendulum never actually passes through the center itself, and the edges of the swing represent the outside boundary, beyond which we can no longer understand the given position as part of this particular coherence. It has become too one-sided to continue to be understood as the composite whole.

In human relationships, the center—again, that which mediates between the two poles of that relationship—is often a particular flavor of the overarching amalgamated pleasure-stability-flourishing value that is always an element present in *li*. Following the Great Learning, we can note that "resting in the ultimate good"—which corresponds to the above value amalgam—breaks down into role specific elements of that value. In this example, it is King Wen that provides the model:

為人君，止於仁；為人臣，止於敬；為人子，止於孝；為人父，止於慈；
與國人交，止於信。

When serving people as a ruler, he rested in humaneness; as a minister, he rested in deep respect; as a son, he rested in filial reverence; as a father, he rested in compassion; and when interacting with [other] people of the country, he rested in trustworthiness. (*Liji* "Great Learning" 43.1)

Each of these listed resting places gives a center for that particular relational dyad. What makes him intelligible as a ruler and allows him to cohere with those he rules is the fact that he rests in humaneness. What makes a minister coherent as minister is his respect in serving his lord, and so on. Each of these centers, in turn, promotes and is participatory in the ultimate good (Ziporyn, personal correspondence).

This also means that regardless of whether or not *li* are applied to things or people, their coherence around a human value and the desire for that value means that particular *li* are meant to meet particular expectations. We can turn here to the rectification of names passage in the *Analects* and the related passages in the *Mencius*. According to the *Analects*, what makes for a harmonious world is for a ruler to act like a ruler, a minister to act like a minister, fathers to act like fathers, and sons to act like sons (13.3). In the *Mencius* we have the reminder that should a person not live up to that standard, that role should not be recognized as a constitutive part of that person (1B8). The above passage of the Great Learning gives the explicit center by which that aspect of a person's role-identity can be recognized.

All of this is to say that *li* as means of identifying things, people, and relationships has a built-in range of expectations. To see the world in terms of coherences is to create particular expectations about how something (as a group of things) will allow one to satisfy our desires, and to see the world in terms of *li* is to have expectations as to how a thing will behave, particularly in terms of how cohering with that thing will bring about the ultimate good. In fact, *those expectations are a constituent part of what that thing is*. Things are recognized as what they are because of how they are expected to cohere with particular values.

Rice becomes truly rice when it is eaten; the good rice becomes the truly good rice when it fulfills its function of getting into the mouth of the duke. Left out in the fields to rot, it is not rice but garbage. In the mouths of commoners, this same rice intended for the duke is not rice but contraband. (Ziporyn 2012, 113)

Things become what they are when they fulfill the expectations that humans place on them. Here social norms come into play as well, but these are just as much a part of the environment as anything else; their being in play does not negate the validity of either meaning or *li*. Here “good rice” is defined as rice that is meant for the duke, and it only truly becomes what it is called in actuality when it meets those expectations. When those expectations are not met, it becomes something else entirely. Just as it was for meaning, we have found that expectations are an integral part of *li*.

Returning to the greater context of this study, we can see that this is precisely the reason that strangers seem to be difficult to deal with — there are no concrete expectations that we have for strangers — there is no *li* for strangers beyond what we would expect to see from someone who abides by the rules for what is or is not socially acceptable. In contemporary America, those rules are relatively thin; the Confucians, however, with their ritual scripts, have a much thicker, embodied basis from which to draw. While those scripts may or may not be followed precisely, they do provide a thick source of culturally reasonable expectations.

I have one final remark concerning the end-points of these processes. Ultimately, when the greatest coherence has been cohered with, “all under heaven” achieves a utopian state, a state I relate to the term *cheng*, which I will eventually compare to Dewey’s equilibrium. In its earliest recorded usages, *cheng* appears to indicate a transparent correspondence, usually said of the relationship between inner states and outer actions or between referent and actuality. After it is adopted as a philosophical term by Mencius, it takes on new nuances (see footnote 119 below) and begins to adopt transformative overtones. In Mencius’ view a transparent correspondence between a person’s true inner self and outward comportment implies that one’s heaven-given goodness is immediately

on display. This transparent view into one's inner goodness thus serves as a form of manifesting one's virtue, which Confucians see as being naturally and unavoidably moving to others.¹²³ Taken to its logical end, this chain of thinking means that *cheng* eventually can help integrate all things, which we see in

Mencius 7A4:

孟子曰：「萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。」

The ten-thousand things are all completed by me. There is no greater joy than to examine myself and find myself to be whole (*cheng*). In seeking *ren* I find nothing closer than to act by strengthening harmonic reciprocity.¹²⁴

In putting this passage together with 4A12 (see footnote 119 above) we see *cheng* as a flavor of *de* and an element that allows one to bring the world to perfection.

¹²³ Here we can reference Mencius 4A12 for support. 誠身有道：不明乎善，不誠其身矣。是故誠者，天之道也；思誠者，人之道也。至誠而不動者，未之有也；不誠，未有能動者也。 There is a way to make oneself sincere (*cheng*): one who is not clear about the good cannot make himself sincere. Therefore, sincerity is the way of heaven. Thinking in terms of sincerity is the human way. There has never been a case of one who has reached sincerity who is not moving (to others). For those no sincere, there has never be one who can move (others).

¹²⁴ I have here translated *cheng* as wholeness. This meaning arises naturally from the meaning stated above: if a transparent, accurate correlation exists between all aspects of a person—inner and outer, thought and deed, and so forth—we can say that she is “whole” rather than of two minds. Given this translation, there is a single thread of “wholeness” that passes from completion, to wholeness of the self, to the wholeness built by harmonic reciprocity. Were we to read *cheng* here as purely “transparently correlated” making this passage internally coherent would be much more difficult.

This transformative aspect of *cheng* is further developed by Xunzi. However, Xunzi, who does not share Mencius' optimism about human goodness, keeps the idea of transparent correspondence between inner and outer, but reverses the process. Humans should conform themselves to standards of morality—namely, the ritual corpus—and reform themselves so that they continue to function as whole, sincere people, even while they practice rituals that run against their nature. In this change, *cheng* also becomes a stage of completion after the process of transformation and a source of order and consistency in otherwise chaotic human life. Xunzi also begins to see attaining this *cheng* as harmonizing with the consistency of the universe, which Xunzi also sees in terms of *cheng* (An 2005, 50-51). According to Xunzi, heaven, earth, the seasons, and humans all follow ritual (71/19/26-28), and in being regular (and therefore predictable) all reach their end with *cheng* (7/3/28-29). In being *cheng* humans form a harmony with the cosmos; *cheng* thus becomes both the perfection of human goodness and the human link to the cosmos.

All of this development culminates in a meaning of *cheng* that correlates to a “perfected state,” a wholeness of person that can only truly be achieved at the grand level, equivalent to the greatest coherence. In chapter 2, I discussed how self-cultivation is part of a process of mutual integration. To cultivate the self is

to cultivate a relationship and to create a harmony out of that relationship. In order to be whole, both parties in an intersubjective relationship must accord with each other. But every individual is a nexus of dyadic relationships; for an individual to be fully whole, fully integrated, each of those relationships must be properly cultivated and integrated as well. This very quickly builds to include everyone, then, following Mencius and Xunzi in their respective ways, extends to animals and inert objects, ultimately integrating all under heaven. What we have in the idea of *cheng* then, is a vision of the world that is harmonious from the innermost incipencies of our unseen desires (in our wholeness or “sincerity”) all the way to the edges of the cosmos. Where the greatest coherence is not just recognized, but actualized, we have the ultimate state of *cheng*.

Dewey’s vision of equilibrium holds no concept of a “grand equilibrium” that I am aware of, though the idea of perfect attunement described above can be easily analogized to either a partially or fully realized state of *cheng*. Part of the seeming disparity between these concepts seems to be the breadth of context included or excluded in the concept of equilibrium. Where equilibrium may refer to the state of only one item in its immediate context, *cheng* and *li* necessarily involve corresponding harmonies that extend beyond the immediate context. Nevertheless, we can note that neither of the ends states of equilibrium or *cheng*

are eschatological in character. Despite being ultimate concerns, both of these states are subject to decay over time. For Dewey, this decay begins almost immediately (see above). Chinese philosophy assumes that change will come, sooner or later, and we can note that the temporal locale for the closest analogue to total equilibrium comes in the past, in the era of the sage kings. This is to say that once achieved, *cheng* can be lost.

My comparison ends here. As I proceed to discuss how embodied, pre-conceptual meaning is understood to function as a subset of the above theory of meaning, the juxtaposition presented in this passage should function as a bridge, allowing the insights garnered there to be applied profitably to Confucianism.

3.3 Embodied Meaning

In this section, I propose a limited, working concept of embodied meaning (allowing for the irony of conceptualizing the pre-conceptual). It is an empirically based concept that draws heavily upon the work of both the cognitive philosophers and on the pragmatist philosophy that often serves as their philosophical foundation. What I demonstrate is that most meaning, from the simplest sense of linguistic indexicality to the most complex considerations of huge masses of information (e.g. the “meaning of life”), is structured heavily by embodied experience, and that the body cannot be ignored in our understanding

of how meaning is formed and functions. We will be reminded that meaning and certain knowledge ultimately must be particular in nature. Thus in using ritual scripts to create immediate, local, and physical frames of reference between in-group strangers, Confucianism taps into the foundations of the meaning making process.

3.3.1 Pre-conceptual Meaning

This discussion begins with an exploration of various sources of pre-conceptual meaning. In representational, constructivist, and foundationally linguistic theories of the self, culture and meaning all take conceptual knowledge as the foundational unit and may object to the notion of pre-conceptual meaning. Therefore, to show the validity of this classification of meaning, I will begin not by immediately addressing pre-conceptual meaning, but by highlighting pre-conceptual aspects of experience.

Though the neuroscience that has helped build a case for the validity of pre-conceptual meaning is relatively new, discussing *experience* in terms of conceptual and pre-conceptual categories goes back at least as far as the beginnings of phenomenology and pragmatism. These theories concerning the nature of experience serve as a good starting point for my discussion of meaning because they demarcate an early theory regarding a possible seed for the growth

of meaning. All of the following theories share a notion of concrete experience, experience arising between a living, embodied person embedded in his or her dynamic environment. Furthermore, all of these theories promote a layer of experience that stands prior to the process of conceptualization. From this point, moving from experience to meaning within these categories requires building only a relatively short bridge.

Developments in cognitive philosophy have further borne out these early theories concerning pre-conceptual apparatuses, but begin their search from a different point and different observations. In general, cognitive philosophy uses the insights of cognitive science in conjunction with philosophy to generate philosophical theories that rely on and are compatible with current scientific findings. Mark Johnson and George Lakoff were some of the first cognitive philosophers who began to be widely recognized and cited in the field of humanities. Their landmark book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) began alerting scholars to the fact that cognition is embodied; this is to say that structures of thought grow in some real, structuring way from the sense and motor functions that govern our bodies.

More specifically, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that the concepts that compose our worldviews are actually analogies based on the experiences of our

bodies. This appears most clearly in what they discuss what they refer to as orientational metaphors, in which certain abstract concepts are framed in terms of spatial orientations arising from a physical mode of being in the world. They provide examples such as “HAPPINESS IS UP, SADNESS IS DOWN,” which they accompany with linguistic examples in everyday usage: “I’m feeling *up*. That *boosted* my spirits. My spirits *rose*. You’re in *high* spirits...I’m feeling *down*. I feel *depressed*. I *fell* into depression.” Lakoff and Johnson further suggest ways in which this metaphor is derived on physical experience: “Physical basis: Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with positive emotional state.” (1980, 15) This example suggests that our ability to conceptualize (that is, to grasp experience through reflective process and thus be able to posit meaning) is bound to our physical experience; in this case happiness is conceptualized in terms of a certain embodied experience of verticality, and without experiencing verticality, happiness *could not be conceptualized or understood* the in way it is now. Lakoff and Johnson go on to suggest that most if not all of our fundamental concepts are understood and organized in terms of metaphors, whether object-based, ontological, or orientational. All of these categories are based on direct experience drawn from our embodied experience.

Matching this with the material just taken from pragmatist theory, we might say that the apparatuses used to impose familiarity on the confusion of new experiences are all bodily in nature. Bodily experience is the context into which we are first born; it makes sense that the body's experience is the least abstract and thus the basis from which we as humans learn to familiarize the world around us.

Johnson and Lakoff have continued to develop this line of metaphorical thinking with the concept of image schemas. In short, image schemas are those basic physical unit of experience from which the metaphors we live by are drawn. As Mark Johnson describes them, image schemata "are recurring patterns in our dynamic experience as we move about in our world. ... Without them our experience would be an undifferentiated mush; but because of their internal structure they constrain our understanding and reasoning." (1987, 137)

According to Johnson, these schemata represent basic elements of our physical experience and serve as the foundations for the metaphors described above. Our understanding of the world, no matter how abstract, must incorporate these structures in order to convey any true meaning. For example, Johnson cites the VERTICALITY schema in our concept of "more." "More" is bound to be understood in terms of increased verticality because our everyday experience of

accumulated things (more things) also has a vertical aspect to it: accumulated things often pile *up*. Whether liquid in a jar, or books piled high, we readily associate “more” with “up” such that a large part of our concept of “more” incorporates “up” naturally. Thus, as he notes, even with abstract concepts, we speak of and understand “more” in vertical terms: “Turn *up* the heat” makes sense to us even though the intensity of molecular vibration that is heat actually has no vertical element to it. (1987, xv)

These metaphors lurk in the background of our concepts and are expressed naturally through the language that we use. How does this cognitive science relate to *pre*-conceptual meaning then? What I have described has been the development of concepts from concepts (the concept of happiness comes from the embodied concept of “up”). Johnson, however, continues to trace the making of meaning back into a “nonconscious dimension,” what he calls *immanent meaning*. The clearest and most relevant example of this type of meaning Johnson refers to was discovered by Daniel Stern (1985) and is a subset of what Stern called “intermodal perception.” Stern found that blindfolded three-week old infants could match the sensation of sucking on either a bumpy or smooth pacifier with the subsequent visual presentation of their pacifier; presented with both the bumpy and smooth pacifier, 75% of the infants fixed

their gaze on the pacifier on which they had been sucking. This means that even at three weeks of age infants are able to link an oral tactile sensation with an equivalent visual appearance. In other words, even at three weeks old, the sensations of being bumpy and smooth provide elements of meaning which can be translated into a different physiological sense. We would be hard pressed to say that these infants have developed conscious *concepts* concerning bumpiness or smoothness that they have stored in a brain repository. Rather, according to Johnson, the meaning of bumpiness or smoothness is given in part by the feeling they engender. Matching visual smoothness with oral smoothness is a matter of matching patterns of feeling, and this feeling, generally abiding outside what we are conscious of, is one of the foundational bases of meaning.

Stern states that this pattern matching from disparate senses provides the child with a shared *vitality-affect* contour. Vitality affects are not the classically recognized emotions like happiness, anger, or joy. Rather they are distinguishable dynamics that undergird experience as it unfolds. As Stern describes them, "These elusive qualities are better captured by dynamic, kinetic terms, such as 'surging,' 'fading away,' 'fleeting,' 'explosive,' 'crescendo,' 'decrecendo,' 'bursting,' 'drawn out,' and so on." (Stern qtd in Johnson 2008, 43) In other words, vitality affects are dynamic qualities of the process of perception,

the *felt flow* that characterizes experience. Our bodies are equipped so that vitality affects have their own meaning, one that registers across the whole spectrum of our senses.

Intermodal perception and vitality effects demonstrate that human physicality gives us a common set of meanings. Certain vitality affects, for example, are associated with particular emotions. Take, for instance, the following set of visual lines, taken from Poffenberger and Barrows' (1924, 192) experiment reprinted in both Nancy Aiken's (1998) book *The Biological Origins of Art* and Mark Johnson's *The Meaning of the Body* (2008, 225):

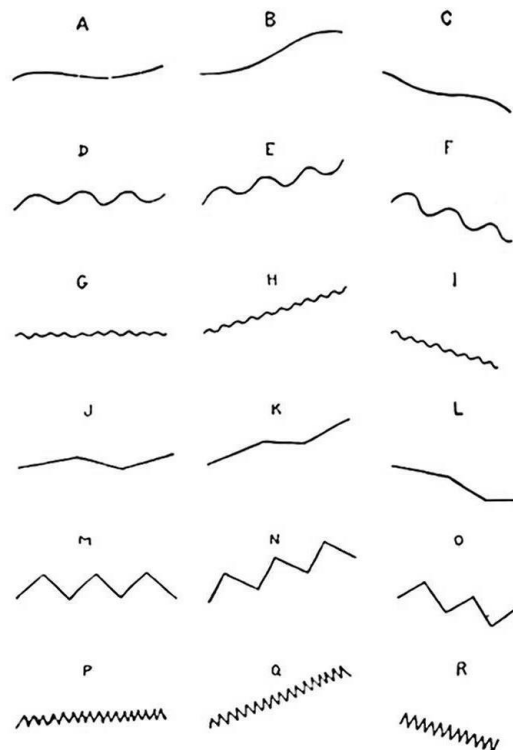


Figure 1: Lines matched to affective adjectives. (A.T. Poffenberger and B.E. Barrows, "The feeding value of lines," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 8, 192, reprinted in Johnson 2008)

In the original experiment, subjects were asked to match lines to emotions, such as weak, dead, quiet, gentle, sad, lazy, agitating, furious, harsh, merry, and playful. Poffenberger and Barrows found that large curves are associated with sad and quiet, small and medium curves with merry and playful, and small and medium angles are associated with furious and agitating. Jagged forms create tension, arousal, or anxiety (Aiken 1998). I doubt anyone viewing the figures above find these findings surprising, and Johnson comments, "We feel in our bodies the gentleness of a smoothly curving line. If we were to dramatically increase the amplitude of the curves, we would experience more of a surge of feeling with each movement upward to the apex of the curve, followed by an accelerating downward rush to the bottom of the next curve." (2008, 26) Each of these lines gives us a "flow" of meaning, and an associated vitality effect which has its own associated emotion. Part of the associated emotion is rooted in what interacting with objects containing those general qualities might engender

emotionally. Smoothness is safe and calming, closer to an equilibrium. Jagged edges are dangerous and sharp, engendering similar emotions.

Other types of nonconscious, non-conceptual meaning exist as well, some of which do not build upon these vitality affects. According to Bruce Mangan, for example, we have “non-sensory experiences,” which are pre-conceptual feelings, such as the feeling of familiarity or “rightness,” that inform and underlie sensory experience and transform unadorned and possibly meaningless sensory experience into meaningful perception. Non-sensory experiences are thus functionally interpretive and help to provide much of the content that undergirds meaning. Mangan posits the idea that non-sensory experience indicates that more information is available for access. These non-sensory experiences mediate between memory and current experiences, providing a person with the ability to connect past and present into something meaningful (2001).

Emotions themselves can also be non-conceptual. Though may initially seem to be manifestly conscious phenomenon, this is not always the case. For instance, if we're caught by surprise by a crash of thunder, we may not always be conscious of the fear that rises in us until after the fact, when we can look back and put a name to our emotional state. For Johnson, the process of being startled

by thunder has at least three distinct layers in the process of meaning generation. First comes the explosion of sound. The vitality affect “explosiveness” is a quality of experience that conveys a particular meaning to us. Even babies who have no concept of the possible dangers represented by an explosion may still become perturbed and anxious at the sound of one – this vitality affect causes an immediate shift in a person’s experienced equilibrium, either because it is unexpected or uncomfortable in some way.

This shift in equilibrium in turn generates any one of a number of emotional responses, which Antonio Damasio claims are “processes arising from the perception of ongoing changes within an organism that require some transforming activity, either to continue the harmonious flow of experience or to help re-establish equilibrium in response to a perceived imbalance or disruption within the organism.” (Johnson 2008, 58) Explosions, by their very nature cause disruption and naturally prompt an emotional response.¹²⁵ Emotional responses are thus designed to motivate changes in behavior that are favorable toward our welfare and well-being.

¹²⁵ This is not to say that we cannot become inured to explosions. However, explosions are naturally disruptive; to become inured to explosions requires us to experience them enough so that our body learns that they are not significant.

Regardless of whether these emotional reactions are conscious or not, Demasio notes that emotional reactions also generate what he calls “somatic markers,” which simply stated are emotional tags about particular situations. As in the above example, even before we have conceptualized that crash-boom as “thunder,” we may have either a negative emotional reaction (if the vitality affect is experienced as disruptive) or a positive one (if, for example, the explosive force is experienced as stimulation rather than disruption). These somatic markers are part and parcel of any experience-derived concept that we might have. Somatic markers are also our most basic, biological indicators of value. They tell us, on a very simple level, if a particular experience was good (and thus to be sought after) or bad (and thus to be avoided). In the early stages of life, these valuations are hardwired and invariably linked to biological goals such as survival, reproduction, and physical or mental equilibrium. Later on, as we build concepts, somatic markers (and thus valuation) can also be twined with other possible goals. Somatic markers are perhaps the most vital carriers of meaning as we have defined it. Being sensitive to the consequences of interacting with a situation or event first and foremost means knowing if the outcome of that interaction will be helpful to or detrimental to a particular goal. Somatic markers

are thus the clearest and most immediate bearers of meaning to develop at the pre-conceptual level.

Instrumental music is perhaps one of the best illustrations for how some of these non-conceptual dynamics fit together convey meaning outside of consciousness or concepts. When we begin listening to music, we know that it engenders particular emotions within us; good music is able to calm, enrage, inspire, or frighten us. Despite this remarkable ability to change how we feel, music contains no explicit propositional value or specific concepts. Rather, the meaning we draw from a particular piece of music relies heavily on the meaning contained in its changes.

Traditional western musical composition is largely about creating emotional responses, often by establishing expectations by creating pattern, breaking that pattern, and returning to it. As listeners, we experience the pattern as a balanced equilibrium, the breaking of the pattern as a interruption, and the return to the pattern as a resolution of that interruption. In music theory, the longing, that pull to return to the original pattern (think of how one feels if “Mary had a little lamb” is sung through to only the second-to-last note) is known as musical tension. Put simply, part of the meaning conveyed by music is thus conveyed by how well the current musical expression does or does not

accord with the pattern that it initiated at its inception, and whether or not the music is moving away from or toward that pattern (representing an increase or decrease in tension respectively). The less it accords with the pattern and the more established the pattern, the greater the pull and the stronger the emotion generated by the meaning of the music.

Note that tension is originally an embodied, physical experience; it is a pulling that imposes stress. Muscle tension is probably our most basic experience of tension, and we experience the tension we see in other physical objects through our own experience of muscle tension. Metaphorical theory suggests that our experience of musical and dramatic tension is understood and filtered through our experience of physical tension. Musical tension can thus be created through the use of various different vitality affects, each of which serves to vary the current music from the base pattern, such as the increasing and decreasing of volume, acceleration and deceleration, flow, break, and interruption. These are all vitality affects that destabilize the pattern or return to it. Each vitality affect thus bears meaning. First, each of them invoke particular emotions by association. An explosive bang on the bass drum, for example, might evoke the danger of cannon fire or thunder, while a smooth, rising clarinet phrase might evoke the sensation of floating. Second, all vitality affects either bring us closer to

or further from the patterned expectations that represent equilibrium. This in turn either increases or decreases the tension we feel.

While we listen to music in a non-analytical manner, however, none of this is usually consciously apparent to us. In fact, while we listen to music, we are rarely even conscious of *why* a swelling crescendo or a stylistic pause adds to the grandeur or tension of a particular musical phrase. If we are simply listening, we are probably only conscious of the fact that the music feels grand or pulls at us somehow, if we are even conscious of it at all. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of meaning conveyed in instrumental music, and this meaning is generally meaning we do not conceptualize, consciously or otherwise.

Note that even at this pre-cogitative level, musical meaning results from contextual relationship. Musical tension cannot be generated without first generating an initial pattern through tempo, key, mode, initial volume and other patterned musical attributes. In music, the creation of pattern and the equilibrium it brings is precisely the creation of an extremely localized context, a context which allows meaning to be conveyed. The creation of expectation through pattern is thus the creation of part of the framework from which musical meaning springs.

There are many more aspects to musical meaning; this study is unable to cover all of them, but because it is particularly important to Confucianism, we can also note that part of musical meaning is also given through intermodal perception. The timbre of certain musical instruments or the effect of certain chords evokes particular feelings by cross-sensory analogy. Our pan human capacity for intermodal perception means that the lines given in the experiment above (figure 1) are easily analogized to qualities musical phrases possess. Lyrical flowing passages *feel* like graceful curves, while loud staccato notes *feel* sharp. Thus a trumpets playing an open fifth (a relatively “bright” sounding instrument playing a chord whose harmonics are associated with energy) will convey meaning on their own, just because their particular sound and the relationship between their notes are easily felt to mimic other senses with similar qualities and their own associations. Suzanne Langer (1953) also notes that musical patterns are tonal analogues of the “felt flow” of experience, and that rising pitch, crescendos, and increases in tempo tend to heighten tension and expectation, which we experience also as longing, anticipation, or intensification of feeling. This is all contextually dependent, of course. Below, we will see that Confucianism makes heavy use of this particular aspect of music.

3.3.2 Pre-conceptual meaning and the self

These different layers of pre-conceptual meaning work in tandem with each other. Consider Capgras syndrome, a mental disorder that prevents the arousal of emotive familiarity. While patients with Capgras syndrome are able to distinguish facial differences and recognize and differentiate objects and people, even the most familiar of people such as family members seem to be impostors — unfamiliar people who have taken on the faces that should be familiar. What is left is a world in which nothing is familiar, where things look and feel unreal and faded or impersonal as well as strange and alienated. (Seok 2013; 73-74, 137) If we read this condition in terms of James and Dewey's pragmatism and the above cognitive science, we do receive a consistent and reasonable understanding for why patients with Capgras syndrome experience the world as they do. The world appears faded and impersonal in part because lack of familiarity prevents past associations and the somatic markers that partially constitute our experience of the world from being applied to current experience; past memories, good or bad, thus cannot enliven their experience of the present. The reality and "presence" of objects is thus degraded because interaction with them lacks the

emotive content.¹²⁶ In addition, lack of familiarity prevents association with past experience, the key in what Dewey claims is the basis for the building of meaning. In a word, without a sense of familiarity and past emotional associations, the world ends up feeling *meaningless*, in part because we cannot make value judgments about any thing or event encountered.¹²⁷ Friends and family feel like strangers because they lack meaning, just like strangers.

All of this also points strongly to the fact that embodied, pre-conceptual meaning plays a huge part in building the relational self. Over time our tendency to avoid bad somatic markers and pursue good ones crystalizes into proclivities and dispositions that are part and parcel of who we are as people. This is another way of saying that values arise from the somatic markers attached to particular experiences, and our values are part of make us who we are. More to the point of

¹²⁶ The association between reality and emotion might be easier to grasp when we consider the case of bad acting. When we see good acting, we feel the emotions the actor intends to portray and accept the realism of the presented scene unconsciously. When acting fails, we feel the lack of affect and a lack of verisimilitude almost simultaneously. Emotion, or lack of it, seems to make the scene real or unreal. We can also imagine a case in which someone is actually sincerely in distress, but because something about the situation fails to arouse the appropriate emotions within us (perhaps something in the person's expression strikes us as unfamiliar to that emotion, or we've made a conscious decision not to accept what's presented) we consider the person's distress to be false.

¹²⁷ Mangan himself reads this disorder differently, claiming that while the familiarity non-sensory experience remains intact, people with Capgras syndrome have a pathologically incorrect sense of "wrongness" that overlays the familiarity. In either case, however, the thesis here remains applicable—meaning relies on preconceptual emotion for its stability.

this study, experience will assign particular somatic markers to other people; positive ones will invariably lead to more interaction and deeper integration, negative ones to less. The stronger the positive valence of the somatic marker, the stronger the sense of integration and familiarity, regardless of whether a large or small amount of time has been spent with that particular person or object.

Johnson continues to claim that these types of non-conscious, non-propositional meaning are not just non-conceptual, they are *pre-conceptual*. This is to say that while these types of meaning exist apart from concepts, they also serve to drive the formation of conceptual meaning and are components from which conceptual meaning is formed. I will examine this process in chapter 5, however, I would first like to take a brief look at pre-conceptual meaning in early Chinese Confucianism. Though these terms and categories are, of course, not present in their discourse, their text provides ample proof that at very least, they were aware of our capacity to act morally without thought. I will show that the ideal Confucian self is one whose perfected moral evaluation ideally takes place not on the conceptual, cognitive level, but on the pre-conceptual level, and furthermore, that the self that arises from such moral evaluation must be deeply connected to the people around it on a pre-conceptual as well as a conceptual level.

3.4 Pre-conceptual Meaning in Early Confucianism

We see the idea of pre-conceptual meaning in the opening quotation of this chapter, drawn from the *Xunzi* (77/20/39-40), speaks of the meaning of the dance being learned from the physical, coordinated movements of the dance itself rather than from some imposed, external meaning. The fact that Xunzi never expands or makes explicit the meaning of dance indicates that there is something concrete to be learned from the process of curling and uncurling, speeding and slowing our movements and the like that we cannot learn through proposition. We also find evidence of non-propositional, pre-conceptual meaning and learning in the *Liji*:

故禮之教化也微，其止邪也於未形，使人日徙善遠罪而不自知也。是以先王隆之也。《易》曰：「君子慎始，差若毫厘，繆以千里。」此之謂也。

Therefore, the transformative teachings of ritual are subtle; they stop aberrance when it has not yet formed, they prompt men daily to move closer to goodness and distance themselves from wrongdoing and yet not be aware of it. Therefore the ancient kings exalted [ritual]. The *Changes* say: "The worthy man pays close concern to the beginning. If it is short even a hair's breadth, the error could reach a thousand li." This speaks of this. (*Liji*, 經解 Jing Jie 9)

The way in which the heart-mind processes things below the level of consciousness was not unknown to the early Confucians. In fact, we can see it documented in a multiplicity of different ways. In the passage above, we note

that the (or, more likely, a) composer of the *Liji* was aware that people need not be aware of the transformations they undergo to be changed, and that teachings can reach down to a subtle level below the awareness. In the *Liji* the term this hidden layer of mental and emotional activity tends to be described in is *wei* 微, the fine, or subtle, most famously seen at the beginning of the *Zhongyong* chapter.¹²⁸

The treatment of unconscious activity in the *Liji* and *Xunzi* are, however, predicated on simpler formulations that we can find in the earlier texts. At the earliest points, we see pre-conceptual meaning functioning far more simply, at the level of spontaneous evaluation. In the *Analects*, for example, we see it in 9.18 where Confucius states that he has never seen a man who likes virtue as much as he loves feminine charms (色 *se*).¹²⁹ The male like of feminine charms often arises

¹²⁸ 莫見乎隱，莫顯乎微。 “Nothing is more visible than the hidden, nothing more obvious than the subtle.” (43.1)

¹²⁹ In this passage, the word translated here as “feminine charms” is literally “a pretty face” and is also often translated as “sex.” (See Eno 2015, While I prefer the broader interpretation because it covers the dangers of infatuation as well as direct carnality (see also the use of this word in 16.7 as something to be guarded against by youth in particular), the point remains the same. Sex is a deeply rooted, biologically incentivized behavior, and the love of sex is not something people usually need to deliberate about. The biological incentive for sex is so strong, in fact that it is often classified as a drive. (This is actually misleading—biological drives are usually linked with survival needs. No one has ever suffered tissue damage or died naturally

without or in spite of conscious evaluations about an object of attention — we can think particularly of cases of “love at first sight” or celebrity infatuation for easy examinations of this. If we read 9.18 as more than just a resigned or frustrated interjection, what seems to be suggested here is that it would be nice if virtue were as instinctively attractive as feminine beauty, or at very least that people could root themselves deeply within the love for virtue so that it has the same visceral hold over them as the things they find charming do.

Love of pretty faces is, in fact, spontaneous, and the Confucian ideal eventually takes on the same flavor of non-cogitative evaluation. In other terms, what this means is that sufficient self-cultivation would allow morality not only to become as powerful a motivator as our love of physical beauty. It would mean the affective, hedonic enjoyment of being a good person could naturally provide as intense a pleasure and attraction as beauty and sexual attraction. This in turn implies that Confucian self-cultivation allows the person to reform their own non-sensory experiences and thus reform their own evaluative apparatus. In the language of cognitive philosophy, this means that Confucian self-cultivation

from lack of sex. This means that both sex and virtue should both actually be associated with *flourishing* rather than basic survival.)

aims at altering the valence and intensity of the somatic markers for moral events.

Bongrae Seok brings our attention to how Mencius' work also invokes particular levels of unconscious moral evaluation, though Mencius emphasizes spontaneity over intensity of feeling. In particular he cites instances of the seeds of virtue and the example of the child falling in the well to show how confusing emotional responses to particular situations do not involve deliberative activity. The advantage of this particular modality of moral evaluation is that it allows for particularly quick reactions to potentially dangerous situations. Again, citing the child about to fall on the well example, he notes that without this particular fast reactive response the child could actually fall. "It seems that *ceyinzhixin* [the feeling of compassion], as soon as it is aroused in the heart, is rushing through the perception, judgment, and action in a unified and unmediated manner: because of a heart of pity and compassion, the man cannot help but to see, to feel, and to act in a certain way, almost unreflectively." (Seok 2013, 65). Similarly, he notes that in the passage Mencius 1A7, about King Xuan of Qi, who changes the sacrifice of an ox for the sacrifice of a sheep he does not see, the King is not aware of his own deliberations; he only reacts accordingly to an unconscious emotional evaluation. He sees the ox, but does not extend this feeling to the sheep precisely

because there is no active cogitative moral evaluation involved. Rather, he just reacts to the fear he sees on the face of the ox with his natural aversion to pain.

Ultimately, the full development of proper spontaneous, pre-conceptual evaluation leads us to the *Analects'* *locus classicus* for non-cogitative evaluation, *Analects* 2:4. Often taken to be Confucius' seven-stage auto-biography, beginning with learning to love learning at age fifteen and ending with his ability to follow the desires of his heart without transgression at the age of seventy, *Analects* 2.4 presents a description of a man who begins his process of self-cultivation with conscious learning, but ultimately is able to mold his affective states so that they match perfectly with his sense of morality. According to this, Confucius was able to alter the pre-conceptual, non-sensory (after all, what sense are morals associated with?) evaluators or "the desires of his heart" to entirely accord with his conscious moral apparatus. Edward Slingerland's thesis that *wu-wei*, broadly conceived as "uncontrived action," is a pan-Chinese spiritual aim and ideal (2008, *passim*) takes up this particular state in Confucianism. From this, we can understand the Confucian sage as one whose moral evaluation takes place on a pre-conscious level as often as not. Confucians not only strive to fine-tune their conceptual understanding of moral situations, but also attempt to sculpt their

pre-conceptual reactions and evaluations of situations with those moral understandings.

This state ultimately requires a unified, holistic sense of self. It means the ideal Confucian self is one that would have the same moral reactions to a situation whether or not active cogitative reasoning is involved. The *Great Learning* of the *Liji* expands on this by noting that “Those who have made their intentions whole do not deceive themselves; like one dislikes an odious smell or likes a beautiful face—this is called enjoying the ‘rightness’ of oneself.”¹³⁰ Here, sincere (*cheng*) implies not only honesty of language, but integrity or wholeness of person as well. The *Great Learning* appeals to the immediacy of sensory reactions to shed light on the nature of sincere intentions. Like those who catch the scent of something repulsive or see something beautiful, those who have made their intentions *cheng* exhibit no duality of mind. There is no divide or conflict between affective and cognitive/rational judgment. Such a conflict would indicate that one part or another of a person is not properly attuned to what is best in a particular situation and thus is in need of further cultivation.

¹³⁰所謂誠其意者，毋自欺也，如惡惡臭，如好好色，此之謂自謙。

More relevant to the point at hand, however, is the fact that *cheng* is articulated by using the body's pre-conceptual evaluations as a model. When we encounter an odious smell, our immediate response is one of disgust and aversion *whether or not we know the source of the smell*. The "what is that disgusting thing?" response shows that we do not need a concept in order to know that we dislike that thing; rather, we know it is distasteful from the start, and this knowledge might help us to create concepts about it in the future.¹³¹

I would also suggest this understanding of *cheng* also points us toward a unity of senses as well. Confucians were aware of a sense of embodied meaning that runs closer to what cognitive scientists and philosophers have discussed in terms of intermodal perception and vitality effects. The *Liji* makes almost explicit use of the analogical meaning found in perception and correlated affective states:

樂者，音之所由生也；其本在人心之感於物也。是故其哀心感者，其聲噍以殺。其樂心感者，其聲嘽以緩。其喜心感者，其聲發以散。其怒心感者，其聲粗以厲。其敬心感者，其聲直以廉。其愛心感者，其聲和以柔。六者，非性也，感於物而後動。

Music is (thus) the production of the modulations of the voice, and its source is in the affections of the mind as it is influenced by (external) things. When the mind is moved to sorrow, the sound is sharp and fading away; when it is moved to pleasure, the sound is slow and gentle; when it is moved to joy, the sound is exclamatory and soon disappears; when it is moved to anger, the sound is coarse and fierce; when it is moved to

¹³¹ See also 16:11 where we are enjoined to avoid evil like we avoid touching boiling water.

reverence, the sound is straightforward, with an indication of humility; when it is moved to love, the sound is harmonious and soft. These six peculiarities of sound are not natural'; they indicate the impressions produced by (external) things. ("Yue Ji" 2)

Here we see the vitality affects of particular sounds translated and correlated with the affective dimensions of particular emotions in the same way that we saw lines correlated with particular emotions in section 3.3.1. Emotional meaning was also understood and framed in physical orientations in the *Liji*. Through most of the *Liji*, sons are required to make offerings to their parents while bending slightly at the waist (see "Ji Yi" 10, below), objects are to be carried "as if" too heavy to bear.

The Confucians clearly knew that music generates powerful emotions, and that some music generates emotions that are more proper and conducive to mutual harmonization than others. Confucius' juxtaposition of the music of Zheng and flatterers is particularly amusing and telling.

放鄭聲，遠佞人。鄭聲淫，佞人殆。

Discard the music of Zheng and distance yourself from flatterers. The music of Zheng is licentious, and flatterers are perilous. (15.11)

Though we probably should not read too deeply into the phrasing here, it is easy to see how flattery and "licentious" music might invoke the same general affective state—both appeal to specific potentially selfish human desires. In

contemporary parlance (with contemporary, western sensibilities) we might liken both to a “guilty pleasure,” with the caveat that the Confucians obviously did not consider either of these harmless.¹³²

The Confucians were, therefore, aware of the usefulness (or destructiveness) of the non-conscious layer of heart/mind activity and aware that the body holds meanings of its own. The question then becomes not whether Confucians knew of the pre-conceptual, but how we can understand the dynamics inherent in the Confucian project of cultivation as being able to *change* the pre-conceptual, unconscious parts of our behavior. Contemporary science has shown us that we can actually change tastes and preferences for things. Sometimes our body does this automatically, as a reaction to being stuck with a particular thing or situation (Gilbert 2007). Other times this can be learned: consistently pairing something neutral with something pleasurable will actually change our enjoyment of the neutral element, even after the additional pleasurable element has been removed (Dywer et al., 2009).¹³³ The Confucians

¹³² See Erica Fox Brindley’s (2012) chapter “Music and the Psychology of the Emotions” for an excellent discussion of music, emotion, morality, and charisma.

¹³³ Though this particular point is speculative, I would suggest that the Confucians tap into this dynamic by joining cultivation with the pleasure of harmonious interaction and the pleasure of getting things just right (as discussed earlier in chapter 2).

clearly believed that their program of ritual cultivation could result in these changes, and the Confucius of the *Analects* purportedly completed the project. By what specific mechanisms did ritual cultivation help to achieve this state?

The mechanism I intend to study here is how ritual mediates the process of intersubjectivity at a pre-conceptual level. Though I will describe this in detail in the following two chapters, we can begin here by mentioning that the way in which we regard others is included in the emotional norms embedded in the ritual script. Take, for instance, *Analects* 2.8, which underscores the *expression* which is component to filial reverence.

子夏問孝。子曰：「色難。有事弟子服其勞，有酒食先生饌，曾是以為孝乎？」

Zi Xia asked about filial reverence. The master said “The expression is difficult. If it is just the young people helping with labor, or feeding their elders when they have food and drink, could this be called filial piety?”

We can gloss this correctly as filial reverence requiring the appropriate respectful emotion and the requirement that we display this on our face. But the expression is not merely an outward sign of an inward disposition, it is itself a mode of harmonizing agency. In the previous chapter’s section on intersubjectivity, I discussed the way in which contextually formed selves are in large part dependent on the sculpting gaze of the people around us. *Li* can be understood as an attempt to filter the effects of the intersubjective gaze through moral norms.

In this way, the dynamic I described as intersubjective agency becomes part of the fabric of ritual cultivation, and the communal nature of ritual cultivation is made further apparent.

Intersubjective agency is, again, a form of agency that we all have, at least *in potentia*; it is the agency to co-create others. Ritual in general amplifies this basic intersubjective agency by harmonizing it with the agency of the other. Again, intersubjective encounters are often conflictual, and when they conflict, the exercise of the intersubjective agency of one person may result in the negation of another's agency and ability to control the character of his or her own world. To revisit a previous example, if the child who wants to be considered an adult and no one is willing to see him that way, not only does he lose his ability to define himself, the intersubjective agency he wields over those adults and his own world is also overpowered and swept away. On the other hand, if the child completes a rite of passage marking him as an adult, authoritative rituals mediate the intersubjective gaze of everyone in society by filtering it through social norms. In such a case, there still might be people that insist on seeing the child as a child, but can do this only by rejecting the authority of society's accepted practices. In all other cases, members of that society including the child himself would see him as an adult, thus making it a social reality.

Confucian ritual similarly harmonizes the way participants in a ritual see each other so that no one's individual personal intersubjectivity dominates the interaction. More specifically though, Confucian ritual also takes the dynamics described above one step further and reaches beyond social status down to the level of emotion. For Confucian ritual scripts not only the way that individuals see each other's place in society, it also dictates the way we should feel about and act toward the people around us. It enforces this in part by scripting the expression required of ritual practitioners. Sometimes specific rituals will require specific expressions. At times we find the expression embedded in the larger requirements for demeanor:

孝子之有深愛者，必有和氣；有和氣者，必有愉色；有愉色者，必有婉容。
。

A filial son, having a deep love, must have a harmonious air about him. Those with a harmonious air must also have a delighted expression. Those with a delighted expression must have also a mild and congenial bearing. (*Liji*, "Jiyi" 11)

Here the facial expression is noted as one portion of the larger impression a filial son is to make while serving his parents.¹³⁴ In other cases, the expression is scripted much more closely:

¹³⁴ See also 玉藻 yuzao 29 for the expression of a man of rank, 30 for mourning expression, and 31 for that of a martialist.

孝子之祭，可知也，其立之也敬以誦，其進之也敬以愉，其薦之也敬以欲；退而立，如將受命；已徹而退，敬齊之色不絕於面。孝子之祭也，立而不誦，固也；進而不愉，疏也；薦而不欲，不愛也；退立而不如受命，敖也；已徹而退，無敬齊之色，而忘本也。如是而祭，失之矣。

The sacrifice of a filial son can be known. While he is standing (waiting for the service to commence), he should be reverent, with his body somewhat bent; while he is engaged in carrying forward the service, he should be reverent, with an expression of pleasure; when he is presenting the offerings, he should be reverent, with an expression of desire. He should then retire and stand, as if he were about to receive orders; when he has removed the offerings and retires, the expression of reverent gravity should continue to be worn on his face. Such is the sacrifice of a filial son. To stand without any inclination of the body would show insensibility; to carry the service forward without an expression of pleasure would show indifference; to present the offerings without an expression of desire (that they may be enjoyed) would show a want of love; to retire and stand without seeming to expect to receive orders would show pride; to retire and stand, after the removal of the offerings, without an expression of reverent gravity would show a forgetfulness of the parent to whom he owes his being. A sacrifice so conducted would be wanting in its proper characteristics. ("Jiyi" 10, Legge Translation)

As this quotation shows, different expressions are required to show different emotions during different points in the ritual for various different reasons.

This mandating of facial expressions delves down past the conceptual into the pre-conceptual realm of intersubjective interaction. Intersubjective interaction technically requires no cognitive content, though the meaning written into whatever ritual is performed might amplify and help to identify present emotions. Intersubjective interactions need not contain conceptual content. Given that the basic positive or negative somatic marker can be ascribed without prior

conceptualization, and that pre-cognitive emotions can arise from interactions with objects, events, and people upon first contact, intersubjective interactions can take place entirely prior to the process of conceptualization. Think, for instance, of one person who startles another in an alley. The frightened person would assign the other a “to be feared” meaning and convey that in their interaction. If the person who did the startling is in a state where filtering intersubjective interaction is difficult, he or she might experience themselves as someone feared and thus rejected. In fact, all that is necessary is the ability to read a reaction as positive or negative and the capacity to ascribe responsibility for that reaction to ourselves — something that we acquire at a very young age. Though more complex interactions are possible, at base, this is all that is needed. This further means that any tradition that governs emotion and expression as a form of communication also governs pre-conceptual intersubjectivity.

This whole process transforms a potential struggle of wills into an exponentially more powerful experience. Let us take, for example, a son and father engaged in a birthday tea ceremony. If they both embody their ritual roles correctly, both parties would be obliged to shape each other — the expressions on their faces should allow the father to experience himself as a figure worthy of respect and the son to experience himself as respectfully filial, regardless of their

prior experiences of themselves and each other. In other words, the ritual would transform the way each person experiences themselves through the expressive gaze of the other, thus transforming each other's experience of self and self-definition. Regardless of who they were *before* they engaged in the ritual, so long as they remain within the ritually mediated script, they would experience themselves and each other as ritual norms dictate they should.¹³⁵

We see a more general version of this in the *Liji*. The comportment, bearing, and expression of the worthy person is supposed to have a known, specific effect on those watching him.

¹³⁵ It is also of note that in this example, the locus of this agency lies neither completely with the son nor completely with the father. In harmony with the understanding of personhood as contextually formed, the agency embedded in ritual is an agency that arises not from one person or the other as a discrete agent, but from the harmonized embodiment of the ideal relationship that constitutes them both. This further means that in Confucianism, the danger of intersubjective encounters is mitigated by both parties *yielding* their own personal judgments about the other person to the mediation of ritual. This does not mean that their personal agency is stolen by a faceless set of social norms; both father and son are still responsible for their counterpart's transformed experience of self. It does, however, mean that by acceding to the standards of ritual, both allow some of the particularities of their individual relationship to be bypassed in favor of harmonizing with each other.

This is in harmony with the fact that Confucians see the agency born of *de*¹³⁵ as resulting from yielding to the *dao* (Fingarette (2003)). My understanding of agency as decoupled from the assertion of the *individual will* thus follows Fingarette's view (cited in full in section 1.1.1). Indeed, as described earlier, in the case of intersubjectivity, the assertion of an individual will often *detracts* from human agency considered as a whole. I want to emphasize again, however, that the fact that this agency is not bound to an individual will does not mean it cannot be intentionally exercised.

子曰：「君子不失足於人，不失色於人，不失口於人，是故君子貌足畏也，色足懾也，言足信也。」

The master said: "When the worthy man is with people, he does not misplace his feet, lose his proper expression, or lose control of his mouth. Therefore his countenance induces awe, his anger fear, and his words confidence. (*Liji*, 表記 "Biao Ji" 2)

It is doubtful whether Confucians expected those watching the worthy person in this passage are making conscious decisions on how to react, just as our initial reactions to random people we meet do not tend to be considered.¹³⁶ Confucian ritual scripts thus incorporate within them a mediated form of intersubjective agency that is, at heart, pre-conceptual in nature. This character underlies all Confucian ritual (which is, if we recall, always either communicative or at very least training for proper communication). From the Confucian point of view, if we are always responsible for our part in defining the selfhood of the people around us, and if we represent only one pole of a relational dyad, internalizing and embodying all of ritual's aspects will also result in our transforming the people around us and harmonizing our relationships with them in the idealized mode described by the ritual script.

¹³⁶ This is especially true if we consider the fact that though the Confucian texts tend to have a very high estimation of the perfectibility of each individual human being, they tend to have a relatively negative view of the masses as a whole. See El Amine 2015 for a discussion of the Confucian attitude to the common people.

Facial expression is important even in brief ritual interactions. Recall Analects 10.24 (cited in the previous chapter), in which each situation in which Confucius' expression changes is noted clearly. In this passage, we can see the extent to which *li* mandates pre-conceptual meaning. Though the exact emotion Confucius displayed is not narrated, we nevertheless have an example of when it is appropriate to respond with some sort of communicative emotional response.

Taking both of these areas of pre-conceptual thought together, we can note that the first example is a form of training to reach the second state. The next chapter examines how it is that Confucian ritual practice is able to transform a person's pre-cognitive, affective experience and move practitioners toward intersubjective and unitive forms of relationality through physicality as well as expressive emotion.

Chapter 4: Ritual Theory, Interaction Ritual, and *Li*

莫春者，春服既成。冠者五六人，童子六七人，浴乎沂，風乎舞雩，詠而歸。

At spring's end, when the spring's clothes already finished, along with five or six capped young men, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze on the rain dance terrace, and return home singing. –Analects 11.26

In chapters one and two, we focused on the individual and his or her relationship to the group in Confucian self-cultivation. Both chapters discussed how the individual comes to reflect the group in the process of ritual cultivation and both emphasized the priority of local connection in the creation of coherent groupings. This chapter points toward ritual as one element that allows different families of Confucianism to remain together as a coherent whole in spite of the fact that there are numerous propositional differences in the way that the varied Confucian schools describe cosmology, human nature, authority, and the role of ritual itself. This chapter and the one that follows picks up on that thread and draws our attention to the ways that ritual naturally focuses attention on local, concrete, embodied contexts by examining the characteristics of ritual as a class

of action. Specifically, these chapters will eventually thrust us toward an understanding of how solidarity arises from the experience of sharing or feeling the embodied physicality of the other. I will argue that a crucial contribution to the creation of a co-presence-like experience lies in modes of being physical together in such a way that the other seems to become part of the self. Described in the terms of the last chapter, what this chapter describes is a way in which strong somatic markers with a highly positive valence can be generated between strangers through embodied channels, in a way that does not rely on abstract meaning.

Such dynamics have been observed in a number of places. In regard to dance, Anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown ([1922] 1964, pp. 251–52) writes, “As the dancer loses himself in the dance, he reaches a state of elation in which he feels himself filled with an energy beyond his ordinary state . . . at the same time finding himself in complete and ecstatic harmony with all of the fellow members of his community.” Radcliffe-Brown’s observations have been studied in more detail in other scholarship, particularly in the work of William McNeill (1995) and Barbara Ehrenreich (2006), which examines the effects of synchronous movements and dance in the production of community solidarity.

Though it tends to be downplayed, Confucians were trained in dance and as Xunzi notes, had dance-like rituals.¹³⁷ Much of the time, we frame empathy in terms of sharing values, beliefs, or ideals, all notions passed on abstract proposition. While Confucian ritual also implies sharing these notions, rituals are also physically enacted and thus physically embodied, and this is a major part of its power to create solidarity. Part of these next two chapters will also bring Confucianism into dialogue with this particular line of scholarship. These chapters thus rely heavily on ritual theory, drawn both from anthropological and sociological fields of study, as well as case studies of pre-conceptually based solidarity from which we can extrapolate meaningful comparisons.

This chapter focuses on ritual and these dynamics as it occurs in what Randall Collins (2004) refers to as Interaction Ritual. There is much more in ritual theory that is applicable to Confucianism. It would be impossible to apply the all of the insights from the field of ritual theory to any one discussion. Some ritual studies, such as those centered on symbol and myth have limited applicability to the Confucian tradition.¹³⁸ Other schools of ritual theory are applicable, even well

¹³⁷ See Xunzi (75/19/122-124), where the *Junzi* takes the musical performances, which include dance, as the appropriate expressions of ritual and harmony.

¹³⁸ While Confucian ritual certainly connects to its own myths concerning the golden age of the sage-kings, it would be difficult to argue that the primary purpose of Confucian ritual

suited to Confucian ritual. For the sake of completeness, we can note that the “practice” school of ritual as described by Catherine Bell, for example, coincides well with the Confucian understanding of ritual performance as cultivational practice. Exemplified by Pierre Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and further colored and qualified by the insights of theorists such as Sherry Ortner, Marshall Sahlins, and Jean Comaroff, practice sidesteps much of the symbolic “meaning” of ritual that Confucian ritual thinking also tends to eschew. Rather, practice theory also tends to discuss ritual as the Confucians would: as a commonplace method of engaging with life and the mundane world. In general, practice theory claims that “the system of structures that are the basis of a culture interact with ‘human practice’ to yield culture internalized as the ‘self’ in social actors.” (Bell 1992, 76) Bourdieu further locates practice within the *habitus*, as something that generates the “socially informed body” and its concomitant “senses” (1977). Catherine Bell in turn suggests that the “sense of ritual” is a required addition to Bourdieu’s list of senses. (1992, 76) This “sense of ritual” and the entire concept of a ritualized body resonates strongly with Confucianism’s

practice is an attempt to recreate the age of the sage kings through symbolic interaction thereby tapping into an eternal or otherworldly order.

internal understanding of ritual propriety (*li*) as a self-cultivation program, with the end point being a totally ritualized human who can “follow the desires of [the] heart-mind without overstepping the bounds of propriety.” (*Analects* 2.4)¹³⁹

Understanding the Confucian ritual body is thus helpful to understand Confucian empathy as a necessarily embodied and unavoidably relational virtue. Despite the appropriateness of this school of ritual thought in looking at Confucianism, this school’s focus on individual actors offers less to the current discussion than the ritual theory on which I have chosen to focus.

I have chosen, instead, to focus on two more newly-minted strains of ritual thinking that both fall in the realm of the “performance” school of ritual thought. Both resonate strongly with the Confucian tradition and that directly address the dynamics of group construction. The first of these is Interaction Ritual (IR) theory, founded by Erving Goffman ([1967] 2005) and most coherently systematized by Randall Collins (2004). This is the theory of ritual that will be the primary focus for this chapter. The second strain is the theory of the ritual subjunctive as outlined by Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, Michael Puett, and

¹³⁹ See Michael Foucault’s (1980) “Body/Power;” Comaroff’s (1985) *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Bordieu’s (1977) “Outline of a theory of Practice,” Marcell Mauss’s (1973) “Techniques of the Body,” and Roy Rappaport’s (1967) *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*.

Bennett Simon (2008) and further elaborated in Seligman (2010) and Seligman and Weller (2012). After some preliminary remarks in section 4.1, we will leave the ritual subjunctive to be the focus for chapter six.¹⁴⁰ The use of these two schools of ritual makes up the first portion of this chapter, which addresses how ritual systematically removes the presence of alternatives and draws the attention to what is happening in the immediate context of the current performance.

Scholars of ritual theory will note that these two theories of ritual action are very different and arguably at odds with each other. Interaction ritual theory focuses primarily on experience and emotion, while the subjunctive theory of ritual emphasizes the social efficacy of form and structure. Seligman in particular, who writes passionately about the limitations of sincerity (which includes the “honest feeling” IR relies upon) would likely take deep exception to Collins’ understanding of ritual failure as a ritual that “falls flat” or fails to inspire emotion (2004, 51). For Collins, ritual efficacy hinges on its ability to create “a mutual focus of attention” which leads to shared emotion and

¹⁴⁰ Briefly, the ritual subjunctive theory of ritual states that ritual creates a “subjunctive universe” an “as if” universe that is performed into being by ritual practitioners. This universe is composed of and defined by the meanings encoded into a particular ritual, but may be at odds with what is experienced. See section 6.5.1 for a fuller explication of this theory.

“collective effervescence,” a term which he takes from Durkheim (2004, 41). For Seligman (2010), ritual is not so much about what one feels on the inside as it is about “getting it right,” or performing the ritual accurately. As we will see, Seligman et al. assert that correct performance serves as a means of bypassing the ambiguity and ambivalence of the internal world in favor of the clear binary of ritual performance or non-performance. This view naturally tends to privilege formality and downplay the importance of internal states.

My hope is that these two approaches toward ritual theory will serve to balance one another and thus offer a more comprehensive understanding of the way in which Confucian ritual functions. On the one hand, if we understand ritual that does not evoke emotion as a failed ritual, we fail to consider the many other vital social functions that ritual serves, the reduction of social friction not least among them. On the other hand, Confucian ritual cannot be properly understood without its affective and transformative dimensions, both of which are bracketed in the version of ritual action presented by Seligman et al. As discussed in chapter 2 of this study, *li* that fails to express one’s true emotions is incomplete in a significant way. While the point that sincerity is not “the point of ritual” is well taken, the binary opposition between sincerity and ritual presented by Seligman et. al is misleading because it seems to exclude the possibility of

ritual in which sincerity is a required, component part of its validity as a social mechanism.

In spite of these differences, I do not believe these viewpoints are irreconcilable; the debt of inspiration both theories seem to draw from Durkheim and their location within the performance school of ritual theory are points of contact that serve as foundations for a useful bridge. Furthermore, both of these theories of ritual work from the assumption of the bounded nature of ritual, each in their own way. Ultimately, both of these theories of ritual point to the way in which Confucian ritual focuses the practitioner on the present context while aligning him or her with the larger ritual cultural family. I will thus proceed in this chapter by describing the ritual frame, a general characteristic of ritual action, which both theories affirm (though IR theory does this implicitly rather than explicitly), then discuss how each theory of ritual action both fits Confucian ritual practice. This chapter builds toward the arguments in following chapters demonstrating a possible Confucian tendency toward the priority of local, immediate groups over larger, more encompassing boundaries.

4.1. Ritual Definitions

Ritual is, of course, a broad term that takes on a number of contextually specific valences. I very broadly consider ritual to be a mode of action that is formal, iterated, socially meaningful, and communicative. By communicative, I mean that rituals convey meaning to both practitioner and observer. This can be conveyed through ritual symbolism or through the simple act of submitting to the ritual's dictates. By socially meaningful, I mean that at least part of the meaning conveyed by ritual is not meaning imbued primarily by the performer. This means that rituals are at least partially conventional, allowing them serve as a type of syntax, a socially mediated form of communication, though less flexibly so than is the case with language.¹⁴¹ The social encoding of meaning further generates the characteristics of iteration and formality. Beyond simple repetitive action (such as the banging of a hammer), iterated ritual action is framed by past and future performances. This is to say that ritual iteration forms a framework that references past and future performances by incorporating or reinforcing the

¹⁴¹ Here we can note that language is far more "modular" than ritual—language can be broken down into far smaller bits of meaning. Where a simple handshake may be a single action, it conveys the equivalent of a fixed phrase, perhaps something like "It is a pleasure to meet you." Linguistic flexibility thus far greater than ritual flexibility, even in cases where they govern very simple, short social interactions.

meaning of past performances and creating a patterned expectation for future performances. The Catholic Mass, which occurs once every seven days, creates a cycle, a pattern and pulse to life marked by the ritual's reoccurrence. While rituals such as rites of passage or the Confucian capping ceremony are performed only once in a lifetime, they mark time's passage generationally. By formal, I mean that ritual limits action and language within its frame to a set of pre-determined options. These characteristics of ritual are fairly uncontroversial and well documented,¹⁴² and this formulation vaguely follows the definition of ritual set out by Roy Rappaport as "*the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.*" (1989, 24) This is also the definition referenced by Seligman et al. in their discussion of the ritual subjunctive, so it is relatively easy to calibrate my understanding of ritual to their theory.

This definition of ritual and Confucian *li* also flow together well. As we have seen in the last chapter, *li* is formal both in the sense that individual *li* are scripted and in the sense that the overall system of *li* has a derivable, grammar-

¹⁴² See Catherine Bell (1992, 1997) for excellent summaries of ritual scholarship and consensus determinations of ritual characteristics.

like structure. As a system of etiquette governing interpersonal interaction purportedly designed by the sage kings, interpreted consciously by other ritualists, and used as a set of social norms, *Li* is socially determined and thus socially meaningful. Furthermore, in both its social function and expressive elements, *li* is ideally communicative both of the performer's internal states and his or her social position. Finally, *li* is also iterative, in the sense that its form is repeated, its performance builds on previous performances in the training of emotion and the building of connection, and in the sense that the performance of a particular *li* creates a pattern for future ritual performance.

Interaction Ritual theory, however, takes a different approach. Goffman himself defines ritual as "an activity, however informal and secular," which "represents a way in which the individual must guard and design the symbolic implications of his acts while in the immediate presence of an object that has a special value for him" (Goffman 1967, 57). This definition is rather broad and requires detailed reference to the rest of his work for a full functional explication. For this, I will rely on Randall Collin's exposition, outlined below. We can, however, immediately note the lack of formality in Goffman's definition of ritual. This is, I believe, unfortunate, as the depreciation of form's importance often seems to lead Goffman and his expositors into a general theory of interaction as a

whole rather than merely a theory of ritual interaction—for Collins, ritual comes to include even such things as the comfortable length of pauses between conversation partners.

Collins himself notes that he over-applies the concept of ritual to the world of interaction, but insists on calling it ritual due to the fact that many of the dynamics he discusses are conventional. From my point of view, this runs against the specifically “designed” aspects of ritual that Collins himself comments on. Many of the things that Collins discusses like conversational pauses and shared physical habits seem to be just conventional habit, part of the “penumbral conventions” that Robert Neville (1995, 166) also includes within his concept of ritual. Neville’s conception of the penumbral conventions are helpful here for specifying my own understanding of ritual. He notes that though we have physical capacities, “biological potential” as he calls them, we cannot exercise them except through mimetically learning a culturally specific convention.

We learn conventional ways of using our hands, of walking, of making eye contact, of looking at things, of eating, of manifesting basic appetites and aversions, of being close to or distant from others, and of even elementary gestures and body language. ...Chinese people tend to walk by lifting their knees and contracting the lower stomach muscles, Europeans by flinging out their feet and thrusting the hips forward; to Europeans, and exaggerated Chinese walk looks like a shuffle, whereas to Chinese an exaggerated European walk looks like a goose step. (167)

Neville suggests these are the fundamental basics of *li* as ritual and the building blocks which people modify into *signs*, or meaning bearing conventions.

In many ways, this view of ritual seems suited to the Confucian mentality; the Confucian “sense” of ritual (“sense” here understood in Bourdieu’s terms as noted above) and the “grammatical” understating of *li* meshes well with the all-inclusive understanding of ritual action suggested by Collins’ use of the term “ritual” and penumbral conventions. Nevertheless, I prefer the narrower definition of ritual as inclusive of formality because it distinguishes ritual as a particular form of interaction. Moreover, despite the fact that *li* may not always be strictly pre-scripted (typically with improvised extensions of the ritual script), it is still *formal* in the same way that grammar is formal. That is to say, *li* has a structural formality in spite of its relative flexibility. It does not include the organic formation of social expectations that Collins tends to refer to as “natural rituals.” (2004, 49) In fact, I would suggest that this is one of the dividing lines between *li* and *su* 俗, or the common customs that were rejected by much of early Chinese philosophy (Lewis 1999, 2003; Ebrey 1991). In their conception and

development, *li* are considered and deliberated while *su* allows for spontaneous or biologically influenced development (though it need not be so).¹⁴³

I should nevertheless note that because IR is inherently interactive, this biologically influenced development does not mean that IRs are less socially meaningful (in the sense I use above) than formal rituals. Furthermore, as we will see, part of IR theory demonstrates how almost anything can become charged with emotion and thus become an object of “special value” under the right circumstances.

Though much of what I argue is that there is a powerful, pre-cognitive bonding element in ritual, I also argue that this *alone* is not enough to generate a reliable solidarity. Though *li* may aim at the same instinctive ease of many of the interactions that Collins considers in its execution, if we consider all interactive behavior to be ritual, the very considered character of the Confucian way of life will effectively be obscured. Not all human interactions are ritual interactions,

¹⁴³ This also means that I respectfully would like to qualify Professor Neville’s inclusion of basic penumbral conventions within the bailiwick of *li*. While *li* may retain common convention, I would suggest that *li* begins with the intentional formalization and standardization of those penumbral rituals. We can imagine a case in which common conventions are specifically altered because their inherent meaning runs against the meaning ritual inculcates, just as Confucius condemns the music of Zheng. In the last chapter we discussed the meaning inherent in movement. I would suggest that *li* would be just as careful before approving the meanings embodied in customary movement.

even if there are expectations or norms involved. Though I will continue to use the term “Interaction Ritual” to refer to Collins’ expansion of Goffman’s interaction rituals, I see his work framed more appropriately as a study of a broader type of interpersonal interaction involving social expectations. Nevertheless, we will see that ritual as I have defined it formalizes and thus amplifies and channels the dynamics Collins studies in his exploration of interpersonal interaction.

IR theory tends to look at situations holistically. Despite Goffman’s reference to individuals in his definition, because IR begins with situations rather than individuals, contexts rather than the discrete actions of an individual mark the starting point in IR theory. Randall Collins (2004, 25), who offers the first comprehensive systemization of Goffman’s interaction rituals,¹⁴⁴ both clarifies and elaborates on Goffman’s IR theory by noting five ingredients that he suggests make up the core of Goffman’s view on ritual interactions.¹⁴⁵ 1) “Ritual

¹⁴⁴ Collins does not, however, offer a strict interpretation of Goffman. Collins consciously creatively interprets Goffman, including elements of Durkheim’s work as well as aspects of symbolic interactionism and other sociological and anthropological insights into his system. I do not intend to present Collins as a pure expositor of Goffman so much as a scholar who has built upon the foundations of Goffman’s Interaction Ritual theory.

¹⁴⁵ Those familiar with Durkheim’s work will immediately see a parallel to the concept of collective effervescence. I will take this thread up in more detail in the section below.

takes place in a condition of *situational copresence*.” Note that this copresence generally implies a *physical* co-presence, or at least a reasonable facsimile thereof.¹⁴⁶ 2) “Physical copresence becomes converted into a full-scale encounter by becoming a *focused interaction*.” Merely being present together is not enough to generate a full interaction ritual; rather, what is required is that attention is focused rather than diffused. People milling about together in a mall are not engaged in IR, while a crowd clapping along with a street dance together would be. Rituals demand mutual focus of attention. Collins thus also notes that the ritual frames that Goffman (1974, 1981) writes about are means of focusing attention. Boundaries are thus also key to this ingredient as they give a clear sense of who is participating (and thus engaging in the mutual focus) and who is not. 3) “There is pressure to keep up *social solidarity*.” Collins glosses this ingredient with the concept of *entrainment*, a word that originally referred to synchronization with a given rhythm.¹⁴⁷ In this case, the synchronization Collins

¹⁴⁶ Collins notes that IR often fails when copresence is simulated via telecommunication. Adding other senses (as in video conferencing) ameliorates this somewhat, but falls far short of actual, physical copresence, as might be expected (2004, 53-67). Virtual reality offers exciting possibilities for the possible bypassing of this.

¹⁴⁷ The word entrainment has many uses across scientific fields, but the most interesting and provocative comes from physics, in which two interacting oscillating systems with different periods come to share the same period of oscillation through sharing of energy. Shared energy becomes a form of negative feedback, which causes the two systems to align.

refers to is social, emotional, and biorhythmic. Ritual requires that we conform ourselves to others, just as they are conformed to us (2004, 25, 47). In this process they embody, enact, and, I would add, create micro-societies. 4) "Rituals do honor to what is socially valued, what Durkheim called *sacred objects*." In other words, IRs theoretically center on objects which are both non-instrumental and morally inviolable. Here we should keep in mind that Goffman and Collins are engaged in microsociology. Where Durkheim sees expansive, relatively permanent and unchanging moral communities arising from his sacred-profane dichotomy, Goffman and Collins see the potential for much smaller, transient groups to be created around sacred objects (*xi*). This is a corollary of the fact that they see these objects themselves as being transient and situational by nature (though repeated interaction over time can sustain this). For Collins, sacred objects (and their corresponding societies) only remain salient so long as they are charged with positive emotional energy (EE). "Societies" in this theory thus represent "just those groups of people assembled in particular places who feel solidarity with each other through the effect of ritual participation and ritually charged symbolism." (41) Once these groups or "societies" are no longer held together by felt solidarity, they fall apart and cease to be an actual group. I see this as a major departure from Durkheim's work concerning social order, which I

will address in the section below. 5) “When ritual proprieties are broken, the persons who are present feel *moral uneasiness*, ranging from mild, humorous scorn, to disgust, to, in extreme cases, labeling the violator mentally ill.” (25) This is a reaffirmation of Durkheim’s social moral schema, with the added remark that this plays out just as well over small groups as it does over large societies.

These five ritual ingredients provide us with a fairly good picture of what ritual looks like when framed in terms of IR: Interaction Ritual is action that harmonizes the people involved with each other and reinforces or creates the symbols and customs of interaction for that particular group, often by charging those symbols or interactions with emotional energy. From this, we can see that IR is both socially meaningful and communicative, two of the four characteristics of ritual action that I have presented above. We have already discussed formality, which IR encompasses but does not bind itself to.

The final characteristic of ritual action that I selected for my definition is that of iteration. Iteration is not a required characteristic of Goffman’s original IR studies, but it often serves as a backdrop for his studies. Goffman’s discussion of face-work, for example, implies that face—the “positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”—is a running “tally” of successes and failures of status

interactions (1967, 5). These interactions are cumulative in nature, thus implicating past interactions in the present one. The success or failure of the current interaction will also determine what face-based interactions are possible in the future. Collins makes the chained nature of IR explicit when he refers to the network of IR as interaction ritual “chains.” (2004, *passim*) Thus though a particular interaction ritual may not be repeated exactly, interaction rituals build on the scaffolding of meaning created by previous interactions and thereby create patterns for future interaction.

Collins also includes secondary and tertiary supportive modes of IR: secondary IR involves the discussion of primary interaction rituals between people (the discussion of theology, perhaps, or an exchange concerning the statistics of professional athletes), while tertiary IR mainly points toward individual investment in IR’s symbols through study, meditation, or other solitary focus. Both secondary and tertiary IRs are understood as recharging cultural symbols with emotional energy through the investment of attention.

IR theory as a whole thus fits poorly into my given definition of ritual: IR includes formal ritual but is not limited to the formal and need not be iterative. At the same time, however, we can note that most embodied rituals exemplify and intensify the dynamics we see discussed in IR theory, and it thus serves as

an excellent resource for discussing ritual dynamics. Though I will discuss non-formal IRs briefly in chapter six, when I discuss IR in conjunction with *li* I am also assuming an element of formality, which as we will see, serves as an intensifier of focus in IR theory.

4.2 Interaction Ritual

Collins' description of interaction ritual is a selected, "subcognitive" portion of the range of interaction rituals that Goffman himself studied. Goffman also addressed the cognitive, social side of interaction rituals in his studies of face-work and the material presented in *The Presentation of the Self*.¹⁴⁸ While I would argue that those cognitive aspects of IR are also an excellent tool for examining Confucian ritual, a comprehensive application of IR to Confucianism would take an entire volume of its own. As the subcognitive portion of IR theory is best suited to highlighting how ritual creates solidarity, I will tend to focus on that aspect of IR in this section.

¹⁴⁸ Collins uses *subcognitive* to index an area of neural processing that is prior to conscious thought. In this respect, his use of the word subcognitive is similar to my use of the word "preconceptual", however, highlights the hidden portion of these processes, the processes that occur beneath the level of awareness. In his words, "the point is that ideas and beliefs are not sufficiently explained in their own terms...the subcognitive program is to understand how ideas arise from social practices." (2004, 11) In other words, his project is not designed to explain interaction in terms of ideas, but explore ideas generated from interaction. His work this complements early Confucian practices well.

Given this definition of ritual, we are now primed to enter into the heart of Interaction Ritual. As can be derived from the material above, IR is primarily concerned with action that creates or sustains association through positive emotional entrainment. IR begins with an assembly of participants (physical co-presence), a recognizable frame that provides clear guidelines as to who is participating, a mutual focus of attention, and a shared mood. According to IR theory, the collection of these characteristics allows a feedback loop, which enhances both the intensity of the mood and the awareness of their shared focus. Bodily synchronization can help amplify the effects of this feedback loop until communally shared intersubjectivity becomes so intense that it forms a bond between the participants:

The central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment — through bodily synchronization, mutual stimulation / arousal of participants' nervous systems — result in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols; and result also in the emotional energy of individual participants, giving them feelings of confidence [and] enthusiasm... (2004, 42)

Among other examples, Collins cites the intensification of shared emotions at funerals, religious services, and during crowded performances as examples of the described dynamic. The more aware the performers become of their shared mood and shared focus, the more their sense of both grows. Eventually an

intense but momentary experience of communal intersubjectivity is built, and this in turn brings a sense of solidarity and membership along with a high amount of emotional energy (48-49). Note that in none of these cases is prior familiarity required. Most of the time, we would expect many if not most of the participants in these situations to be strangers.

Because of its importance in the process of solidarity building, Collins spends an entire chapter discussing emotional entrainment. Most entrainment, however, relies upon the biological synchronization of the people involved, which is why physical co-presence is generally necessary. IR thus serves as an excellent bridge between ritual action and pre-conceptual meaning. As described, IR need not involve any sort of propositional or conceptual meaning at all—in fact, any words exchanged are often irrelevant. Rather, according to Collins, IR “puts emphasis on the situation, not as a cognitive construction, but as a process by which shared emotions and intersubjective focus sweep individuals along by flooding their consciousness” (32). The entrainment that occurs in IR intensifies the sharing of attention and mood to a point where nothing else occupies the mind, and all that is experienced is the mood shared through collective intersubjectivity. This flood of shared, synchronized emotional and physical experience crystallizes into group identity. IR theory thus serves as

a means to identify the conditions and situations under which non-propositional solidarity can be built.

One of the most accessible and striking examples provided by Collins involves the difference between New Year celebrations that succeed in building solidarity and those that fail. Collins' fieldwork suggests that those gatherings that successfully build solidarity are those that involve mostly playful, non-cognitive interaction: the participants make noise and throw celebratory items at each other (streamers and confetti), use rattles and firecrackers, and all participate actively in the final countdown. When the anticipated moment arrives, everyone is swept up in the entrainment of counting and making rhythmic noise. When the moment arrives, group cohesion is celebrated in a "burst of solidarity gestures" with hugging and kissing all around, including those newly and only vaguely acquainted (2004, 52). Compare this with Collins' observations of many parties that do not succeed:

Individuals continue in normal conversations, saying intelligible things. This keeps them in distinctive little pockets of shared mentality, cutting them off from the larger intersubjectivity that might encompass the whole group. Interactions have not been reduced to the lowest common denominator, as in the mutual noise-making ties; shared emotion does not build up; and the climax of the stroke of midnight is given only perfunctory acknowledgement, immediately after which many participants say they are tired want to go home. (52-53)

What is important to note here is not just that the sharing of cognitive discourse keeps people in smaller, divided pockets, but that synchronized, non-cognitive, non-propositional interaction actually results in more powerful, more inclusive bonding. Information and meaning is being shared between the participants, but it is grounded in the body rather than conveyed through proposition.

Collins tends to see entrainment in almost every interaction that generates strong feelings of solidarity; his fieldwork examination of natural rituals are particularly striking and compelling in this regard. Citing fieldwork concerning solidarity generated during conversation, he notes that the strongest solidarity is found between those who adhere to a very particular turn-taking pattern.

Conversations which have no appreciable gap or overlap (0.1 seconds or less) between speakers establishes a rhythm between speakers that serves as a form of subcognitive emotional entrainment. Conversations following this pattern feel good and generate a strong amount of solidarity even if the conversation has no deep meaning to it. Conversations that do not follow this pattern, either because the gap between speakers is too long or they overlap each other too much, tend to feel awkward or even become destructive of solidarity (2004, 66-71). Collins acknowledges that the specific timing cited here is culturally specific, but also notes that other cultures have similar conversational rhythms, and that it is the

expected rhythm shared by the participants of a culture that provides solidarity-building entrainment. Conversation thus becomes an interaction ritual reliant upon conversational expectations concerning the timing of speakers. Collins also notes a number of other natural, unscripted situations in which this is true, including victory celebrations, crowd behavior, and he devotes an entire section to discussing entrainment during sexual intercourse.

Collins' findings concerning entrainment are supported by a wide spread of empirical research. William McNeill (1995) was one of the first humanities scholars to write about the bonding powers of shared physicality, and he analyzes phenomena like military drill and dance to demonstrate the powerful solidarity between people who move synchronically. Part of his theory is that drill was so strong a bonding mechanism that those countries that practiced it developed a significant military advantage from the soldiers' willingness to risk death for other corps members. What he called "muscular bonding" has since been studied in cognitive science through studies of mimicry, mirror neurons, and synchronous behavior. Countless studies have shown that individuals who mimic or mirror the behavior of others or those who move in synchrony with others are more likely to group themselves together, sometimes sharing powerful

solidarity.¹⁴⁹ I would suggest that the formalization of rituals can help with entrainment, either by mitigating some of the factors that might prevent the setting of a rhythm or by scripting the timing of the interaction outright. As we will see below, both of these situations can be found in the Confucian ritual corpus.

According to Collins, the end result of this heightened awareness of communal intersubjectivity is the birth of Durkheim's *conscience collective*, the moment at which the *sui generis* society is formed. He associates these moments of high emotions and intersubjectivity with the collective effervescence written about in Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. As noted briefly above, the major difference between Collins' description of the IR process and Durkheim's collective effervescence is the extent to which the event is linked to *lasting* social order. As I understand it, this is due largely to the fact that most IR is too transient to allow the internalization of and permanent identification with the standards of the group created. Repetition of IR can continue to renew bonds of solidarity, but without some shared interpretation of the solidarity involved,

¹⁴⁹ See Ackerman and Bargh (2010) for a brief summary of much of the literature concerning bonding through coordinated physicality like mimicry, synchronization, and complementary behavior.

some shared goal, or some movement to internalize the ritual as a part of identity, it is unlikely that IR groupings will form a lasting society.

We should also specify Collins' understanding of "morality." Here, Collins seems to be depicting morality in the Durkheimian sense, as being comprised of the positive valuation of a sacred and the negative taboos protecting against the violation of that sacred. In this context, it makes more sense to discuss morality in terms of scales of appropriateness than it does in terms of ethical maxims. Stomping on the transubstantiated Host or defacing the Quran would both be actions so disrespectful as to be understood as morally evil within the respective traditions that hold those items sacred. If we analyze the dynamics at play, however, we can see that such an action lies on the same spectrum as lighter breaches of etiquette, such as crossing one's legs in front of the tabernacle might be for more traditionally minded Catholics. Both actions are inappropriate because of the disrespect they show, but the former is so inappropriately disrespectful that it provokes the harshest of moral condemnations, while the latter may just elicit disapproval or scorn.

The sense of appropriateness generated by IR is a sense of appropriateness that is established by creating patterns of behavior that generate expectations. There seem to be at least three classes of expectations generated in IR. One of

these is the pattern created by the rhythms of entrainment. The above example of the expected rhythm of conversation, or the expectation that one claps in time with the music are two such examples of entrainment expectations. The second set of expectations concerns boundary maintenance, which includes access to ritual performance or ritual symbols. Participants may be expected to bar access to ritual performance or symbols on the basis of group membership, as is the case with the Catholic Eucharist. In the case of communities just formed during the IR itself, the in-group is created by the boundaries provided by the IR frame. The last is a sense of appropriateness that has to do with the value accorded to the symbols that emerge from or are honored by the ritual. It is expected that participants will honor (or dishonor) what the group values (or devalues).

Note, however, that IR does not necessarily create new values, though it might make existing values feel salient. IR thus does not necessarily translate into the generation of true societies in the sense of generating an object that is truly *sacred* (aka inviolable), in the Durkheimian sense. I would suggest, however, that IR does create *shame*, as opposed to moral guilt and culpability. This is because IR is the perfect mechanism to create standards of acceptability, and standards of acceptability are more temporally variable than moral identities. Shame, in turn, is precisely a failure to live up to or embody a particular standard of

acceptability. Shame is not associated with the violation against a sacred, but with a shortcoming in the type of person one is. As Herbert Morris puts it,

The whole focus in a shame scheme where relationships are valued is the question "Am I worthy of being related to others?" ...With shame what is crucial is a failing to correspond with the model of identity.... where the maintaining of [a] relationship is an element in one's model identity, when one acts in a way incompatible with the relationship, the shame response focuses on failing to be a worthy person as one conceives it, rather than on failing to meet one's obligations to others and needing to restore that relationship....With shame there is an inevitable derogation in one's status as a person; with guilt one's status is intact but one's relationship to others is affected. The shameful are not worthy of association. (Morris 1976, 61-61)

IR creates a transient model identity as a participant in a ritual who acts according to the dictates of that ritual. To the extent that a particular person wants that ritual identity, he or she is susceptible to shame, based on whether or nor he or she is able to live up to the requirements of that identity. We can imagine, for example, a simple case in which I want to clap along with a crowd but have no sense of rhythm whatsoever and am incapable of following along. My inability to clap with everyone else would prevent me from acting appropriately to the ritual situation and thus become a source of shame—I would be unable to live up to the communal standards I place upon myself.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Note that under this rubric, while shame and guilt can occur simultaneously, they operate in different planes. Guilt is largely relational while shame is self-referential, even if our understandings of worthiness are socially given—via the values embedded in roles, for example,

This is equivalent to the child who throws a crying tantrum at a dinner party—the child’s failure to live up to adult standards marks him as being unready for adult relationships. There is no debt to be paid in order in order to stop feeling shame, Morris writes. Rather, “the steps that are appropriate to relieve shame are becoming a person who is not shameful.” (1976, 62) Only then does a person consider himself again worthy of relationship. Thus my re-entry into the clapping group would be contingent upon my learning a sense of rhythm.¹⁵¹

This level of analysis is generally not accessed by the subject experiencing shame. When I cannot clap in time with others, I merely feel my face redden and perhaps a desire to withdraw. When I succeed, I feel the elation of communal ritual. For the most part, the force of the experience remains on emotional, pre-conceptual level, beneath the analyzing, conceptual mind. This, however, is

or in this case, via the norms generated during IR. For example, a person might feel more or less shame at needing to accept charity or at sloppy workmanship depending on how much value that person places on being someone who is self-sufficient or someone who is skilled. Someone with a low need to be skilled but a high need to be self-sufficient would feel no shame at being a shoddy wheelwright who gets by, but a high amount of shame at being a master craftsman living on someone else’s dime. Note also that both of these examples are amoral examples.

¹⁵¹ This stance on shame vs guilt puts me at odds with Fingarette’s (1972) view, in which shame is external and guilt is internal. Ames and Rosemont (2009, 53-54), however, describe the Confucian virtue *yi* in terms similar to mine: “What is central is ... doing what is optimally *appropriate*, what is fitting (*yi*)—that is, proceeding along one’s path in life disposed toward excellence in one’s habits of conduct (*daode*).” This view, like mine, describes fittingness and appropriateness as a standard of personal and social conduct. Accordingly, Ames and Rosemont claim that shame results from a failure to be appropriate.

precisely what makes IR an excellent lens to understand how group solidarity can be built without sharing an overarching framework of meaning. Many if not most of the examples of IR given by Collins and Goffman occur between people who have no prior connection and no shared meaning beyond the event itself. IR creates the sense of the group upon which meaning can then be built.

Given the dynamics noted here, we might be tempted to compare IR to *communitas* as described by Victor Turner, and there are certainly strong parallels to be found, particularly between what Turner calls spontaneous *communitas* and what happens in IR. While both *communitas* and IR both describe groups who experience an ecstatic unity and bonding, Turner places a great deal of emphasis on the aspects of structure and anti-structure, associating *communitas* with egalitarian equality and structure with hierarchy. This is the greatest difference between the solidarity generated during IR and the *communitas* of Turner's rites of passage. Solidarity generated by IR is not inherently egalitarian, though it has been in many of the instances we have studied. If the focus of an IR is a person, for example, it tends to place that person in a hierarchical place over those participating in the IR. Rock stars, for example, might find themselves to be the objects of devotion after a particularly successful concert in which excitement and adoration became amplified by shared mood and entrainment. In fact, part

of Collin's motivation to generate a solid theory of IR is the very question of how relationships of power come to be accepted by those in either inferior or superior positions. IR can be a contributing factor to social stratification. If we understand Turner's spontaneous *communitas* as a type of IR, we should understand *communitas* as a type of solidarity generation specific to this and other anti-structural rituals. Eventually, of course, *communitas* is what Turner suggests strengthens the hierarchy and social order. We can thus see the rites of passage as a hierarchy building IR. The distinction I make here is between *communitas* and IR solidarity simpliciter—solidarity is not necessarily egalitarian by nature.

4.3 Interaction Ritual and Li

Examining *li* through the lens of interaction ritual offers a number of immediate benefits. It reminds us, for example, that when Confucius emphasizes the importance of one's facial expression (*Analects* 10.3-5, 10.25), this is not simply a gesture toward the importance of being sincere, though that element is certainly present. Rather, Goffman's analysis of interaction rituals reminds us that demeanor, including one's facial expression, is part of what one contributes to a situation and that putting on the appropriate countenance is part of what

one contributes to interplay of social reciprocity.¹⁵² Among other things, it represents one's attention as well as a bare minimum of participation in the event of someone else's presence (Goffman 1959).¹⁵³ This outward-facing, relational orientation seems appropriate to the Confucian emphasis on harmony and communal selfhood; it prevents the Confucian ritualist (and those who study them) from falling into a mindset in which ritual is primarily performed for the sake of interior transformation and is instead performed for the sake of creating a situation in which the Way takes its appropriate course — man broadening the presence of the Way in the world, not the Way functioning to make man

¹⁵² Note that sincerity is not necessarily requisite for the adoption of a particular expression. Sincerity is ideal, but even the Confucius of the *Analects* was seventy before he attained complete sincerity (*Analects* 2.4). Until then, it would seem, one is obliged to bring the appropriate expression to one's face regardless of how that person actually feels. This will become a much more important point as we discuss the issue of intersubjective agency and ritual scripting below in section 4.3.1.

¹⁵³ There is an entire corpus of work that analyzes Goffman's work in this area as a rather Machiavellian, instrumental theory. This viewpoint sees the calculation inherent in the style of interpersonal interaction that Goffman describes and attributes to all of us. Citing Geertz, Daniel Rigney writes that "At times, Goffman implies that we are like casino gamblers, looking to maximize our payoffs through cunning and strategic deception, and following the action wherever it leads without much concern for the well-being of others. In this view we are all hustlers, employing 'gambits, ploys, bluffs, disguises, conspiracies and outright impostures' (Geertz 1983:24-25) in pursuit of our own private ends." (2001, 125) I would argue, however, that Goffman balances this viewpoint with his Durkheimian viewpoint, in which sociality is seen as the root of who we are and a deliberate approach toward our presentation of ourselves allows positive contributions as well as self-interest. This view is summarized above.

greater.¹⁵⁴ I see this outward-looking attitude as being truer to the mindset of Confucian self-cultivation as well, as it recognizes that the self being cultivated is best found not in one's interiority but in the lived relationship one has with those near at hand.

More importantly, interaction ritual theory also provides a way to understand the transformative, "*impressive*" aspects of ritual. While most scholars of Confucianism acknowledge that rituals are performed to cultivate and transform the self, there has been scant examination of how or why Confucian ritual performance actually can transform a person's spontaneous emotions beyond a vague gesture toward practice and the practitioner's willed commitment that it be so. The empirically based data concerning the circumstances and methods by which salience can be brought to values, morals, and symbolic systems offered by IR holds one key to understanding how and

¹⁵⁴ The Way taking its appropriate course does, of course, also entail sincere and spontaneous virtue, but as I argued in a previous chapter, virtue is both communal and connective, present in how a person is able to conduct himself in situations. Approaching ritual from this angle thus allows the performer to be drawn out of himself into the connective relationships that represents true self-development.

I should also note that given this reference to the interior world, it should be clear that I take a different view from Fingarette (1978, 45) when he states that the interior psyche is not a component of the early Chinese experience of self. Following Eno (1990), I do not see inside and outside as being sharply differentiated, but phrases like *nei zi xing* (内自省) in the *Analects* (4:17) seem to indicate the same sense of interiority. See also Slingerland's application of cognitive metaphor and his citation of metaphors of "self as container" (2003, 35).

why practicing ritual can actually change one's affective reactions to a person, situation, symbol, or body of doctrine.

Most relevant to this study, however, is the fact that if IR theory can be responsibly mapped onto Confucian *li*, it presents a compelling argument for an alternative mode of understanding how early Confucian ritualists might have engaged in the care of strangers: by adopting them bodily into local networks of solidarity through the practice of ritual. As discussed in the section above, the conditions of IR function best and most inclusively when a minimum of conceptual, abstract knowledge is in play and when synchronization occurs not at the higher level of propositional agreement, but at the lower level of rhythmic, biological synchronization. This is precisely what the embodied level of *li* does during its performance—it harmonizes and synchronizes people on the biological level.

I do suggest that IR presents a promising lens through which to view Confucian rituals. My reasons for this claim are threefold. First, if we consider the characteristics of *li* in classical Confucianism, we begin to find that we can see elements of IR within much if not all of the formal Confucian ritual tradition. As we have mentioned, most of Confucian ritual is explicitly oriented toward the governance of interaction. Ritual is important for the sake of communication,

connection, and order. Confucian ritual scripts all require physical co-presence, provide both a communal focus for attention and recognizable boundaries, and mandate a shared mood. Furthermore, a great deal of physical synchrony is required to perform a ritual, and this in itself generates biological entrainment. Thus all of the ingredients identified by Collins as elements for the non-cognitive, non-propositional production of solidarity are present. Second, as argued in section 2.3.1, *li*, like IR, aims precisely at raising awareness of shared intersubjectivity. Because of this, Confucian ritual is already primed for the magnification of the intersubjective experience upon which IR solidarity relies. Third and finally, Confucianism is very much a society whose morality is situated in what is ritually appropriate. As discussed in chapter 2, both the Confucian virtues of *li* and *yi* are associated with what is proper to a particular situation, and this sense of what is appropriate is precisely what Collins suggests that IR either defines or strengthens.

4.3.1 Interaction Ritual and Classical Confucianism

Though they are not often explicitly described in the classical texts, we do find some rituals and ritual situations that display the characteristics and effects noted by IR theory. There is, for example, one striking example of a situation that

IR theory might help to shed light on in the *Analects*. This is *Analects* 11.26, which

I referenced cited in full in the chapter concerning grouping.¹⁵⁵

Dian said, "At spring's end, when the spring's clothes already finished, along with five or six capped young men, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze on the rain dance terrace, and return home singing." The Master heaved a deep sigh and said, "I am with Dian."

In section 2.3.1, this passage was used to emphasize the fact that building local groups is foundational to Confucian order and ethics. Here, I return to this passage to examine the place of such gatherings in the thought of the *Analects* as markers of solidarity building.

According to Brooks and Brooks (1998, 151) this particular layer of the *Analects* marks a turn away from political aspirations and a focus upon personal development. They link it to 5.26, in which Confucius expresses that his greatest wish is that the old enjoy peace, friends trust, and the young affection. They suggest both passages were interpolated at the same time as chapter 1, in which we see the gentleman as being unperturbed with lack of political success. Indeed, following their work, we can read this section as the beginning of a politics subordinated to personal cultivation, or even just the beginning of a new "citizen

¹⁵⁵ See section 2.3.1 for the full passage citation.

ethic” that valorizes virtue even without public office (145). If this is the case, then we can understand Dian’s rain altar excursion (and other situations like it) as being an important means by which virtue and the Way are lived out and embodied within culturally beautiful forms.

If, on the other hand, we follow the text of the *Analects* as Simon Leys suggests we might, as deriving from “one unique and inimitable voice,” (2014, *xii-xiii*) this passage suggests to us that the greater political aspirations of the three other students cannot come to fruition without first learning how to bond with others through the intricacies of ritual action, deference included. Simply put, I suggest this passage argues that the process of taking joy in bonding with others is a key to political efficacy as well as a worthy end unto itself.¹⁵⁶ In this, the contented sigh of Confucius speaks volumes.

Strikingly, we can note that many, if not all of the elements that Collins refers to in IR theory are present in this passage: physical co-presence, shared attention on the sensual aspects of bathing in the river as well as enjoying the breeze, the entrainment that comes with the rhythm of singing, and the obvious

¹⁵⁶ Here, we can also take note of the other passages in which taking joy in the Way or in ritual features in the *Analects*, particularly 1.15 and 4.8.

joy that arises from imagining this joint excursion on the part of both Zeng Xi and Confucius himself.¹⁵⁷ In this we find a possible model for the character of Confucian ritual interaction. The bonding in an interaction like this is gentle and contented where contemporary New Year's Eve celebrations tend to be excited and ecstatic, but I would argue that both push their participants toward the enjoyment of new levels of connectedness and intimacy. Ultimately, here Zeng Xi and Confucius both suggest that the richness and fullness of life take place in shared, connective events like these.

This passage is perhaps the only place where something like what Collins refers to as IR is explicitly described in the *Analects*. At the same time, we should note that Zeng Xi's excursion is largely informal, and excepting the rain ritual performance, is similar to what Collins might refer to as a "natural ritual," in that it has a very low level of scripting.

For a scripted ritual example, consider the ritual requirements for visits between officials in the *Yili*, which describes the visit of one ordinary officer to

¹⁵⁷ If we read the reference to the breeze on the rain altar in *Analects* 11.26 as a poetic way of indexing ritual performance, we can further include the entrainment provided by formal ritual, the characteristics of which are discussed below. As ritual spaces tend to be set apart from and protected from mundane usage, I do tend to read the enjoyment of the breeze on the rain altars as a reference to a specific ritual performance. This is lent further validity by the specification of the ages of Zeng Xi's compatriots.

another. The visit begins with a formal dialogue. While the content of this dialogue is certainly important in establishing deference and respect, I would also point out that the pre-scripting of content and the knowledge of the whole dialogue beforehand easily allows for a conversational rhythm to be established between the performers of the ritual. One can expect that the performers of this ritual would naturally fall into whatever rhythm was natural for the early Chinese ritualist, and that untoward delays or overlaps in the ritual conversation would be considered skill-based faults in ritual knowledge. Following the dialogue, we find the following set of physical directions:

Then the host goes to meet him outside the gate and there bows twice, answered by two bows from the guest. Then the host, with a salute, invites him to enter, and himself goes in by the right side of the door, the guest holding up the present in both hands and entering by the left. When they enter the courtyard, the host bows twice and accepts the present, the guest bowing twice as he hands it to him, and then goes out. But the host sends the usher after him with an invitation to carry out the visit, and the guest returns and complies. (士相見禮 “Shi Xiang Jian Li”¹, Steele translation)

Like the greeting ritual from the *Liji* cited in chapter 2, here we find a typical ritual script that also closely scripts movements of the participants, allowing them to establish an easy synchrony and thus a certain amount of physical and emotional entrainment. In this ritual—and I would argue this is the case in most Confucian rituals—the shared object of focus is the interaction itself, the

interplay of speech, facial expression, emotion, motion, and other forms of communication that comprise the ritual. Confucians are to enjoy the harmony of interaction and focus on the relationship as embodied by the ritual exchange. With such a dance-like script, it is easy to see how ritual practice would have served to help generate solidarity between people with no prior connection. If the above visit was the first exchange between two officials, establishing solidarity through physical entrainment, however slight, would help provide an emotional boost to the beginning of their relationship.

Actual dance provides an even more striking source for entrainment.

Collins himself gives scant attention to dance of any kind, which is unfortunate, because it exemplifies the ingredients of interaction ritual almost perfectly and is often cited as a strong source of subcognitive solidarity.¹⁵⁸ Eno's (1990) characterization of Confucians as "master dancers" is particularly striking in this context, and it reminds us both that there is but a short hop from ritual to dance, and that Confucians were also trained in dance as an art form.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, McNeil's *Keeping Together in Time*, as well as Sam Gill (2012), who writes, "Dancing is the deep experience, and thus the embracing with certainty, of the structurality I call self-othering; the experience that something completely other than self can be experienced as self. Dancing offers the experiential grounding that makes it possible to know the other, to be aware of the other, to represent the other, to name the other, to comment on the other." (101)

Ritual scripts and dance scripts are, in many ways, very similar.

Physically speaking, knowing a dance is more or less equivalent to knowing a ritual; both dances and rituals are narrow, framed contexts with prescribed physical movements. Both dance and ritual require the display of particular emotions from the performer—one does not laugh at a Confucian funeral or cry during a Viennese waltz. Both are formal, expressive of the meanings given them, and both require skill, and thus require practice and bodily attunement before they can be adequately performed. Once mastery of both has been achieved, the consummate performer can also improvise around the script to adapt to circumstances while remaining true to the original message of the script. Like ritual, dance thus provides a powerful and even more obvious source of entrainment in its perfectly scripted physicality and highly rhythmic movements.

Dance also connects strongly with what I see as the concrete symbol into which IR-like activity might invest the emotional energy raised by entrainment. I suggest that in that the ritual corpus itself, *li*, and more generally early Chinese culture (*wen* 文) as a whole serves as the “sacred symbol” of the Way into which this emotional energy is invested. *Wen*, the category of aesthetic patterns and patterned action to which *li* belongs, stands at the heart of a Confucian ritualist’s identity as a Confucian and more generally at the heart of the early *Chinese*

identity (Eno 1990, 39). The degree to which one has been trained in and has internalized *wen* marks how close a particular person stands to the heart of the community. *Wen* and *li* are thus symbols of the community and the most visible attributes for IR-like activity in early China to charge with emotional energy.

Fingarette (1972) discussion of *li* as Holy Rite evokes this point:

Instead of being diversion of attention from the human realm to another transcendent realm, the overtly holy ceremony is seen as the central symbol, both expressive of and participating in the holy as a dimension of all truly human existence. Explicitly Holy Rite is thus a luminous point of concentration in the greater and ideally all-inclusive ceremonial harmony of the perfect humane civilization of the *Tao*, or ideal way. Human life in this entirety finally appears as one vast, spontaneous and holy Rite: the community of man. (1972, 17)

Here ceremony (*li*) stands in as a symbol of the community as a whole, which further implicates the *Dao*, the great Way. The great Way is thus the ultimate sacred object (as opposed to God, or a totem, or other such figure) toward which the symbols of *li* and *wen* index us. If we apply the insights of IR theory to Confucian ritual practice, it means that every time Confucian rituals are performed and solidarity is generated, *li*, *wen*, and the Way are all further charged with positive emotional energy. Perhaps this is yet one more lens through which we can understand how Confucian ritualists might come to mirror Confucius' love for ritual (*Analects* 1.15) and his intense enjoyment of the

Way (8.13). IR charges both with emotional energy thereby changing a person's experienced, affective reaction to that object.

If we merely consider the above greeting ritual in isolation, coupled with the occasional dance, the claim that ritual performance might help a person experience the Way as ecstatically as Confucius did might seem to fall a little flat. But if we consider the tendency toward ritual totalization that we find in the *Analects*, we find an entire system of social order that holds the potential to tap into the dynamics of IR, supported by an entire framework of cognitive meaning that focuses specifically upon relational excellence and harmonic solidarity. Every interaction then has the potential to charge *li*, *wen*, and the *dao*, with positive emotional energy, even as it helps to build solidarity between the people it directs and connects.

4.3.2 Li and the Limits of Embodied Solidarity

I do not wish to overstate the efficacy of solidarity generated by IR. While I believe the bonding effect *li* as a system is great in total, the bonding effect of each particular ritual performance is probably fairly small, even though each performance does tap into the emotional energy stored in the Way and *li* as

sacred objects.¹⁵⁹ What the performance of *li* does do, however, is to simultaneously begin a relationship and posit a purportedly shared end to which their ritual efforts contribute with each performance—the embodiment and triumph of the Way. Both of these aspects are vitally important. The solidarity generated in the performance of IR helps to generate the positive emotions that bring saliency to Confucian morality and ritual practice. The shared end in the Confucian Way is that which frames, characterizes, and ultimately channels and solidifies that solidarity.

As a purely embodied form of solidarity, there is no moral or ethical valence to solidarity arrived at purely through Collins' IR. Such solidarity can bond people who share a destructive mood and unite them in solidarity toward destructive ends. Mobs, for example, can rouse themselves into a frenzy by sharing focus and participating in entraining activities, and though they may feel

¹⁵⁹ Whitehouse's theory of "modes of religiosity" (Whitehouse 1996, 2002, 2004; Atkinson and Whitehouse 2011) and the may be helpful in parsing out some of the ritual dynamics here. Whitehouse suggests that ritual performance varies between two distinct modes: a high repetition, low intensity "doctrinal" mode, which allows cogitatively processed religious teachings to be stored in memory, and a low repetition, high intensity "imagistic" mode which provide strong emotions that remain in memory and create saliency and solidarity. Atkinson and Whitehouse (2011) emphasize that traumatic rituals generate the most striking and lasting of theses images. *Li* as a whole tends to eschew the latter for the former—there are few if any "traumatic" rituals, and though life stage rituals may echo the "imagistic" pattern, the vast majority of *li* are the everyday, low arousal rituals that function by creating habituated "grooves" of action and emotion.

united, this solidarity in itself does not make them better or worse people. Rather, it changes their perception of what is or is not appropriate, moral behavior by grounding them in a group with alternative standards. This in turn may or may not lead to the breaking of the moral standards of the dominant social group.

Nor does group solidarity fashioned in this manner guarantee that the group can or will work together toward a given end, for solidarity on its own gives no direction beyond a desire to maintain that solidarity by supporting whatever interaction it was that generated the solidarity in the first place. Enthusiastic audiences after a particularly entraining concert may feel solidarity and be unified in cheering for their band, but that implies nothing about what will happen once the show is over. The group may disperse, or someone may take over and give the group an aim. The “down with capitalism” message of the band may then turn into a full-scale riot aimed at breaking shop windows and looting.

We should also note that without the framing provided by a communal goal, the feeling of solidarity generated by IR may not be to the benefit of all parties involved, and that solidarity can be dangerous to the participants themselves if the aims of the newly formed group does not serve the best

interests of some of the participants. This part of the reason I cannot support Daniel Bell's (2008) claim that rituals of song help to mitigate the dangers faced some groups, such as sex workers. In *China's New Confucianism*, Bell claims that the process of singing together before engaging in more intimate activities helps to build a bond between the karaoke "hostess" and the customer.

One common by-product of communal singing in the karaoke club is to tame wild sexual desires and to produce a sentiment of emotional bonding between participants. In duets involving the female and male voices, the client and hostess sing together; they listen carefully to each other and must harmonize her voices, and experience a sense of togetherness if the job is well done. In the best cases, the customer develops a sense of care and concern for the well-being of the hostess (and vice versa). (64)

Such a ritual certainly does change the dynamic of the interaction from a purely economic one to a mildly personal one, but in so doing it also opens up a number of other vulnerabilities between the participants. Bell suggests that feelings of togetherness work for the benefit of the hostess, but I would argue that even such a mild bonding could also be exploited for the customer's benefit, possibly leading the hostess to accept people, conditions, or expectations that she might not otherwise be willing to accept.

In addition, as IR theory notes, solidarity comes with expectations concerning appropriate behavior, and violations of that behavior evoke negative reactions ranging from scorn to moral outrage—the more powerful the bonding,

the stronger the reaction. Moreover, such a simple ritual lacks firm explanation, so what is or is not a violation of the newly built bond remains up to the individual participants to decide. The ritual Bell describes valorizes harmony and cohesion, but as has been noted many times, protecting harmony often comes with concomitant sacrifices. Bell seems to assume that this sacrifice will be made by the customer. We can, however, easily imagine a case in which a customer believes that this sense of togetherness means that the hostess should do whatever he requires to honor the spirit of harmony. I would suggest that he could become far more dangerous than he would have otherwise been if or when the hostess makes it clear that his impression is not actually true. IR group solidarity lasts only so long as a particular group *acts* like a group. I assert that the “taming of wild sexual desires” and the development of care and concern is only one possible outcome of such an interaction ritual and is only likely if the owners of the karaoke bar and the hostesses know how to frame the ritual situation so that the limitations fall on the customer rather than the hostess. If we want to be aware of possible benefits of ritual participation, we also need to seriously consider possible drawbacks.

Recent scholarship in Confucianism has tended to stress the complementarity and reciprocity of Confucian roles, in part to highlight the fact

that the costs of harmony should not be one-sided in any given relationship, and that attempts to make it so are either abuses of or drifts in the intentions of the system. This reciprocity is also the standard in most Confucian rituals. Consider portion of the dialogue from the *Yili* visitation ritual between the two ordinary officers, mentioned above:

The visitor says: "I have desired an interview for some time, but have had no justification for asking for it; but now his honour So-and-so orders me to an interview."

The host replies: "The gentleman who introduces us has ordered me to grant you an interview. But you, sir, are demeaning yourself by coming. I pray your honour to return home, and I shall hasten to present myself to you."

The guest replies: "I cannot bring disgrace on you by obeying this command. Be good enough to end by granting me this interview."

The host replies: "I do not dare to set an example as to how a reception of this kind should be conducted, and so I persist in asking your honour to return home, and I shall call on you with out delay."

The guest replies: "It is I who do not dare to show that example, and so I persist in asking you for an interview."

The host replies: "As for me, as I have failed to receive permission to decline this honour, I shall not press it further; but I hear that your honour is offering me a present, and this I venture to decline."

The guest replies: "Without a present I cannot venture to come into your presence."

The host replies: "I am not sufficient for the conduct of these ceremonies, and so I venture to persist in declining."

The guest replies: "If I cannot have the support of my gift, I dare not pay you this visit, so I persist in my request."

The host replies: "I am also decided in declining; but as I cannot secure your consent that I should go to your house as aforesaid, how dare I not respectfully obey?" (3.1)

This exchange consists of five rounds of dialogue, where the host gradually accedes to the requests of the guest. Here we have a harmony arrived at by both sides putatively attempting to take upon themselves the social burdens of harmony. Both sides act with deference, and both sides attempt to shoulder the "cost" of harmonious interaction. This harmony does not arrive without conflict—this entire dialogue is predicated on disagreement. The "loser" of this argument, however, is the host, who is honored by the visit to begin with, the custom being that the lower officer visits the greater officer.¹⁶⁰ Thus we see a reversal: the host, placed in the higher position by the visit takes the lower position by acceding to the wishes of the guest in the ritual dialogue. He is also later required to make a return visit and offer the guest a return present. In the ritual script for the return visit, the dialogue is reversed, with the original guest being unable to reject the return gift of the original host (Steele 1917, 43-44). In

¹⁶⁰ We can see this emphasized in the next section of the *Yili*, in which the visit of an ordinary officer to a great officer is described. Little is added, except that the number of bows on the part of the greater officer is lessened, and, importantly, the greater officer refuses the gift entirely. John Steele glosses this reasonably, stating that accepting the present would entail a return visit, which would be inappropriate. ([1917] 1966, 271) We also see no ritual provisions for a greater officer visiting an ordinary officer, presumably because the greater officer summons the lower.

this manner, the required rituals balance the costs of the interaction, social and otherwise, between both parties. This is all part of *li* taken as a whole. While the ritual performance generates mild embodied solidarity, the ritual script and the larger system of *li* to which it belongs directs that solidarity toward particular prescribed ends, locally with a harmonious building of a relationship between the performers and globally as a means by which to bring the Way bodily into the world. This is the theme of the following chapter, which will serve to show how the first stage of pre-conceptual solidarity building can begin to be directed and flowed into something resembling social organization.

Chapter 5: Goal Directed Non-propositional Solidarity: Fish, Flow, and Ritual

無為而治者，其舜也與？夫何為哉，恭己正南面而已矣。

Was not Shun one of those who governed without contrived action? What did he do? He reverently took his proper place facing south, that's all. –Analects 15.5

At the end of chapter three, we discussed intersubjectivity as the assigning of meaning to the other and intersubjective agency as the resultant capacity to alter the experience of the other through that process of meaning-giving. In chapter four we built on this foundation and surveyed interaction ritual as a means of understanding the ways in which pre-conceptual interaction can deepen the experience of intersubjectivity and create an experience of collective solidarity. In IR's physical entrainment all participants actively engage in a temporally unitive activity, and as we noted, this can lead to a sense of mutual solidarity without the aid of shared concepts. As we saw, however, this single dynamic alone only builds a platform of solidarity upon which a group can be built. Such solidarity posits no goals of its own and as such, is undirected.

In this chapter, I ultimately hope to begin to show how some interpersonal interactions create the sense of unity on the pre-conceptual level of cognition, much like we saw last chapter, only in service of a particular local goal. However, because this chapter serves as a bridge chapter between the consideration of pre-conceptual meaning and conceptual, propositional meaning, I will also begin to explore the difficulty in sharing conceptual meaning discussed at the end of chapter one. In service to this, we will revisit the pragmatic theory of meaning which we developed in chapter three and continue to examine how concepts are built from embodied roots.

In the first portion of this chapter, I thus hope to demonstrate two things. First, that drawing borders of inclusion around those who share our propositions is, to a certain extent, arbitrary. Meaning depends on experience, which in turn depends on context, which can only be shared to a certain extent. Given that context cannot be fully shared, we can also say that meaning cannot be fully shared. Though the social standardization of meaning may help some parts of this issue, it also exacerbates other parts of the problem by introducing an insoluble ambiguity. This brings me to my second point: because I claim that propositional, conceptual meaning is rarely actually fully shared, focusing on “shared meaning” (as theories such as Durkheim’s sacred-profane moral

community does) forces a reliance on a solidarity that is inherently unstable. Furthermore, because generalized knowledge (and by extension generalized or shared meaning) consists of stereotypes by nature, reliance on shared meaning distorts our interactions by creating stereotypical lenses through which we view the other. This is not to demean the value of shared meaning or the selves that are formed in relation to (or constituted by) such systems of meaning; the world would be radically impoverished without these points of view. This merely suggests that finding alternate means to extend empathy and build solidarity is vital to our contemporary context.

The second half of this chapter is an attempt to address the issues raised in the first half. I will examine how certain types of action—ritual action inclusive—focus attention on the local context by being oriented toward particular goals. Within these local frames, propositional meaning may or may not be shared at a greater level (religious, philosophical, national, racial etc.) but we see people sharing meaning at the local, embodied level while bracketing whatever ultimate concerns they might have for the duration of the interaction. The bracketing of shared meaning, however, does not preclude the formation of a powerful solidarity formed from the coordination of embodied knowledge and embodied expectations. Ultimately, in this chapter I will demonstrate how the ritual

entrainment and interactional solidarity of chapter four can occur in a more directed form, then apply these dynamics to the Confucian ritual tradition. I present ritual as a mode of coming to know and include the other by synchronizing or making complementary embodied meaning between people.

5.1 Conceptual Knowledge

5.1.1 All Concepts are Abstractions

In chapter three, I settled on a definition of meaning as *a sensitivity to consequences that flow from interactions with specific things or events* that allows us to establish an equilibrium with that thing or event. In this context, all interactions begin to infuse things and objects with meaning as our relationship to them and their relationship to the greater context becomes clearer. Much of what has been discussed so far describes the gathering of experience and leads toward the development of concepts. This is the process by which strangers become known. Beginning with an even more basic example, however, we would say that a child comes to assign a certain meaning to fire when she isolates it from the greater situational impression, begins to interact with it, and starts to learn about the consequences of her interaction with that object. She may initially learn that fire allows her to see better and engenders delight in her as she watches it dance. Through this visual experience, fire acquires a particular significance for her as

something that causes a certain type pleasure and increases her visual acuity. This in turn allows her to establish a particular equilibrium with it; whenever she wants to see better or engage in visual stimulation, she can look at the fire. At this point, she is sensitive to only two consequences of interaction with fire and thus the meaning of fire for her is limited. This meaning, this sensitivity to the consequences of interaction, develops further the first time she reaches for it, burning her fingers, and continues to grow as she gains knowledge of other ways of interacting with it.

Remember that meaning is carried at least partially by somatic markers. Fire as a bright dancer receives a positive emotional tag; fire as burning one's fingers receives a negative one. Regardless of the valence of the somatic marker, the existence of the marker at all grants the interaction significance, thus marking it as meaningful. We have no need to create concepts of interactions that have no bearing upon our particular goals (conceived of as survival or something more important). Emotional responses and the somatic markers that result show us what needs attention or adjustment, thus driving the creation of relevant concepts. In other words, somatic markers are what drive the attribution of significance to a particular interaction and mark it as being worth conceptualization.

As concepts arise, we begin to take them out of isolation and work them into a particular system, what I call a framework or structure of meaning. This framework is developed by gradually placing particular concepts into wider and more inclusive contexts in order to glean the relationships between objects. Eventually, such structures of meaning may eventually develop into a fully developed order or complete worldview.

Note, however, that in the creation of a concept we have already begun a process of abstraction. Temporally speaking, when we conceptualize something, we store up information about *past* instances of interaction with that object or situation. We then use that concept to predict the consequences of future interactions despite the fact that the object may or may not have changed in the interim and may be in a completely different environment. Because of this, all concepts drawn from experience must necessarily be abstractions—concepts by themselves are never equivalent to current experience itself, which is the only form of non-abstract knowledge to which we have access.

Furthermore, concepts are also situational abstractions. Fire behaves in one way when it uses oak as fuel and in quite another when it uses pure methane as fuel. All this is to say that the child in the example above will never understand the *complete* meaning of fire, for to understand it completely, she

would have to understand all possible consequences of all possible interactions with it. Thus, understanding the *full* meaning of fire is unattainable, as it would require interacting with fire in every possible context. By corollary, we might note that worldviews cannot be full and complete without the full meaning of everything in every context. In other words, no humanly constructed worldview is ever complete.

This aligns with James' insistence that logic and concepts are a "static incomplete abstraction" (1943, 94) of a more dynamic reality feeding our phenomenal experience. When concepts are taken to be a true representation of actuality, our knowledge becomes distorted. The vibrancy of phenomenal experience is trapped into static categories that cannot index the whole of its lived richness. Thus James urges that "our intelligence cannot wall itself up alive" in logic and conceptual analysis, but must instead "at any cost keep on speaking terms with the universe that engendered it." (ibid) It was this dynamic that finally drove James to exclaim, "I have finally found myself compelled to give up the logic, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably. It has an imperishable use in human life, but that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality. Reality, life, expedience, concreteness, immediacy, use what

words you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it." ([1912] 1943, 96-97)

Again, what is practically important is for the child to obtain a *general* understanding of fire, abstracted from a multitude of interactions. Thus the child actually attributes a meaning to fire along the lines of "usually, for most of the contexts in which fire and I interact, fire leads to these consequences." This serves a practical function in her life, and can often serve as a guide to help others. Of course when it takes on a social life, meaning is further abstracted when it is generalized not only in terms of context, but in terms of subject. Public, shared meaning is detached from the original subject and posited as consequences that arise from interaction with the object, under most circumstances for most people. To return to a previous example, a forest guide about the edibility of peanuts is valid for most, but not for those with allergies. Thus meaning can be divided into two general types: experiential meaning, which is assigned through direct interaction, and generalized meaning, which has been abstracted from context for ease of transference between people.

Generalized meaning is always at least one step removed from experience, and in the course of learning may come to us without the experiential grounding that first generated the need for such a concept to begin with. Seeing a picture of

a horse in a child's book and touching a horse are, of course, two very different experiences. Hearing stories of "glories of the revolution" provides different information from actually fighting in one. There is, thus, a non-trivial difference between experiential and generalized meaning, the former of which "overflows" the latter. Thus while generalized meaning indexes the experiential, it points to an undetermined aspect of that experience. Firefighters and chemists generally reference different aspects of the word "combustion," and this disparity reveals just a small bit of the ambiguity inherent in any generalized, publically accessible concept.

To give an example from the field of religion, the sense of the sacred is often described as initially arising from consequential meaning, through an experience or interaction with the sacred. We see this *par excellence* in Mircea Eliade's classic discussion of hierophany in *The Sacred and the Profane*. The story of the original recitation of the Quran, for example, is an account of a hierophany—an experiential encounter with the sacred. The Christian gospels are another such account, the insights of which people choose to pass along. What is passed down in institutional religion is thus the generalization of this initial experience, the attempt to find others with a similar experience, and the attempt to share this experience with others. In a way then, religious education

(and much education in general) is the sharing of meaning without the benefit of concrete experience. In cases like this, education provides one possible interpretive lens for experiences that have not yet been experienced.

Even when something has been experienced directly by two parties, the underlying ambiguity between the generalized, abstracted meaning of a concept and the full range of that which it references can cause a mismatch between what people believe they are sharing and what they are actually sharing by accessing a particular concept. I would suggest that is due primarily to a mismatch in concepts arising from a difference in the contextual experience that gave rise to that concept.

Remember further Lakoff and Johnson's claim that all concepts, no matter how abstract, are at least partially based on embodied experience. The experience of verticality is unavoidably textured into our concept of "up," and thus further embedded into our understanding of happiness. But all of us have different bodies and thus slightly different experiences for our embodied experience of verticality. These will not be incomparably different between humans, but they will be different, particularly if some embodied experience were significantly different, as would be the case for someone with non-functioning legs or who has lived a birth-to-death life in a weightless environment. Happiness as a concept

would thus “feel different” and thus have a different meaning for people with different physical experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 14-19). If we thus allow that “*no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented apart from its experiential basis*” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 19; emphasis original), it also follows that no concept can ever be comprehended apart from experience. This suggests that meaning *depends* on particular context, and that generalizable knowledge, that knowledge which can be shared, is a higher level abstraction dependent on a lower order processes.

The classic example of being unable to describe color to a blind man serves as the perfect example of this. Without experience, there can be no concept, and can be no sharing of generalized meaning. The only means by which a blind person would be able to conceptualize color would be analogize it to something within his field of experience; sunrise gold could be conceptualized by likening it to warmth or trumpets on an open fifth. Nevertheless, as should be obvious, this metaphor is only a rough approximation that attempts to evoke the same affective state as the gold in a sunrise might evoke. In reality, what is truly communicated (“shared”) through this metaphor? Even if we discount the radical difference between seeing the color gold and hearing an open fifth played by trumpets, this metaphor (or this conception of gold) depends on a similar

experience of trumpets and open fifths between the creator of the metaphor and the blind man. In short, it requires both to have similar subjective contexts in relation to trumpets and this particular interval of sound in order for there to be even a vague a similarity between the blind man's concept of gold and that of the metaphor's creator. Without contextual similarity, sharing is problematic if not impossible.¹⁶¹

5.1.2 *The Unavoidable Fragility of Shared Meaning*

This then, is the basic, commonsense thrust of my argument. "True sharing," or a perfect match in contexts, experiences, and meanings between two subjects is impossible. In order for sharing to occur, portions of the shared experience must be first isolated, then abstracted or generalized from their context. This process is the heart of the metaphor; making two dissimilar things seem the same by virtue of isolating one aspect of the experience of each, abstracting that aspect, and noting the experiential similarity. All generalizations and therefore all shared concepts *must* be abstract, and being thus abstracted

¹⁶¹ The greater the difference in context, the greater the difference in meaning. This includes the type of bodies we have—Thomas Nagel's (1974) famous article "What is it like to be a bat?" covers the analogical difficulties in trying to even understand a creature with a physicality and mode of interaction with the world that is alien to our own. The differences between people are smaller than those between us and bats, but they are present nevertheless.

they lose their ability to convey precise meaning outside their initial isolated frame of focus. The larger the gap in initial context then, the less likely that one person's concept of something is truly shared by any other. This is, perhaps, one reason why there are so many definitions of and metaphors for subjective, affective states such as "love" or "having faith" and significantly, for experiences of that which is holy, or to use Rudolph Otto's phrasing, "wholly other." ([1917] 1929, 25) The idea of something holy being "wholly other" implies that this something is difficult if not completely impossible to analogize, something ineffable. For this reason, the Divine, however conceived, will always be a stranger (or just strange) unless experienced. This is not to say that all sharing is impossible, only that sharing which is able to withstand close scrutiny must derive from a beginning context which is similar, a prospect which is highly problematic in modern, pluralistic society.

This becomes a further problem when we tend to think of solidarity in terms of commonalities. Durkheim's discussion of mechanical solidarity serves as the theoretical model of the thesis that unity and empathy are grounded on shared, unified systems of meaning. As previously discussed, Durkheim describes the way societies (which for Durkheim are all *moral* communities) grow out of a shared sense of the sacred. This is to say that people in the same society

share the same meanings in regard to specific objects, distancing them and framing them away from the mundane. For example, for Durkheim a collection of people truly becomes a society when they all understand that the eagle (or Christ, or the dignity of humanity) is sacred and inviolable. Given this shared orientation toward the sacred, members of the same society share the same taboos and injunctions that stem from this particular understanding of the sacred as ultimate and inviolable values; this shared value marks them as members. For Durkheim then, this understanding of sacrality provides the fundamental framework around which a society is organized. In other words, the sacred serves as a fundamental source of meaning and identity within a particular society. Thus, shared meaning allows the recognition of the self in the other and thus prompts the extension of trust and empathy to other members of the community (Durkheim, *Division* 32-46, *Elementary* 38-44).

Two relevant assumptions are in play here. The first is the idea that the self is the product of intersubjectivity and comes to exist in the realm of the social. Durkheim's theory requires selves to be constructed and constituted, not inherent in a human subject. They are constructed from the boundaries of the group, from identification with a particular form of the sacred. Without a group or at very least an "other" to identify with or against, the self as a second order

process of reflection cannot exist. This implies that without shared, propositional meaning (e.g. eagles are sacred), there is less “self” to be recognized in the other.¹⁶² The second assumption implicit in Durkheim’s theory of the shared sacred is the idea that meaning is something that is generalize-able and similar enough between two people in two different contexts so as to be recognizable.

Though both assumptions are important to the task at hand, it is this last assumption that I would first like to address, for while I believe that shared meaning is possible, this type of meaning is by nature limited and often imposed via education rather than directly experienced. Shared meaning is meaning that, by definition, *must* have been generalized and therefore abstracted from a particular context. Because of this, the empathy and solidarity that arise from it lie vulnerable to being undermined by different experiences arising from different contexts.

In sum, direct experience is the primary and most effective method of developing meaning in regards to an object or situation. However, the embodied, emotional aspects of directly generated meaning cannot be shared or

¹⁶² “I am Roman Catholic” often implies that I am not Hindu, and “I am Communist” excludes the possibility of being a US Republican. Durkheim’s moral communities, particularly as they occur in the West, tend to come with their own hard identities that are mutually exclusive with others.

communicated. What can be communicated, then, is necessarily an abstraction, an analogical evocation of experience. Lakoff and Johnson's extension of pragmatic philosophy notes that this is done primarily through the means of creating metaphors based in embodied experience. This means that empathy arising from frameworks of abstracted knowledge must be an empathy that rises from an abstraction of more basal experiences.

The idea of communities based upon shared meaning implies that the experiences that govern this meaning are actually shared. Given that we have seen how difficult such sharing truly is, how is it that we can understand Durkheim's conviction that communities are all moral communities, based upon a shared sacred? After all, sharing is a result of abstraction, a process that isolates one aspect of an experience and relates it to another. Because shared meaning is thus *always* abstracted from context, it always rests on a less than solid foundation. What results then is a concept removed from its experiential, contextual root and transplanted into intersubjective space. There it remains a concept without root, without foundation in experience and is in turn relayed to others. One claiming to be Catholic will still never actually know the full meaning of what being Catholic consists of for Sally next door, or for St. John Paul II, or even for his best Catholic friend because that person does not have

access to their experiences of the divine or their contextually formed experiences of the Church. Even so, he or she would theoretically empathize with them because they claim to share some of the same values. Though it is possible that their pre-conceptual experience of the divine could be highly uniform, it is also conceivable that they might have two completely different experiences of the divine, enough so that actually experiencing each other's experiences would feel so foreign as to be unrecognizable. The only mechanism that allows empathy to arise from shared meaning is *analogy* (an abstraction given by canon) that seems to mimic aspects of the other's experience (e.g. God is Love).

This also implies that shared meaning often may not actually be shared. Rather, it is *experienced* as shared only until we attempt to reconnect the abstracted concept with the foundational experience that gave rise to it. Once reconnected with its foundation, differences in contexts reveal differences in concepts and experiences of generalized meanings. Thus in order to draw a sense of solidarity from shared meaning, people must either consciously or unconsciously overlook the disparities in the meaning that each subject constructs. In other words, individuals must either not know that their conceptions of shared meaning structures are different or consciously choose to leave their differences undiscovered, thus allowing them to treat others *as if* their

meaning structures were in fact the same. If this is the case, then shared meaning would serve as a source of solidarity only so long as it remains unexamined.

To a certain extent then, all empathy based upon shared meaning (and thus all propositionally-based grouping) is *imagined*. This is to say that any time we see the self in the other due to the fact that we share meaning, we imagine that this is the case by ignoring all of the context that makes our experiences and meaning different. This is not to say that such ways of extending empathy are not valuable; any means of extending empathy to someone who might otherwise remain “other” seems useful. What it does mean, however, is that care needs to be taken when considering the empathy that arises from shared frameworks of meaning. If meaning is only shared imaginatively, then the creation of solidarity through empathy is made possible through the engagement of the imagination to the exclusion of the analytical processes that undermine it.

No one will actually experience exactly what someone else has experienced, and no one’s concept of an object will exactly match that of another person’s. What can be done, should we attempt to continue to draw lines of empathy in terms of meaning, however, is to share *context* as much as possible, in hopes of creating a more points of commonality in the experiential base from which we draw our concepts. The rhythmic ritual entrainment discussed as part

of the IR process, for example, draws close to the sharing of emotions between two people. This is not to say that one participant feels exactly what the other feels, but that there are shared aspects of the situation that are irreducible to the imagination of one person or another because both share the context in roughly the same way due to their synchronized movement and mutually mirrored mood. This, however, only brings meanings closer; it does not solve the problem completely. Sharing meaning cannot be the only means by which we attempt to create empathy and certainly cannot be the sole basis of solidarity.

5.2 Harmonic Models of Grouping

The consequences of the above analysis mean that if propositionally-based grouping were the only method of grouping available to us, communities would always be illusory to a certain extent. Fortunately, non-propositional groups do occur. We saw this in the previous chapter with Interaction Ritual. Where those groups were unfocused and undirected, however, harmonic models of grouping are specifically directed. This section describes models of grouping that function as a “harmonic” grouping—a type of grouping that pivots not on a shared identity, but on a shared goal. This understanding of “harmonic” is based on the famous analect concerning the character of the gentleman: “The gentleman is harmonious yet not the same.” (13.5) Harmony thus allows the grouping of

difference where models of sameness do not. Brook Ziporyn builds upon this understanding of harmony and defines a harmonic group as one that is both intelligible and capable of bringing about a particular valued condition, state, or event. This point is vital; properly speaking, ineffective groupings are not harmonic groupings because such a grouping would be unintelligible. As briefly mentioned in chapter one, what brings about the intelligibility of the group is precisely this overarching goal; those familiar with old European document verification practices will naturally recognize a candle, a block of red wax, and a signet ring as an intelligible grouping, while those unfamiliar with that process would not. If the ring were changed to a carrot, however, the group would become wholly unintelligible because the grouping of all of these items would not be conducive to the reaching the goal in question.

This type of grouping may or may not create a shared identity. The important point to note, however, is that the group is not *predicated* upon a shared identity. Because this type of grouping aims at a common goal, it may involve role differentiation, but it need not—two members of a harmonic group could both perform the same function in relation to each other. This section first describes natural groups as a pure model of harmonic groupings. Then I will briefly apply these insights to the network of Confucians in classical China

before moving on to discuss one human equivalent of a harmonic network to be found in flow action.

5.2.1 Schools of Fish: Naturally Occurring Harmonic Networks

From one angle, harmonic groups are more natural than sameness groupings because they require no internal sense of identity and often need no external authority to hold them together. These two characteristics are best exemplified in groups such as schools of fish. Confucian communities (and human communities in general) are obviously more complex than schools, but these cases represent a pure type.

The most important point about this particular example is the fact that schools of fishes are definite groups, but they are not structured (or structuring) wholes; rather they are networks of local connections that form a larger whole without the benefit of familiarity between the constituent members of the group. Loosely speaking, we can say that fish are groups of strangers.¹⁶³ There are three basic rules that govern schooling behavior: first, each member attempts to stay

¹⁶³ When I say that schooling or flocking behavior is not structuring, I mean that it has no lasting, constitutive effects. While fishes behave differently in groups than they do on their own, joining a group does not change the way a fish behaves once a school has broken up and it is once again on its own.

near the others in the group; second, members all travel toward the goal or destination (this is best exemplified by migration groups); and third, members avoid predators. The first two rules in this form of grouping are what creates the group itself. Keeping a fixed destination or goal (such as food or a migration destination) keeps the group moving in the same direction and prevents the group from fracturing as a result of competing ends. Without a common goal, grouping would be purposeless and nonsensical.

This grouping thus has an intelligible goal that arises from the valued states of survival and flourishing. Staying nearby to other members of the group allows each member of the group to benefit from the information gleaned from the perspectives of those immediately surrounding it. When a member of the group notices something and adjusts to account for it, others nearby notice the adjustment and respond to match. In this way, the course of the entire group can be adjusted through a chain of localized reactions to other group members located in the immediate vicinity. In other words, these groups are bound together overall by a shared destination, and share information across the whole of the group by providing information only to those of the group immediately proximate, which is then relayed chain style through the network.

Schools of fish are thus harmonic groupings—they are intelligibly grouped, and that grouping helps to bring its members the values of survival and flourishing. This is a pure harmonic grouping in the sense that grouping is based purely on the efficacy of the group at supporting its members. Similarity comes into play only when the effectiveness of the group is enhanced by similarity—efficacy not similarity is the ruling factor. For example, in cases where multi-species grouping occurs, the members of that group often sort themselves into smaller species groups not because they “belong together” by fact of their similarity, but because species homogenous groups often share the same defense reactions and are thus more likely to result in safety when faced by a predator (Ward, Axford, and Krause 2002, 182-3).

We can additionally note a few other characteristics of schools relevant for the comparison to Confucian groups that follows. First, and foremost, we can note that the meaning exchanged in schools of fish is entirely non-propositional. Though information is absolutely shared, since fish lack language and the capacity for abstract thought, it mostly takes the form of embodied, hardwired meaning. This further means that for fish, there is no information sharing and no group without physical co-presence. Fish can *only* share dynamic meaning via physical co-presence and embodied motion; “imagined communities” (Anderson

1991) are thus impossible for fish. This leads to the second relevant characteristic of schools as groups: the school's fish can *only* be connected to the fish that immediately surround it. The whole group is thus composed of an interlaced network of immediately local frames of reference, each making adjustments and moving toward its goal according to the actions of the fish immediately sensible to it.

The final characteristic is only tangential to the first two: there is no overarching figure that guides the behavior of schooling fish; schooling is a spontaneously arising behavior that appears when a species-specific number of fish come together (Ward, Axford, and Krause 2002, 184). Fish thus form distinct groups without needing propositionally posited boundaries or some sort of extrinsically applied, unifying power to hold them together. While this is not necessarily the case in animal groupings—imagine alpha wolves, for example, who communicate directly but maintain a hierarchy over their packs—fish maintain the unity of their school organically, so long as it is needed to achieve their purposes.

5.2.1.1 Fish and Confucians

Schools of fish and schools of Confucians are, of course, different in notable ways, the first and foremost of these being the fact that Confucians share

more than pre-cognitive, embodied meaning. The ability to abstract and generalize meaning exponentially increases the number of ways that power and influence can be wielded, thus making the Confucian group exponentially more complex. Abstract meaning allows the formation of group and solidarity that require propositional meaning—imagined communities, moral communities, and other similar associations, which would be impossible for fish. As Confucianism employs both pre-cognitive and cognitive meaning this section should be taken with the caveat that the analogy only goes so far. Nevertheless, a few points arise from this brief comparison which will be helpful in the section on the Confucian group to follow.

Schools of fish are best understood as a-centric, a-structural bodies grouped harmonically and composed of a latticework of direct, individual connections. The analysis presented in the first half of Chapter 1 and the observations of Ambrose King indicate that Confucian groups share most, if not all of these characteristics, though not in as pure a manner. First and foremost, Confucians can be considered Confucian in part because of their dedication to the embodiment and actualization of the Confucian Way. While there is some element of shared values—the Confucian Way is not simply what each person decides it is—enough variation exists within those shared values to confidently

state that the common end holds Confucian scholars together as much as if not more than the means to those ends.

A recap of an earlier discussion on Confucian charismatic authority provides the basis for the second comparison. As we have seen, differing understandings of how authority is derived from the Way functions so that each Confucian strain imposes a different vision of a relational “whole” upon the Confucian group, creating tension and conflict between those following the Confucian Way. Differing avenues for access to authority thus mean many of the characteristics commonly shared by a Durkheimian community are not shared within the whole community of Confucian followers. This is largely a function of the limited range of pure, charismatic authority; historically speaking, the only scholar whose charismatic vision was able to bend the direction of the whole of the Confucian tradition *without the benefit of state power* is Confucius himself. From his time onward, we find clustered communities highly responsive to the intellectual and social challenges of place and time and influenced to varying degrees by those around them and before them. When we consider that everyone has his or her own unique familial, social, and cultural context to respond to, *everyone* becomes a source for new readings of the tradition—like Confucius, people are all both transmitters and creators, both takers and re-makers of the

ideas that come to them, and everyone becomes a possible source of charismatic authority.¹⁶⁴

From this viewpoint, the centralizing and structuring effects of authority on group dynamics are downplayed significantly. For this reason, when we attempt to map the dynamics above, we find that the tradition is perhaps best represented by sets of interlocking groups, each group with an individual and his unique and particular understanding of Confucianism (recall the contemporary Confucian scholars mentioned in section 1.1.3 of this study, each with their own understanding of the *daotong*) governing the bonds that make up that group. At best, these groups can exist as mutually supportive units. They would respond to each other's mutual guidance, thus allowing beneficial influences to ripple across the web of interconnected circles rather than radiating out from a single point as we saw happen in schooling fish.

¹⁶⁴ More than ever, we see this in modern China. Yu Dan, for example, has written her own interpretation of the Confucian message. Though many scholars disapprove of the inexactness of her readings, her understanding of the Analects has arguably become one of the most influential in contemporary times due to its broad accessibility and popularity. Yu Dan is not attempting to form her own school of Confucianism; she is merely attempting to read Confucianism in a way that is applicable to and helpful in her own particular context. This is precisely the dynamic I reference here; every person potentially serves as a source of change in the tradition.

Other similarities schools of fish arise as well. In areas without many challenges, schools of fish will remain together naturally. Predatory challenges are the main source of separation in schools of fish. In the face of such challenges, grouping still occurs, but it occurs along selected fault lines — where some veer right, others veer left in order to avoid a particular predator. Once the immediate danger is over, these separated groups usually merge again and continue on toward their destination. The history of the Confucian tradition looks very similar in terms of differing responses to challenges. When a challenge to the Confucian Way arises, we have exactly this sort of divergence. As examined, where Mencius and his lineage attempt to defend the Way against naturalists by grounding ritual in the patterns of nature, Xunzi takes exactly the opposite tack and asserts Confucianism's intentional break with an amoral natural setting. Despite these differences, we eventually have the inclusion of both of these scholars as Confucian. They expanded on the same sources and were headed in the same direction; they merely answered a challenge to the tradition in a manner that took them in different paths toward the same goal.

In one final similarity, we can note that just as in schools of fish, in Confucianism, the strongest, most influential of influences occur on the immediately local level. Furthermore, on the local level, familiarity can be

replaced by a very specific, highly scripted role. In these sets of animals, groups form spontaneously between others of their kind when a requisite number of creatures is reached. Smaller numbers—generally numbers that do not exceed a number of creatures that can be tracked by one fish alone—do not cause schools or flocks to form. Once this number has been reached, however, creatures with no prior connection easily connect with others merely because they have the embodied instincts necessary to allow grouping to take place with others. The next section presents a way in which ritual scripting is that which allows the interlocking of two potentially competitive groups within the broad brush of Confucianism.

5.3 Building a Human “School”

5.3.1 Meaning and Action

Fish form groups by interacting together in an embodied modality that is primarily instinctual. It works well because fish naturally have relatively few aims, and all of these aims are biologically given. This section is an attempt to demonstrate that humans have group organizations that are similar in function. On top of this, we can note that what I consider the most useful of these organizations not only functions as a whole, the group is *experienced* as a unified

whole. In order to explain this experience of oneness, however, I will have to dip back into the dynamics of embodied meaning, shared physicality, and add to the mix the concept of *complementary* physicality.

If we temporarily bracket the potential within propositional and conceptual meaning to help generate empathy, we are still left with a rich, thick layer of meaning that arises from our embodied action within the world, a layer that does not deal as closely with the vagaries of generalized meaning. Even without delving into deep neuroscience, a comment by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* begins to point in this direction in her discussion of language verses action. She states that in words, we are forced to fall back on talking about *what* someone is, whereas action shows *who* rather than *what* we are. (1958, 181)

While I am a little less sanguine about the ability of action to communicate “who we are,” I do agree that language forces us to speak in generalities and analogies that always stereotype in some way and always fail to do justice to the full complexity of any human person. What is useful about Arendt’s comment for our purposes is that it points to a way in which action exists on a level different than that of the analogies and generalities of language. When we interact with someone, we bypass proposition and concept in favor of direct, pre-conceptual, “consequential” meaning.

While language is made purely of generalizations, action (specifically *interaction*) with objects allows a subject to establish a *direct*, non-abstract relationship with an object to gain knowledge of it and understand its significance in relation to our ends. In other words, action is the means by which experience and therefore meaning is created. As shown above, action can thus exist as meaning's foundation; *action* gives rise to experience and therefore meaning. Interaction with an object produces an experience of that object. Strictly speaking, this singular experience of an object *for its duration* is the only truly non-abstract knowledge of an object that we can gain. Sharing actions then, implies at least a partial sharing of experience, and thus sharing a contextual basis from which concepts derive.

This also means that sharing modes of being embodied and physical (as much as it is possible to share anything) lies at a cognitive level that is more basic than any propositional concept can be. This is because embodied meaning requires less abstraction than proposition. This is why people who cannot speak the same language can still bond through dance and why music can, to a certain extent, be a "universal language." To the extent that our bodies are similar, they generate similar embodied meanings from the same motions and motor interactions. Muscle tension creates the same basic feeling among all people, just

as the release of that tension creates a similar relief. The same sequence of movements creates the same pre-conceptual meaning within all people as well. Thus ultimately means that shared physicality generates shared meaning more closely than does shared proposition.

It is also in the midst of *experience* that the experience of the world as either external or internal, self or other, is determined. Experience is what occurs on the boundary of self and not-self, the interactive space in which both the internal world and external world are co-created. Experience might thus be conceived as a third “potential space” that exists between internal and external. The potential space I suggest here takes inspiration from Winnicott’s potential space, as “an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute.” (1974, 114) However, unlike Winnicott’s potential space, which is primarily concerned with how an infant breaks out of a solipsistic worldview through the experience of frustration, what I propose here is not just a potential space within which objects in the world begin to become differentiated from the self. It is also a place where the reverse occurs, where objects in the world are *created within* the mind. Within this potential space, this space of contact and interaction between what is outside the self and what is

inside the self, the concepts that inform our worldviews worldview are created or altered.

As we have seen, Dewey's philosophy resists the idea of internal and external, the purely subjective and objective, as does the coherence theory of *li*. In using Winnicott's potential space as an inspiration, I do not mean to be moving back to a pure subject-object divide, nor do I intend to imply a reliance on the representational theory of cognition, in which the "objective" world is apprehended, then "represented" to the brain. Though Winnicott tends to use language reminiscent of these two viewpoints, I mean to imply nothing so thickly theoretical. Rather, what I mean to emphasize by referencing Winnicott is the fact that when we link concepts, we create theories about how the world works, where our zone of control begins, and where this zone of control ends. This is experience of control is part of how we determine what is self, and what is not self, and as Winnicott notes in his work, this determination can be blurred, depending on how well the world accords with our experience, or to use language we have been using, dependent on how well experience accords with expectation.

Returning to the pragmatists, we see meaning as the accumulation of experiences that allow one to make the necessary backward and forward

connection between possible interactions and possible or probable consequence. This is seen most clearly in the form of action we call practice. Viewed purely in terms of its relation to meaning, practice is repeated interaction with an object to produce an accumulation of experiences that indicate an object's significance to the subject (i.e. that indicate an object's meaning.) This accumulated experience varies across contexts in order to produce a more complete knowledge of how interactions with that particular object will proceed. It is only from the accumulation of experiences in regards to a particular object (embodied knowledge) that meaning can be assigned. Practice, then, takes place on a level below conceptual meaning—in this view, embodied interaction is, in fact what allows concepts to arise in the first place.

It is in this frame that I assert action as being intimately connected to embodiment through the specific mode of *interaction*, the source of all of our concepts and meanings. Interaction with objects gives rise to concepts and meaning, which are then again used to color and interpret the world. It is because action gives rise to meaning that shared action may serve as a better option for the sharing of empathy than shared meaning garnered from the matching of concepts.

A survey of the full range of action reveals that even though action is intimately related to contextual meaning, as often as not, action has nothing to do with larger meaning structures (worldviews). According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “autotelic action,” or action that is done for its own sake, is one of these types of action. To ask a small child to explain whirling until dizzy in terms of its greater meaning is fruitless.¹⁶⁵ Csikszentmihalyi asserts that this kind of play is done for its own sake, and is without second order, reflective meaning. Csikszentmihalyi’s depiction here fuses the action with the enjoyment; a child spins because spinning is enjoyable, not because spinning is instrumental to a further goal of enjoyment.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has created a theory for one particular type of autotelic action, what he terms the “flow experience,” during which action holds the whole of a person’s consciousness. As we will see below, such an experience makes the ascription or injection of abstracted meaning impossible in the moment. “Flow action,” as I term it, is thus experienced as being performed without conscious intention, and therefore without being immediately guided by

¹⁶⁵ We can later attach meaning to it – one whirls to imitate the whirling of the spheres of the cosmos—but this is not what a child is engaged in. To attempt to attribute meaning to a child’s whirling is to misunderstand the purpose of the child’s action: enjoyment.

or altered by meaning extending beyond the immediate, local, frame. To state it another way, this type of action bypasses the secondary, reflective layer of experience, and remains on the level of primary experience. Autotelic action, particularly flow, will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter. For now, it suffices to say that autotelic action suggests ways in which action bypasses abstracted systems of meaning.

Actions performed as specific skills also generally focused on the immediate context, and do not immediately implicate larger meaning structures unless larger meaning is externally imposed upon them. Explaining what screwing a bolt onto an engine has to do with the meaning of life relies upon an acute awareness of how well a person understands his own ultimate concerns, how internally coherent his network of meaning is, and how well that action nests within it. Screwing on a bolt may nest well into a larger system of meaning. If bolting an engine together means that the US will win the war with more sturdy equipment, so democracy can flourish and everyone can be happy, then that person has framed the action within a coherent system of meaning that leads to an ultimate concern. This need not be the case. If bolting the engine means a person will survive forced labor but simultaneously means that his countrymen, friends, and family may be killed, the action likely coheres less well with what

that person would like his or her life to mean. Addicts in the throes of a particularly damaging substance may not even be thinking in terms of worldview; in many cases life becomes like that of an animal—an animal that moment search for the source of addiction (or food in the case of the animal). The point here is that like autotelic actions, skills are concerned with immediate, local goals, not inherently about ultimate concerns.

What both of these categories of action point to is that while actions can be linked with ultimate concerns, their frame of reference tends to be more immediate, more focused upon what is directly at hand. Actions are about creating consequences, and therefore are about goals. This means that to share action is not to share meaning, but to share ends, to share goals. Sharing goals in turn means sharing a local, relatively immediate context. Two people can cooperate in putting an engine together while framing that action under conflicting ultimate concerns. Thus the meanings that are relevant to shared action are concrete meanings that arise from context rather than abstract meanings that are imposed upon context. My task for the rest of this section, then, is to suggest ways that action can be shared to create solidarity. I thus now turn to a particularly promising form of interactional shared action, what I have termed “flow action,” after Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow.”

5.3.2 Action and Solidarity: Flow and Union

Flow action falls under the category of interactional shared action. What I refer to as interaction does not necessarily mean the active participation of two actors; it merely involves a bottom line: the inclusion of the other within an actor's relevant context. Thus people who act together in the same physical space do not necessarily interact. Interaction brings people and objects into direct relationship. This section is an analysis of a psychological mode of action called *flow*. I have also chosen ritual as a foil to flow in order to explore the process of solidarity resulting from interaction. Flow and ritual represent very similar modes of interaction with one key difference: ritual is inevitably connected with meaning, whereas flow may not be.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, the architect of the flow concept,

Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement. It is the kind of feeling after which one nostalgically says: "that was fun," or "that was enjoyable." It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future. (2014, 136)

Flow as a phenomenon is particularly interesting in this discussion because it involves no conscious controlling activity, because distinctions between self and environment seem to pass away, and because, as a highly enjoyable sensation, flow is able to transform almost any action into autotelic action.

The lack of conscious controlling activity and the loss of the self-other distinction gives rise to the most interesting and relevant aspect of flow: it is able to create a sense of community without the benefit of (or *in spite of a lack of*) shared meaning. Though Csikszentmihalyi gives several examples of this, including a surgical team, chess players, and ballet dancers who all experience a feeling of unity with their environment and the others that are part of that environment, Ikuya Sato's study of the *Bosozoku* (youth motorcycle gangs) of Japan most clearly and dramatically illustrates flow's ability to create an experience of oneness without relying on a shared structure of meaning. Sato's work on flow action in *Bosozoku* activities notes that gang members participating in "runs," high speed races through downtown areas, often experience a sense of "one-ness." As one of Sato's informants describes,

I...I understand something, when all of our feelings get turned up.... At the start, when we are running, we are not in complete harmony. But if the boso drive beings going well (sic), all of us—all of us—feel for each other. How can I say this? When we wag the tail of the band [weave to slow police pursuit] ...When our minds become one. At such a time, it's a

real pleasure. ...When we realize that we become one flesh, it's supreme.
(A. Sato 1991, 32)

In this example, there are two things to note. First is the lack of harmony prior to the beginning of the run. This is significant because it reveals that at the time when meaning and second order reflection that allow construction of self, other and boundaries of empathy is still possible, the band members are still out of sync. Shared propositional meaning is *not* the source of the solidarity created by this run. Second is the more obvious of the two; once the run begins and there is no psychic space for anything except the action itself, the band members experience what appears to be a primal and unmediated solidarity and unity, one that extends beyond the temporal limits of the run itself. In commenting on the study of these gangs as a whole, Sato notes that friendship and companionship were ranked among the highest reasons for participating in runs.

5.3.3 Analyzing Unitive Flow

How then does flow accomplish this? There are several factors of flow presented by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 50) that seem to point to an answer.

- 1) Flow must take place in a situation with clear goals and clear feedback. This usually means that flow takes place within an isolated field of action, one in which goals can be singled out and isolated and in which feedback in regards

to that goal is immediate and clear. This does not necessarily mean the ultimate goal in any given scenario. Rather, what it refers to is a next step, or an *immediate* goal in a series of goals. Getting to the next hand-hold for the rock climber, or playing the next chord or cluster of notes for the piano player would be the appropriate goal, rather than getting to the top or playing the whole piece.

- 2) Within flow, challenge matches skill exactly, and all feedback gained is either neutral or positive in character. In flow, everything feels under control (see item 6). The frame of action in question is neither too difficult nor too easy; it remains a challenge, but a challenge that can be met with the full application of the performer's accumulated skill (i.e. his experience, or embodied knowledge).¹⁶⁶
- 3) Because of this, flow requires intense concentration on a certain frame of action. This concentration requires the full capacity of the mind, forcing concerns outside that frame to be forgotten for the period of flow. Factors four and five are a direct result of this all-consuming focus.

¹⁶⁶ This obviously indicates that a person must also have had prior experience of the frame of action, a point which will become important later on.

- 4) Action and awareness merge, and those within the flow channel lose awareness of themselves as separate from the action performed. Because of this, the action feels effortless and spontaneous and seems to carry itself forward. There is no sense of premeditated intention driving the action. This ease is often cited as a source of pleasure.
- 5) There is a loss of the sense of self. The experience of the self results from a self-reflexive mental process, a process which has been focused out for the duration of the flow action and which is allowed to remain inert throughout the duration of flow. A stimulus sufficient to provoke such a reflection will break the flow of action. This loss of self-consciousness is often accompanied by the experience of merging with the environment or others engaged in similar action. I interpret this to mean that a person within flow loses not only self-awareness but the ability to draw boundaries between self and other. As Csikszentmihalyi states it, "this feeling is not just a fancy of the imagination, but is based upon a concrete experience of close interaction with some Other, an experience that produces a rare sense of unity with these usually foreign entities." (1990, 64) These entities can be things, animals, people, or entire contexts.

- 6) Due to clear and immediate feedback and the fact that challenge matches skill exactly, people within flow experience a sense of control. This sense of control is nuanced by the aforementioned ego-less state and the merging of action and awareness. In regard to this, Csikszentmihalyi states, "rather than an active awareness of mastery, it [the feeling of control] is more a condition of not being worried by the possibility of the lack of control."

Putting these together, we can begin to understand how a flow experience functions. In flow, a person's psyche becomes totally concentrated and immersed in an activity. As stated, flow most often occurs when the challenges of a particular task exactly equal the abilities of the person engaged in that task. When the task is too easy, there is excess "psychic energy" left unspent, boredom ensues, and the person's psyche begins to search for other things to occupy it, preventing immersion. When the task is too difficult, the person's attention scatters across the overload of stimuli and the person fails to impose control over the flow of action. This also prevents immersion in the task. When challenge matches skill perfectly, however, the person's mental resources are used *completely*. For the subject, this mental concentration effectively focuses out all other thought processes, thus framing and isolating the arena of action. A person immersed in

flow is completely absorbed in the immediate frame of action, and thus only registers meanings arising from immediate frame of action. There is effectively no mental space for second order, abstracted reflection, and thus meaning that does not arise from the immediate context disappears completely. The psyche in flow experiences only the current moment in the immediate context of the activity.

This further means that flow, like play, takes place in a mental frame that excludes consciousness of both economic necessity and larger structures or systems of meaning. If play is framed and primarily considered a means to an external end, it ceases to be play and it becomes work. Flow prevents such a reframing because the psyche cannot handle the extra information that would allow a person to frame the action as work rather than play. For example, Csizentmihalyi notes that a factory worker he studied was able to enjoy his routine work by raising the challenge of his assembly line job. This worker would attempt to raise his speed with each iteration, thus allowing him to enter the flow channel. Though he was performing an activity whose underlying nature is economic, he experiences it subjectively as a separate arena of action. For Csikszentmihalyi, the ability to experience actions in a subjectively isolated mode allows a person to transform everyday economic activities into an

enjoyable play-like activity. More precisely, flow transforms specific arenas of action into play by erasing the larger, economically-based meaning structure from active consciousness. Because the psyche is consumed in the moment, action in the flow channel can take place within contexts specifically imbued with greater meaning structures without overtly invoking those meanings for the course of the interaction. This further means that different people can engage in the same activity for different reasons, yet all benefit from the solidarity-building benefits of flow.

How then does flow create this impression of merging with the environment and the others within it? I speculate that this is a result of two intersecting cognitive effects. First, the experience is primed by the loss of self-reflection and thus self-awareness. Awareness of the self's boundaries fade. Second, because challenge matches skill, the sense of control is created. While within the flow channel, a person experiences the environment as being controllable—the environment either conforming exactly to his expectations or becomes conformed to his expectations after the exercise of his skills. In other words, his particular embodied knowledge taken from his own subjective context fits the environment, the objective world, perfectly, or he is able to attune the context to fit his liking after acting.

Theoretically, this is what allows this feeling of union to occur. During the course of practice leading up to the flow experience, the environment has been infused with particular meanings. Because the environment within flow conforms perfectly to the subject's expectations (i.e. the subject's accumulated experience, which allows his skills to meet the challenge at hand) and efforts, during flow all of the subject's meanings are experienced as true. I speculate that this causes the subject-object distinction to fade, and the experience of *interaction* between subject and object to become similar to interacting with one's own imagination.

More precisely then, the flow state seems to create a state similar to what Winnicott calls "primary creativity." This is made possible because the practice (i.e. accumulation of experiences) that leads to flow creates the aforementioned "potential space" as, again, "an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute." (1974, 102) This potential space is defined by the domain of interaction between subject and object, and as Winnicott phrases it, it is "a product of the *experiences of the individual*... in the environment." (107, emphasis original) Winnicott begins his discussion of this potential space with a discussion of infant development. Primary creativity is made possible by the efforts of the mother to adapt especially to the needs of the

child, creating the illusion for the infant that his or her inner subjective experience of creating her world conforms to the outside world. Winnicott discusses the child as subjectively “creating” the mother, as experiencing the breast of the mother both as his own creation in response to his needs and as a part of his own imagination. Winnicott refers to this experience as the experience of “primary creativity,” which represents a time of pure subjectivity when the external world is experienced as being manipulated and created as if it were a concept internal to the child.¹⁶⁷ As the mother responds less and less perfectly to the child’s desires, the child experiences a period of frustration through which the world is slowly objectified.

¹⁶⁷Note that according to the modes of interaction outlined in chapter 2, the relationship between the mother and child is not an I-thou relationship, nor is it an I-it relationship. Since, according to Winnicott, the child experiences the mother as a part of himself, we are here talking about a unity—the child has not yet learned to differentiate the mother from his own urges.

I personally found that even as an adult, it was fairly easy to simulate the blurring of self-caused effects and effects created by external powers in a way that mimics the child’s illusion that he wills the mother’s breast into being. After picking an elevator I knew well and pressing the appropriate button, I tried to move the elevator to the fifth floor through sheer effort of will. Though I knew intellectually that I had no part in moving the elevator apart from signaling where I wanted it to go, I found that my preconceptual, internal feedback told me that I was succeeding in moving the elevator. So long as I timed my efforts to match perfectly with when I knew the elevator would start and stop, this sense of success continued. This experiment has obviously not been rigorously tested, but I suspect that should others find themselves able to overcome the inherent silliness of the exercise, they would find similar results.

This frustration is mitigated by a transitional object, which “symbolizes the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, *at a point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness.*” (114, emphasis original) The object has been infused with meanings given to it by the infant, and as long as the mother reinforces the symbolism through her presence within a given time frame, the infant is able to experience the mother through the symbolism of the object. Through the object, the world is both manipulable and it is not. On one hand, the mother is not actually there. On the other, she is present through the object, and so long as the mother returns before the object loses its symbolic power for the child, it is experienced as a symbol of the seamless union in which the mother and the child’s desires are one.

Winnicott’s potential space is seen as a way to relate the internal and external but keep them separate. The potential space of experience I propose and illustrate with flow also allows the potential for the merging of the internal and external through a return to primary creativity. Flow seems to recreate the experience of primary creativity by reversing the process Winnicott describes, returning that person to the experience of pure union. My claim is that the flow frame itself is a potential space like the transitional object of Winnicott’s work, only this time, the transition takes place in the opposite direction. Where

Winnicott's transitional object allowed children to transition smoothly from pure subjectivity into a world that does not shift according to their whim, flow allows people to transition from distinctiveness back into an experiential state of pure subjectivity and primary creativity.

Flow first requires experience built from accumulated interaction with the flow frame. Using Winnicott's language of internal and external, this process is a process of moving the external world into the internal world via experience. The external and internal worlds, however, are initially misaligned. This represents the opposite of what the child experiences in learning that he or she is a separate being from her mother; where the child experienced continual and perfect alignment of his desired ability to control the world, the flow participant begins in exactly the opposite position. The child experiences frustration at greater and greater intervals, thus allowing the process of objectification to take place. The flow participant experiences frustration as decreasing as his knowledge of the environment becomes more and more complete, and the subjective meanings with which he infuses the environment grow closer and closer to reality. In effect, the person who practices something engages in a process of fine-tuning the way in which she creates meaning. Where a child creates the internal in the external (the mother in the transitional object) in response to increasing frustration, the

process leading to flow creates the external within the practitioner through practice and in so doing merges the two into a state that more and more closely resembles that initial state of primary creativity.

When flow has been attained, a person experiences his interactions with the environment conforming exactly to his expectations. Thus in the same way that a developing child's experience of the subjective and the objective world is made to match by the mother, within flow, subjective meanings mapped onto the environment match exactly with the actuality of the environment. The environment is experienced as both wholly external in the objective world, and yet is also wholly internal in the participant's subjective, embodied world. Flow leads to a feeling of union because all objects within the flow area have been moved into the subjective realm and are experienced as if belonging to the subject himself. *I posit that this is true whether the environment purely consists of things or includes other people with whom one has practiced.*

We can also describe this flow phenomenon in terms of equilibrium and coherence: a person in flow fully understands the meaning of everything—objects and people—in the surrounding environment for all purposes relevant to the flow frame. Because of this, he or she is able to maintain a perfect equilibrium with his or her environment. Again, this should not be mistaken for a static,

unchanging equilibrium; rather, this equilibrium represents a perfect match between expectation and actuality within the limited scope of the flow frame. In terms of coherence, the flow frame divides the world down to those things relevant to achieving the given, immediate goals. Because the person within flow is able to continually balance all of the parts, she stands at the center, pivoting perfectly with everything else to keep everything else in balance. In this, she coheres perfectly with everyone and everything in her environment. The person literally experiences herself and everything else in the environment as *one thing*, one single coherent whole.

We could gloss this state as the experience of localized 誠 *cheng*, of wholeness. In flow, coherence, and the creation of meaning, we can see nesting occurring according to the immediacy of the goal and the breadth of the context considered. Flow might occur just between the offensive players of a soccer team as they drive the ball toward the goal, each knowing exactly where the others on the team will be and where they will put the ball before it happens. Or flow might occur between the entire team, defense and offense perfectly coordinated between all members of the team. Presumably, the broader the frame, the more difficult flow is to accomplish as more points for possible failure are introduced. In Winnicott's words, "The thing about playing is always the precariousness of

the interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects. This is the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arises in intimacy, in a relationship that is found to be reliable." (1974, 47)

The role of the mother is that she (or her breast) *is* the environment in relation to the child; *this* is the relationship found to be reliable, the intimate relationship. The flow participant has found his relationship to contextual objects to be reliable because he has built a bank of experience regarding them, and because these experiences are felt to be infallibly correct. (If there were not, the flow frame would be broken.) Again, what this experience leads to is the experience of unity, a seamless merging of our expectations and desires with a world normally stubborn in its intransigent unwillingness to match us perfectly. In a sense, people within the same flow frame experience one aspect of the powerful, primal bond between mother and child. *The other becomes part of the self.*

This understanding of what happens within flow offers a radically embodied, pre-conceptual understanding of how solidarity can be created. People operating within the same flow frame are seeing the other as self in a way that has nothing to do with shared meaning and everything to do with shared practice, shared action. The solidarity and empathy resulting from flow does not result from sharing meanings between people; two people in a flow frame may

have completely different meanings for objects — and different philosophical or religious commitments, for that matter — within the shared frame. The empathy results from the experience of understanding and being in direct relationship with that other (within the frame).

In spite of this compelling power, flow is a fragile state, unable to be held longer than a person is able to focus exclusively on the frame of activity given, and unable to be entered by someone who lacks the necessary skills. We cannot live our entire lives within the flow frame. Nevertheless, flow does reveal some dynamics vital to the understanding of how non-propositional solidarity might be created. The first of these dynamics is the way in which flow clearly requires isolated spheres of action in terms of structure and set goals. This in turn gives hints as to how and when propositional meaning becomes an inhibition to coordinated action. The second of these is less flashy, but no less important: flow demonstrates the importance of immediate roles.

Above, I chose motorcycle racing as an example of an activity that creates experiential unity. Even in this, however, what seems to be the most wild, boundary breaking and freeform of actions, there must be structure and organization for flow to be possible. While activities like *boso* runs and rock climbing may seem like activities that draw their amusement from the thrill of

danger and the possibility of *losing* control, Csikszentmihalyi makes a point of noting that the flow that results from these activities results from the thrill of *exerting* control, from *minimizing* danger. Thus flow and danger thrills land on the opposite sides of a spectrum. In terms of Caillois's (2001, 11) classifications of play, where drawing enjoyment from danger and losing control falls under the *illinx* category, exerting control is a matter of skill, placing flow into the *agonic* category. Where *illinx* represents the breaking of structure and boundaries and often relies on surprise and the unknown to thrill, *agon* relies heavily on the structures and boundaries created by experience and practice. These boundaries and this order are what allow the flow frame to be constructed in the first place. Thus even in *boso* runs, there are very specific rules to be obeyed and roles to be followed in order for flow to take place. The front biker must never be passed. Traffic must be blocked at the lights, police must be held at bay. When the roles are all played properly, what would otherwise be a highly dangerous, highly chaotic, lawless motorcycle run through the streets of Tokyo comes under control (A. Sato 1991, 34).

This structure allows flow to be coordinated between people. When the bikers feel like they have become one, they are not performing the same actions; rather, they are each riding in a way that matches perfectly with the expectations

of each of the others in the group. This includes but is not limited to the role to which each of the bikers is assigned. Those assigned to “wag the tail” perform their role in a way that matches the expectation of the others, allowing the others to feel as if the tail were a part of themselves and that the group as a whole is an organic being. Here, flow is coordinated through roles. Coordinated flow then, could be described as guided by role, but that barely scratches the surface. In a perfect flow situation, expectations would be matched perfectly. This means that expectations would either have had to be set down to the very last detail, and executed to perfection, or more likely, have been set by the performer himself over the course of practice. In the above *bosozoku* example, not only would the base expected role be performed, the method of execution, the style, the variations in speed in those wagging the tail would all be predicted perfectly by the others in the run. A stronger sense of flow would pass beyond role, to a comprehensive understanding of the individual involved and his or her reactions, timing, habits, and other eccentricities. Again, this knowledge comes only with extensive experience of the others involved.

Thus flow goes one step beyond role. Those within flow know not only the set roles of those around them (which are general at the level of group organization or society) but also know the individuals involved. (This goes one

step further than role in that it engages with the individual, but flow knowledge is still temporally and situationally generalized, though to a much lesser extent than that of pure role). For example, baseball roles dictate that the shortstop throws the ball to first base if no other runners are present, but in flow, the first baseman knows instinctually not only that the ball is coming to him, but that Timmy, today's shortstop, always skews his balls slightly to the left and thus compensates to match. In this way, the embodied knowledge of flow is both more detailed and more flexible than the knowledge one knows of the other within a role. Unlike role expectations in both rituals and societal life, which are dictated at least partially by someone other than the performer, expectations within flow are encoded by the situation within the flow frame and the individuals themselves. Because of this, even in situations in which roles are not defined, flow participants will still have an intimate knowledge of what to expect. For example, while a lone sailor sails the seas, he is nevertheless intimately aware of how to coordinate his actions with the sea itself. Though the sea has no socially defined role, the sailor within flow is nevertheless coordinated with the winds and tides because of his intimate knowledge of the sea. Other people within the flow frame can be seen and understood in the same way. Thus flow serves as the experiential mirror of role. Even should roles not be

properly defined, someone within flow would know exactly how the others within the frame of action should act.

This brings me to the second portion of this discussion. Attempting to add too much meaning is an inhibitor to flow. As the entire psyche must be directed to the action, even the modicum of attention that allows for self-awareness breaks flow. There is no room for additional thought. The boy playing baseball from our chapter three discussion can only enter flow if he forgets the girl, forgets the storm, forgets himself, and focuses entirely on the game—how hard and how high, how early or late to swing to direct the ball where he wants it to go. The experienced meaning that arises within flow and play is immediate; it is grounded in the context at hand and framed only by immediate goals.

What this indicates about the creation of solidarity then, is that the first step in community building between groups with separate meaning structures is a matter of agreeing upon concrete ends or goals. Playing a game of baseball does not require everyone involved to adhere to the same worldview, it only requires that everyone agree on the end result of the game and the prescribed means of arriving at that goal. The smaller and more circumscribed the goal, the easier it is to create personal relationships because it leaves more space and flexibility outside of the goal for differences. If it is agreed that the *only* goal

shared is to play baseball according to the prescribed rules, this leaves much more space for others to assign greater meaning as they choose (for national glory, for exercise, for fun, to get the girl/guy, etc.). Thus, a child in an imaginary religious sect with proscriptions against having fun could still participate in a neighborhood ballgame by framing it in terms of practicing teamwork skills and gainfully exercising. Those who are there just for the fun of it may take exception to the seriousness which this child exhibits, but since they cannot claim that “this is all just for the fun of it” they have no choice but to let things be. Those who come for fun and those who come for exercise will remain in their respective camps of fun seekers and skill builders, but for the space of the game, they can act like a team and build solidarity from that interaction, rather than from whether or not they share religion, philosophy, or any unifying system of meaning. To insist upon one “why” for the game would destroy this.

The example of baseball is a simple case in which roles and the end are clearly defined without necessary reference to “greater meaning” of any kind. Few problems arise because of the extremely narrow goal involved and the irrelevance of most meanings to the project at hand. Most social organization cannot afford to be this narrow; a brief examination of the issue of abortion shows a case in which the end (respect for the sacrality of the individual) seems

to be the same, but in which different structures of meaning and understandings of the individual are radically different. Even in cases like this, however, without an understanding of a shared end, no meaningful dialogue can even begin to take place.

5.4 Interaction Ritual and Flow

Unitive flow exhibits the same affective states that we see in Collins' IR in terms of the intense sense of intersubjective oneness and solidarity. This is unsurprising—flow exhibits all of the characteristics of Collins' IR with one striking difference. The four ingredients of interaction ritual that generate collective effervescence are physical co-presence, a mutual focus of attention, a shared mood heightened by physical entrainment, and barriers to outsiders, and all of these can be found in flow. Unitive flow cannot be achieved without others being in the immediate environment, usually and most powerfully in the form of physical copresence.¹⁶⁸ In order to reach a state of unitive flow, the attention of each participant needs to be focused on the overall goal at hand as they perform

¹⁶⁸ Just as with IR, the lack of physical copresence can be mitigated by modern technologies—playing chess online with someone might be able to create unitive flow, for example. Nevertheless, we should understand such tech as a limited and limiting proxy that functions only in some situations and which may limit the quality of the intersubjective experience.

their particular role. Without being connected to others through attention the overarching goal, individual flow could be achieved, but not unitive flow, because the individual task would not cohere with everyone else's efforts. The flow frame is clearly demarked by those immediately acting to accomplish the goal; this provides the boundary for IR. And, as Csikszentihalyi has noted, those within flow share the same affective mood—confidence, elation, and excitement.

The major difference between IR and flow is to be found in the mode of interpersonal synchronization. Where Collins' IR relies on physical entrainment—usually physical synchrony of some sort—for the positive feedback loop that heightens the sense of shared intersubjectivity, flow seems to rely on a combination of dissolved personal boundaries, and a match between expectations and actuality concerning the actions of others. I speculate that both of these activities activate many of the same cognitive dynamics. Entrainment in the form of physical synchrony is the simplest way to step outside of the self and experience oneself as part of a larger whole. In flow, we find the same experience of self-transcendence, only the need for linkage is met not through synchrony, but through intense familiarity and the fulfillment of expectations through reciprocal movement (rather than synchronous movement).

5.5 From Flow to 禮 *Li*

Recently, flow has attracted more detailed comparison with Chinese thought, particularly as a foil to *wu-wei*, often translated as “uncontrived action” or more recently as “effortless action” (Slingerland 2003). The parallels between these two states are too large to miss: both involve a loss of conscious choice, both are experienced with pleasant, joyful ease, both are often exercises in skill mastery, and in instances where *wu-wei* is an exercise of skill—think here of Cook Ding, the bell carver, and the cicada catcher of the *Zhuangzi*)—both *wu-wei* and flow direct attention to the immediate, goal-based frame of reference. Most of these studies, however, do not engage the Confucian side of classical Chinese thought and the Confucian versions of *wu-wei* we find in the *Analects*, *Mencius*, and *Xunzi* to which Slingerland (2003) has directed attention.

In fact, in contemporary English scholarship, Robert Eno (1985, 178-180) is the one that engages Csikszentmihalyi’s flow and Confucian ritual practice in the manner closest to what I attempt here, but his treatment of the matter in his conclusion is more kin to a satisfying introductory handshake than full comparative exposition. In an evocative three pages, he highlights many of the same aspects of flow highlighted in the paragraph above and links them with specific aspects of Confucian practice, particularly ritual and dance. This section

aims to pick up where he left off by bringing aspects of cognitive psychology and philosophy to bear on the issue.

5.5.1 Resonances Between Flow, Li, and Confucian Wu-wei

In making his case for a Confucian *wu-wei*, Edward Slingerland (2003) draws particular attention to passages in the Confucian texts that reference both supreme competence and effortless ease. These passages, taken as a whole, reveal that Confucian *wu-wei* involves a particular brand of trained spontaneity. It is a result of training, particularly ritual training, that allows people to act with effortless, spontaneous, and uncontrived ease. *Wu-wei* is, in a narrow sense, the unfurling of a person's ritual skills in a masterful and effective fashion. *Li* is thus the most explicit path to *wu-wei*, and ultimately culminates in the state Confucius describes in 2.4: a person who can follow the desires of his heart without crossing the boundaries of right and wrong.

Can we see a parallel between the *wu-wei* performance of *li* and flow? I suggest that we can—both involve the joyous exercise of a mastered skill that results in the attunement of a particular context so that the immediate context coheres as an experiential whole. Though ritual may seem like purposeful behavior, we can also note that Confucius thinks that ritual is worth practicing

just for the sheer enjoyment of it.¹⁶⁹ Ritual is thus behavior framed within a larger context of meaning, but also practiced for its own sake.

There are also structural parallels between flow and the *wu-wei* performance of *li*. The most relevant parallels involve frames and roles. As discussed, flow action is “framed” in terms of attention and goals. Ritual action also takes place in a similar frame. In the last chapter, the frame was minimally present, serving as a way to separate those within the interaction ritual from those not participating. In general ritual theory, the frame serves that function as well, but it also frames time and space for exclusively ritual purposes.¹⁷⁰ The walls of the classroom or church and the chalk on the soccer field mark off a particular space, just as the bell signifying the beginning and end of class, the

¹⁶⁹ I already discussed Confucius’ approval of Zeng Xi’s wanting nothing more than to perform ritual on the rain altars, but we can also reference 1:15, where Confucius gives his approval to those who are poor but happy, rich and yet love ritual. (貧而樂、富而好禮). Ritual is not for profit or benefit—it is something to be enjoyed. Given this passage, we can also make a strong case that *li* is what Confucius refers to in 6:20 when he states that “to know it is not as good as loving it; loving it is not as good as rejoicing in it.” We could also state that “it” here refers to *ren* or the Way; in either case though, ritual is a component part of both and is thus implied in this statement.

¹⁷⁰ The term “frame” as is currently applied in ritual studies was first used by Gregory Bateson to denote a framework which interprets the acts and messages that happen within it in one way and not another. A dog’s nip can either be play or aggression, and certain “framing” signals—growling for example—allow us to understand it as one act rather than the other. Bateson refers to these signals as “metacommunication.” (1978, 179-189) Erving Goffman (1974) will later also note how the frame is “keyed” by various different elements that signal the “ceremonial” (that is, ritual) aspect of the current moment.

whistle at the beginning and end of a soccer match, and the hymn at the start and end of a Catholic Mass all mark the time between them as different from the time outside them. Within the bounds of that frame, a world markedly different from the chaos of freeform experience emerges within which many different frames of reference vie for influence. A man who is a priest, a teacher at a Catholic high-school, and a member of the adult co-ed soccer league lives in a number of different contexts that can overlap and compete. If that priest is talking with the mother of one of his students, who also happens to be one his parishioners as well as a fellow player on the soccer team, all three of these different contexts collide at once. This makes the map of their possible modes of interaction at least slightly ambiguous when they bump into each other at the local coffee shop. This is not so within the demarked frame; norms dictate that he behave one way when they interact on the soccer field, quite another while running the confessional or saying Mass, and a third way while the school's open house "class period" for parents is running. Within the bounded time and space, convention foregrounds the relevant context and thus the rules and norms that govern behavior within those boundaries: talking is no longer allowed without raising one's hand in class; hands can no longer touch the ball during the soccer match; and everything from one's verbal utterances to one's physical postures

are set and dictated for the length of the Mass. All of these represent frames, though properly considered, the Mass is the only of these that fits our criterion for a ritual proper.¹⁷¹

Both overall goals and immediate goals are also clear within the ritual frame, given as they are by the ritual script. There may be multiple goals to be accomplished by any one ritual, but the number of goals given within a ritual is relatively low when compared with the chaos of aims and expectations present in extra-ritual life. Within the time and space framed away by the ritual, one's aims are focused on only what is immediately prescribed.

All of this is true of Confucian ritual, though as is the case with flow, the frame tends to be more goal-oriented than the clearer example frames given above. The rituals listed in the *Liji* and *Yili*, for instance, tend to discuss the way to handle one particular interaction—how to care for parents, greet guests, or comport oneself at an archery competition. Nevertheless, the frame is clearly present, evident from the fact that everything within a particular ritual's frame is

¹⁷¹ Play, such as we find on the soccer field, has been compared by J. Huizinga (1950, 15-25) to be remarkably similar to ritual. Both play and ritual are activities framed away from ordinary life, and both involve the recognition of playing roles separate from the rules of ordinary reality within that frame. However, ritual in its scripting is close-ended, where play is open ended and rife with possibility. We know how the Eucharistic sacrifice will end; this is not so of Saturday's soccer match.

carefully dictated, from the way one is to stand or walk, to how one holds objects, to one's expression and the appropriate feelings that should stand behind that expression, and one's goals are clearly given by each step of the ritual. Take, for example, the discussion of how a son should attend his parents from the "Nei Ze" chapter of the *Liji*:

子事父母，雞初鳴，咸盥漱，櫛縱笄總，拂髦冠綏纓，端鞞紳，搢笏 ... 以適父母舅姑之所，及所，下氣怡聲，問衣燠寒，疾痛苛癢，而敬抑搔之。出入，則或先或後，而敬扶持之。

Sons, in serving their parents, on the first crowing of the cock, should all wash their hands and rinse their mouths, comb their hair, draw over it the covering of silk, fix this with the hair-pin, bind the hair at the roots with the fillet, brush the dust from that which is left free, and then put on their caps, leaving the ends of the strings hanging down. They should then put on their squarely made black jackets, knee-covers, and girdles, fixing in the last their tablets... Thus dressed, he should go to his parents. On getting to where they are, with bated breath and gentle voice, he should ask if their clothes are (too) warm or (too) cold, whether they are ill or pained, or uncomfortable in any part; and if they be so, they should proceed reverently to stroke and scratch the place. (12.2-3, Legge translation)

The above script continues at some length, giving breakfast suggestions and dictating the pleasant expression that the son should wear so that his parents might feel at ease. Once breakfast is over, the son is instructed to withdraw. Here, we have a very specific, highly framed activity that begins at the first crowing of the cock and finishes with the morning repast. We have not only the overall goal, which is to serve parents with the proper respect and form, but we

are given very immediate goals at every step of the process: when to begin, how exactly to dress, what exactly to attend to in terms of parent's comfort, how to serve and sweeten breakfast, and when to withdraw.

Roles are also important to both flow and *li*. Roles are generally found when flow is to be found in contexts with more than one person because flow requires one's expectations to match what actually happens (either before one acts, or after), and this can occur in one of two ways. A person can be so familiar with the other people in the action frame that he or she knows what they will do before they do it. More often, however, we find flow occurs well when roles are involved, because roles provide structured expectations for how others will act in a given situation. Roles thus short-circuit the need to build years of familiarity by limiting the range of actions that a person will perform. The closer a person sticks to the prescriptions of a role, the more predictable their behavior and the more easily they are incorporated into flow. The more detailed the requirements of a particular role, the more easily predictable a person's behavior. Ackerman and Bargh (2010) summarize their research on coordinated action in flow in the following way:

In sum, much of social coordination is highly automated, associated with subjective ease, and reinforced by the positive individual and interpersonal experiences resulting from it. With respect to effortless

attention (which requires some degree of conscious attention), we suspect that a state of effortlessness is likely to emerge between individuals who have automatized their roles in the particular social interaction and who are able to easily coordinate with others, thereby freeing up conscious resources for the appreciation of this interpersonal activity. (357)

This is part of the reason I have chosen to focus on ritual scripting so closely — scripting provides an exceedingly detailed role for people to follow. It is precisely this detail that allows people without relationship to interact in a way that is familiar, and this physical familiarity makes them less strange.

We can also note that both flow and *li* result in the creation of solidarity.

Physicality is a powerful bonding agent. In the last chapter we saw how physical entrainment provided a powerful boost to the sense of shared intersubjectivity and group membership, and I briefly commented on how mirror neurons, mimicry, and synchronous action all aid the development of empathy and solidarity. Here, I return to that theme, with the significant addition of complementary behavior. Again, according to Ackerman and Bargh (2010)

People who are behaviorally mimicked report liking the mimicker more, even when they are not aware of having been mimicked (e.g., Chartrand and Bargh 1999; Maurer and Tindall 1983). Complementation of behavior [behaviors that represent the natural or rule-based counterparts to other behaviors] may produce even stronger feelings of liking and comfort than mimicry does (e.g., Tiedens and Fragale 2003). Emotional synchronization can also lead to closer peer relationships and increased romantic relationship satisfaction (e.g., Anderson, Keltner, and John 2003; Dryer

and Horowitz 1997). Social coordination can bind individuals together through the shared positive experiences people undergo. (346)¹⁷²

In relation to flow and ritual practice, we can specifically underscore what Ackerman and Bargh have written regarding complementary behavior. They give the example of one person holding open a door being coordinated with another person walking through the open doorway as an example of complementary behavior, which is precisely the type of role coordination I discuss in my discussion of flow. If complementation produces even stronger feelings of liking and comfort than mimicry, this helps to explain part of the unitive dynamics of flow from a cognitive scientific point of view.

My sense is that flow and *li* both access many of the same dynamics in the creation of the other, and that flow can be entered into during the practice of *li*. Ritual practice is a physical phenomenon and these dynamics should be part of our examination of Confucian ritual. In the last chapter, I drew an analogy between ritual practice and dance. Given the fact that Csikszentmihalyi often cites dancers as people who can enter flow, I would like to return to this analogy. Physically speaking, knowing a dance is more or less equivalent to knowing a

¹⁷² See Fiske (2000); Markey, Funder, and Ozer (2003); Tiedens, Chow, and Unzueta (2007); Tiedens, Unzueta, and Young (2007); Tracey, Ryan, and Jaschik-Herman (2001) for discussions of complementary behavior and social coordination.

ritual; both dances and rituals are narrow contexts with prescribed physical movements.

Drawing on this metaphor, imagine for a moment a choreographed dance in which both dancers are blindfolded and need to perform all of the dance's spins, throws, and catches completely without the aid of their eyes.¹⁷³ What allows them to perform this dance is knowing the dance, the ritual, exceedingly well. Because of the ritual, they have such a keen and sensitive knowledge of each other and the roles that they are playing that visual adjustment is not necessary to complete the ritual. This is the power of circumscribed physicality; the ability to know someone in a way that bypasses words because it stands prior to words. Again, the *Xunzi* passage on dance (77/20/39-40) quoted at the beginning of chapter three points to this. The meaning of the dance, found in the movements of the body, the curling and uncurling, the quickening and the slowing, can only be known by those who have performed the same dance.

¹⁷³ Such dances are not unknown. Take, for example, the blindfolded dance between dancers Alan Bersten and Jasmine Mason in the episode of the television show *So You Think You Can Dance?* airing June 25, 2013. These dancers, who had only been partnered for one week, learned a dance including lifts, catches, and throws and were able to dance it blindfolded for a live and televised audience. Obviously, there is a great deal of personal, experiential, and embodied knowledge that can be gained from dancing together for one week, and this example moves beyond mere roles. Nevertheless, performing this dance would not be possible without their given script.

Movement is a way of learning and knowing, and sharing knowledge of a dance, ritual, or sharing knowledge of the action in the flow frame is to share a deep knowledge of the other. For those who begin as strangers, choreographed, scripted motion can serve as an incredibly strong beginning to a new relationship.

5.5.2 Bridging immediate meaning and social meaning

In the above analogy the dancers know each other only physically, and only within the dance. The same may or may not be true in the flow frame, but it is ideally false for those practicing a Confucian ritual. Someone who knows another person through a Confucian ritual theoretically knows not only what a person will do, but also what they feel, or at least what they publically acknowledge as wanting to feel. That is the difference between Confucian the idea of a whole person who lives their roles (see section 2.3.2) and the idea that a role that is put on like a mask: the development of Confucian roles allow us to make someone more fully a part of who we experience ourselves to be, through intimate knowledge of that person both physically and emotionally. We all know, or at least can imagine, what it is like to know someone so well that we can spontaneously finish their sentences. Rituals then, not only allow us to think in harmony with another person but to feel and move in harmony with them as

well. This is made possible because we know them not only through our minds, but through the bone-deep pools of physical experience.

Ritual's attempt to accomplish this multi-level harmony is a result of the fact that everything in ritual has social meaning. Flow specifically hedges out the greater socially encoded meaning of actions in favor of focusing on the actions themselves. Ritual can be performed as flow and be experientially isolated from greater structures of meaning, but meaning cannot be removed from ritual. What differentiates ritual from play and flow, the Mass and other rituals from ball games and classroom time, is that ritual carries a wealth of encoded propositional meaning as well, meaning that relies upon and thus implies an entire worldview. Roy Rappaport sees ritual as a form of communicating this meaning. According to his work, ritual transmits two types of information to both the observers of the ritual and the performer of the ritual him or herself. Rappaport claims that the performers of ritual transmit both what he refers to as "self-referential messages" and "canonical messages." Self-referential messages are those in which "the participants transmit information concerning their own current physical, psychic, or social states to themselves and other participants." (1989, 52) Note that self-reference is distinct from expression, understood as the "rendering outward of something inner" or the "revelation or emergence of

something inner in a manifest, outward form" (Black 1989, 14).¹⁷⁴ While self-reference may overlap with expression, it is primarily concerned with indicating acceptance of a particular social position, role, or obligation to the performer or observer. A man's "I do" in front of the Justice of the Peace may express love, but even if love is not present, his performance of the wedding ceremony transmits his acceptance of his new "married" status and its varied obligations to himself and to others. In a scenario where he is actually marrying for money rather than love, the ritual transmits messages that reference the self's acceptance of obligation without ever overlapping with self-expression.

The self-referential messages, however, do not encompass all of the meanings and messages that are transmitted by ritual, particularly for those rituals closer to ceremony and liturgy. Rappaport proposes that since "messages are not encoded by the performers, and since they tend toward invariance, it is obvious that these messages cannot *in themselves* represent the performers' contemporary states." (1999, 51) In other words, since the messages were not encoded by the performers, canonical messages, which are messages pre-

¹⁷⁴ Black has a comprehensive discussion of expression and her work is tapped here both for her excellent scholarship as well as her additional discussions of how well this understanding of expression meshes with Chinese thought.

encoded into a ritual by its creator (whether religious or not), are not inherently expressive either; there is a natural space between the state of the performer and the encoded meaning of the ritual. Canonical messages reference and transmit the meanings and messages originally encoded by those who created the ritual, not the meanings and messages of the performer. While the performer may have appropriated those messages for the sake of self-reference or expression, canonical messages reference something other than the performer himself. The declaration that “there is one God and Mohammed is his prophet” or the recitation of “The Lord God our Lord is One” may be, on one level, a self-referential expression of the acceptance of one God, but on an even more basic, fundamental level it references a universal order which transcends the performer, the circumstances of that performance, and the present time (119). It references a cosmic order in which God exists and is indivisible as well as a social order based upon that conception of God, and a ritual order that serves God as is proper. All of these orders are independent of the performer. To use a Chinese example, sacrifice to the ancestors show one is filial, but more fundamentally it references both a cosmos in which the ancestors can accept the sacrifices of the living, a social hierarchy subordinating the younger to the older, and an ritual culture in which sacrifice is understood as a form of respect.

Rappaport claims that the performance of ritual represents the performer's choice to impose that ritual's canon upon himself. As Rappaport states it, "By participating in a ritual the performer reaches out of his *private* self, so to speak, into a *public* canonical order to grasp the category [king, citizen, husband, knight, or other role] that he then imposes upon his private processes." (106)¹⁷⁵ Rappaport further claims that all liturgical ritual contains elements of this performative aspect; by performing ritual, an individual conforms himself to, and thus informs himself with the canon encoded in ritual. Thus, in a sense, a person creates himself through ritual performance by positioning himself in a network of roles. Confucian ritual is no exception to this. As we saw in chapters two and three, Confucian ritual is thickly encoded with social meanings for everything from why the body is bent when offering things to parents to why certain expressions should be worn.

Play and flow imply none of the above meanings, and awareness of these meanings at the time of practice actively inhibits flow. This does not mean that flow and ritual cannot coincide. What this does mean is that to be performed in

¹⁷⁵ In some ways, this move is a supplement to what was described in chapter one concerning Taylor's self as chosen. Just as Taylor insists that a true sense of self rises from

flow, we need to bracket greater meaning and non-immediate goals for the span of the ritual. We can take an example from Herbert Fingarette's work on *Li*, *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred*, to demonstrate exactly this rupture between flow and conscious meaning inherent ritual when he describes a handshake performed properly. Though handshakes are tied to meanings involving respect, conscious awareness of that fact (self-awareness) prevents the proper execution of the ritual. Fingarette notes that

mutual respect is not the same as a conscious feeling of mutual respect; when I am *aware* of a respect for you, I am much more likely to be piously fatuous or perhaps self-consciously embarrassed; and no doubt our little "ceremony" will reveal this in certain awkwardness. (I put out my hand too soon and am left with it hanging in midair.)...we who shake hands... must have (but not think about) respect and trust. Otherwise we find ourselves fumbling awkwardly or performing in a lifeless fashion, which easily conveys its meaninglessness to the other. (1972, 30)

Fingarette comes to a conclusion here that I find puzzling: that a flubbed handshake indicates that the performance was meaningless. From his description, however, it seems to me that what caused the failure in skill here was not meaninglessness, but an overabundance of meaning, which distracted from the proper execution of the skill. This contextualizes a point that has been made before; true flow and conscious meaning cannot take place at the same time. In this context, however, even though this ritual is highly expressive,

during its performance Fingarette implies, the meaning of the ritual must drop from immediate awareness in order to be performed correctly.

What this points to then is that flow and ritual are not mutually exclusive, but that there are different aspects and different arenas of efficacy in ritual. The social meanings and encoded messages are the mainstream way of looking at ritual. This chapter has proposed that there is another way of understanding ritual. Ritual is not only a way in which socially encoded meanings can be shared or enacted; it is also a way in which we can build direct experience of the other. This direct experience in turn allows the other to become part of the self. At the same time, ritual is also linked into sociality and community that is based on propositional meaning. I would thus suggest that ritual has the potential to serve as a bridge between embodied meaning and social meaning, bonding some people through action, others through the putative sharing of social, propositional meaning.

5.6 Summary: Confucian ritual and local bonds

When we look at human interaction, we find that one, if not *the* major reason for human grouping is the same for humans as it was for fish—the ends of survival, continuance, and flourishing. This is the reason for the division of labor and its concomitant roles, but it is also the broad reason for most if not all

human association. When people choose to develop a relationship, ultimately, it is most likely for one of these two reasons (though the immediate goal or value around which the group develops may be a sub-goal on route to flourishing or survival). Harmonic groups—in this case groups cohering around the shared goals of survival and flourishing—can thus occur naturally and voluntarily, without requisite abstracted meaning.

Friendships are perhaps the purest human example of the voluntaristic aspect of human harmonic grouping behavior. People become friends largely as a matter of choice, primarily for the sake of a more flourishing life. Friendship cannot be coerced or bought. It results only when all the parties involved choose it voluntarily, and it ends when either of the parties involved choose to terminate the relationship.¹⁷⁶ Other relationships, such as familial relationships, may not be entirely subject to the same voluntary termination, but distancing actions may nevertheless be taken within that rubric. King's understanding of Confucian society, a society he has called "relationally based" (*guanxi benwei* 關係本位), is

¹⁷⁶ Merely considering someone a friend is not the same thing as an actual friendship; the former describes feelings toward someone, the other describes a lived, reciprocal relationship.

clearly based on this personal power. He argues for a relationally based form of society in the following terms:

the individual self is ... capable of shaping, if not fixing, what kinds of relationships to have with others. In a word, the self is an active entity capable of defining the roles for himself and others and, moreover, of defining the boundaries of groups of which the self is at the center. It is clearly no accident that social phenomena such as *la kuan-hsi* (to establish relationships with others) and *tan chiao- ch 'ing* (to relate oneself to others) are so prevalent in Chinese society. These social phenomena attest to the individual's freedom of action in constructing a personal relational network. At this juncture, it must be stressed again that in constructing a personal network, the emphasis is placed on the *particular* relations between oneself and other *concrete* individuals. The individual interacts with others always on a particularistic relational basis. (1985, 64)

King's words remind us that grouping occurs in ways that cannot be fully explained by the structuring aspects of any one tradition. This focus on each person's ability to determine his or her own relationships shrinks our understanding of Confucian communities from the grand outline of the whole community, through the intermediate stage of lineages and schools, down to singular people and their own interpretations. When we reduce the scale upon which disagreements take place within the tradition to such a fine grain, we flip the directionality of influence from the structure of the community pressing upon the single person to the single person's appropriation of and influence on

the community.¹⁷⁷ Rather than looking at the structure of the group as created by shared values or doctrines, King looks at the groups individuals create for themselves, stating that the Confucian group stops at the limits of a person's own connections. This in turn allows us to analyze how people themselves might have formed their community around them. In effect, it allows us to examine the other side of the social scientific structure-agency debate while remaining grounded in the Confucian viewpoint.

It should not be surprising, then, that the model of sociality arrived at by King is a network-like model.¹⁷⁸ Mapped onto an entire society, this model gives

¹⁷⁷ The process of casuistry, here understood as the delicate process of reasoning concerning the application of generally phrased moral axioms within complicating circumstances, serves as an appropriate analogue in terms of system *granularity*, here understood as the fineness of detail which a system can address. Casuistry is a mechanism designed to create a finer granularity in moral systems, doing the work of fine tuning general principles to meet the needs of specific circumstances. While casuistry is specifically about how to apply and interpret given moral axioms in contexts within which their generality makes them ill suited, however, in the above discussion concerning Confucian interpretation, we are discussing how Confucians *each* apply and interpret given ideas and traditions in different situations. There are many resonances here, but the important similarity to raise here is the fact that casuistry takes place in the fine grains of life, in the same area where I suggest most of the adaptations of Confucianism do as well. The two changes to the ritual script noted in the *Analects*, for example, are both small, fine changes: bowing at the top of the stairs instead of the bottom and changing the material for a ritual headband from hemp to silk (9.3). While we do not know why people began bowing at the top of the stairs instead of the bottom, we do know that changing the cloth was for the sake of thriftiness, exactly the practical type of change that individual people make when the given rules do not mesh well with the immediate circumstances.

¹⁷⁸ See also Bruno Latour's Actor-Network theory (ANT), which attempts to navigate the structure-agency debate by flattening the model into a pure network.

us a network of personal connections, some clusters of which form structurally-defined wholes, such as families, and some of which do not. Note the similarities between King's model and piscine schooling behavior: once we limit grouping to concrete relationships, the size of the group immediately shrinks to the metaphorical equivalent of those immediately surrounding one particular member of the group. From that point of view, again, the Confucian community as a whole must take on some aspects as a school of fish — a-centric interlocking networks of connection.¹⁷⁹ If King is correct in his weighting of the voluntaristic nature of Confucianism in his analysis of Confucian groups, fish would serve as an almost perfect analogy for a relationally-based society.

The previous three chapters explored the types of bonding that help lead to an a-centric network model of the group and potentially allow strangers to weave themselves strongly and quickly into the web of local solidarity. Ritually-guided, pre-conceptual intersubjectivity describes the way in which individuals engage in the process of mutual integration through the process of interactive co-creation. This type of interaction requires physical co-presence and is a-centric in

¹⁷⁹ Individual networks within the group are centered upon individual fish. But the group as a whole is an a-centric lattice of relationships.

the sense that both parties surrender their intersubjective agency to the mediation of ritual, and neither takes intersubjective control.¹⁸⁰ Regardless of how well they do or do not know ritual, strangers cannot help but be drawn into this aspect of the tradition, simply because the brain operates on this level. All except for those who purposefully, obstinately close themselves off from human interaction and consciously refuse to acknowledge others as fellow agents are affected by things like facial expression and the meaning-bearing gaze of others.¹⁸¹

Rituals also amplify the group dynamics found in the entraining aspects of interaction ritual by helping to synchronize and coordinate both the expectations and the actions of those who engage in ritual practice. Ritual scripting provides a clear frame, a mutual focus of attention, a coordinated mood, and the clear expectations for synchronized or harmonized activity. As IR

¹⁸⁰ This does not mean the relationship is not hierarchical; Confucian relationships clearly are. The a-centricity I refer to here has to do with control and agency. Ritually governed relationships do not function in the way Hall and Ames' field and focus model functions, with one point focusing the field around him, like the wind blowing through the grass. Rather, both ritual participants play an equal part in co-creating the other and are both equally subordinate to the ritual order as a whole. While one party is given authority and the other is expected to follow that authority, both ritual practitioners are equally responsible for creating and sustaining that system that keeps them grouped.

¹⁸¹ Even then it might be impossible to avoid simply because mirror neurons recreate the emotions of the other within the self based on their facial expressions.

theory shows, all of these elements heighten the experience of intersubjectivity and group connectivity. Given the ubiquity of ritual in Confucian interpersonal interaction, all human interaction at the local level in a Confucian ritual community has the potential to tap into these dynamics. Strangers who are ritually fluent can thus tap into this powerful pre-conceptual mode of bonding because they are familiar with the ritual and can match the expectations of the other. Ritual generates a pre-conceptual sense of complementarity that can take the place of personal familiarity, generating a feeling of closeness or intimacy despite the newness of the relationship.

Interpersonal or group ritual also has the potential to harness the dynamics of flow, in which we saw the experience of a radical group unity. Though this particular experience of ritual practice may be initially closed to strangers as some level of personal familiarity beyond mere ritual scripting is required. As Robert Neville notes,

Ritual forms are something like formulated dance steps that each performer has to take in his or her own way, developing recognizable individuality within a generalized form. To participate in a ritual thus means more than acquiescence to doing things the ritual way: it means finding specific ways of doing what the ritual form vaguely prescribes. (214, 263)

Even with the extensive choreography provided in each of the ritual scripts examined thus far, there is always space left between notation and performance

that each performer has to give form to. Nevertheless, the ritual script vastly shortens the time required for a flow-like experience to be accessible because it narrows the personal familiarity required to the area of the likely emendations or personalizations that a performer will make to a ritual script given a particular circumstance. Again, the ubiquity of ritual in Confucian interpersonal action grants the possibility that the unitive experience of flow could occur during almost any interpersonal interaction, much the same way that natural interaction rituals can arise in well-synchronized conversations.

The groups that arise from interaction ritual and flow both have a focus of attention that could be called a “center,” but this center is only a center in the sense that food is a center for a school of fish. This is to say that it is not an authoritative center so much as a harmonic center—a symbol or goal that governs the group. All three of these modes of bonding are non-propositional and propositionally non-structuring and in this sense all fit nicely within King’s suggested *guanxi benwei* society. However, both interaction ritual and flow show both create a definite relationship between the individual and the group in the sense that the bonding that happens is *group* bonding, which does not proceed through the medium of a concrete relationship with a concrete person. This is not an aspect of the tradition that is explicit in its moral philosophy, though

descriptions of uncontrived, effortless action and the joy of ritual participation indicate that the outlined dynamics were active and actively pursued in Confucian communities.

In sum, what the past three chapters have attempted to demonstrate is that Confucian ritual is uniquely poised to create non-propositional solidarity between strangers, particularly given the detail of classical ritual scripts. Mastery of ritual practice, including the focused performance of ritual, amplify intersubjectivity through the focusing of attention, standardization of moods, and entraining of bodies through complementary action. These are all pre-cognitive modes of bonding that require local co-presence. In short, they are bonds that are formed by a number of people who form associations *first* by doing things together rather than by explicitly sharing beliefs, ideas, or other propositions. In so doing they deepen their awareness of their mutual intersubjectivity and progress along the path of developing a harmonic, reciprocal, resonant relationship. Ritual specifically jump-starts the process of familiarizing strangers by allowing participants to come to know and recognize each other in an embodied manner and engage together in a frame where expectations are theoretically well-matched with outcomes, thus blurring the lines between self and other.

The following chapter is the concluding body chapter of this study. In this final chapter, will consider how the social meaning of ritual and the grand, worldview level of meaning either enhances or inhibits the dynamics described in the previous chapters.

Chapter 6: Pre-conceptual Bonding and the Classical Confucian Community

禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美，小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也。

In the employment of ritual, harmony is to be valued. This was the beauty of the way of the ancient kings, realized in matters great and small. Nevertheless, there are some things that will not work; knowing harmony for the sake of harmony itself without using ritual to tie it together is indeed one of those things.

-Analects 1.12

My criticism of Bell's optimistic suggestion that the ritual of singing together protects sex workers in the last section of chapter 4 was based on the claim that the ritual of karaoke singing is not sufficiently embedded in a mutually beneficial vision of human flourishing. Thus while the ritual may help to raise mutual awareness of the subjectivity and personhood of the other participant, such awareness would be difficult to generate if it is embedded in a larger worldview in which people in general are seen as complex things to manipulate for the sake of one's own needs and desires. As I argued, one working from such a worldview could thus appropriate the karaoke ritual as a sophisticated method of emotional manipulation designed to secure a more

powerful position on the part of either the worker or client. In other words, though the karaoke ritual helps to increase solidarity, that solidarity is directionless until appropriated and giving meaning by a larger frame of reference.

Full human flourishing requires conceptual meaning. Most if not all conceptions of the human self move beyond the biological imperatives of survival and reproduction to include non-biological dimensions. In chapter one we discussed the fact that moral frameworks are an integral and inalienable part of the human self. Without the orientation provided by moral frameworks, we have no way of making the strong evaluations that comprise our constitutive values (Taylor 1992, chapter 2). We further saw that human selves are not only constituted by the frameworks for strong moral evaluations, they are also inescapably bound to some form of authority. As authority arises from recognizing the wielding of power as legitimate, it is thus (at least nominally) necessarily tied to our concepts of the good and the just (Seligman 2000). Such concepts are necessarily conceptual and propositional in nature.

This chapter considers how the dynamics of the previous three chapters is affected by placement within a Confucian community that does involve a great amount of formative and structuring propositional meaning. In order to do this,

then, I will need continue the discussion begun in chapter one concerning the nature of classical Confucian grouping in order to highlight the social context of pre-conceptual and conceptual bonding mechanisms in the earliest Confucian groups. Having established that, I will be in a position discuss how Confucian social structuring aids or inhibits pre-conceptual bonding mechanisms.

King's depiction of the Confucian community in his article tends to downplay the effects of social structure and charismatic authority. Confucianism, however, would be truncated and critically impoverished without its conceptual values, its exemplars, and without the conception of *de*, the tangible manifestation confirming the power of the Confucian Way, in both its pre-conceptual and conceptual apparatus. We thus cannot see the Confucian community purely as an a-centric network; the authority of exemplarity *ru* introduce distinct, influential authoritative centers into the conception of the group. Centers in turn define their own wholes. When we aggregate King's network model with the centers of charismatic authority, we can see that communities based purely upon embodied or concrete connections tend to form a-centric networks, while the addition of propositional meaning, which naturally leans toward forms of authority, tends to add centers and create holistic structures that are able to connect non-local points to the network. The issue

then, is not whether networks or center-periphery models are more “accurate” in describing the tradition, but under what circumstances each exhibits its strengths as a model. When we examine the tradition from the tradition’s conceptual resources, center-periphery models clearly dominate.

As explorations of non-propositional bonding, the previous three chapters of this dissertation were primarily considerations of how pre-conceptual knowledge may have been at play in the development of Confucian ritual practitioners and their communities. Each chapter built upon the chapter before it, first defining pre-conceptual meaning, then showing how pre-conceptual meaning grounded in facial expression and physical activity help to build and amplify intersubjectivity and finally showing how these dynamics fit into a directed frame of ritual performance. Each chapter represented one step broader in scope and one greater level of integration. This chapter takes things to the final step, which is the integration of these dynamics into a full-fledged tradition with its own sets of social meaning and scales of worth.

Ultimately, it is this final step that is the critical step. As noted, even cognitively simple animals such as fish can form embodied, local groups. But as Neville (1995, 173) reminds us, it is sophisticated, meaningful ritual that transforms simple reproduction into civilized family life, cooperation into deep

friendship and government, and I would add, creates solidarity that surpasses the reciprocal trading of “enlightened egoism.” Moving together can create a powerful sense of unity; doing ritual together turns unity into community. Strangers who practice ritual together can no longer truly be strangers.

6.1 Classical Confucian Community

If we follow the model given by Confucius’ community, we have a vision of the type of community we might have encountered throughout the pre-Qin period. The following analysis thus serves to lay a model for the types of Confucian schools that were plausibly found later. We know that there were very real, emotional, family-like bonds that developed in the community. I have argued that much of the bonding that happens in early Confucian communities is *local* bonding, formed through personal interaction in general and ritual action in specific. The details of daily life at the Master’s school drawn from the extant texts helps to support this. From the *Analects*, we know that there was formal instruction time, and we know that there was private time that students spent away from public instruction time.¹⁸² Given the fact that Confucius could observe

¹⁸² See again, the passages concerning private (*si*) life in the *Analects* cited in section 1.4.

at least some of what occurred during students' private time, we can reasonably suggest that they lived in near proximity to each other. Lo (2014b, 86) argues that since many students came from a distance, they were likely housed in living space provided by Confucius himself. If this was the case, then simply living in close proximity provides a natural, constant setting in which local bonding can take place through the everyday interactions of shared life. Phrasings like we find in 17.8 where Confucius asks a question of Zilu, then asks him to sit for instruction suggests a transition from casual interaction to focused instruction that lends credence to the idea that there was opportunity and location for casual interaction to begin with.

Even if this was not the case, however, we also know that Confucius did in fact become very close to some of his students by the fact that some instruction time was informal and personal. We get a brief picture of this in 11.26, where Confucius suggests that he and his students speak as if they were equals, and asks about their heartfelt desires. Zeng Xi also plays the zither while the group chats, which may or may not have been the case for all lessons, though the casual focus with which both listens and plays at the same time suggests that it was not standard. We also see Confucius holding informal conversations in the *Liji* as well, most obviously from the *Zhongni Yanju* 仲尼燕居 ("Confucius at ease at

home”) chapter, where we see this same discussion time in informal settings where Confucius chatted with specific about topics important to him.¹⁸³ The *Kongzi Jiayu* also notes that some 76 disciples had “ascended from the hall and entered the room” (升堂入室) of the master, lending credence to the idea that certain more advanced students had the chance for more personalized discourse, while others had access to the master only in more formal settings (“Qishier dizi jie” 七十二弟子解).

This passage is often read allegorically, as is *Analects* 11.15:

子曰：「由之瑟奚為於丘之門？」門人不敬子路。子曰：「由也升堂矣，未入於室也。」

The Master said, “Why is Zilu’s zither at my door?” The other disciples began being disrespectful to Zilu. The Master said, “Zilu has ascended to the hall, but he has not yet entered the room.”

The metaphor of Zilu’s progress here in terms of nearness to the master’s room is clear, and I do not intend to debate that reading of this passage. I would, however, speculate that the passage makes just as much sense when also

¹⁸³ The *Liji* was, of course, a later source and may or may not have been accurate in its depiction of Confucius’ original practices. It has also been suggested that 11.26 (soon to be quoted) was a later interpolation elaborating on 5.8 and 5.26 (Eno 2015), and may thus also not be a reliable source. Nevertheless, if this formal/informal split is not true to Confucius’ own group, however, it would stand to reason that it appears in later interpolations because later communities developed this habit. It thus serves as a useful illustration either way in considering how Confucian groups might have operated.

interpreted literally. It stands to reason that Confucius would allow only those who were advanced enough to be able to manage and benefit from harmonious, ritual interaction in a relatively informal setting to come his room. From the point of view of ritual cultivation, formal situations are easier to manage than informal situations. Formal situations have a form to follow: clear requirements, clear directives, and clear rules of interaction. Informal situations are more difficult to handle harmoniously, and thus those students allowed to enter would be those whose ritual practice, including the emotional and moral aspects of ritual practice, was sufficiently advanced. We could even speculate that zither playing during conversation was a mark of informal intimacy or the mark of a student who was particularly good at harmonizing. If Zilu's zither was literally placed at the master's door, it could be read as an implicit request for private instruction that Confucius thinks Zilu is not quite ready for. Such a literal interpretation does not negate the allegory of progress but instead strengthens it: some aspect of Zilu's moral cultivation kept him from being ready to enter the room, both literally and figuratively.¹⁸⁴ Again, this is purely speculation, but such

¹⁸⁴ If this was the case, then Zilu did eventually make it in, as noted in the *Kongzi Jiayu* and *Analects* 11.26, though in 11.26 he is still the least tempered of the disciples to answer Confucius' question and is still not the one playing the zither.

a reading does seem to fit with the general picture painted in the Analects.

Regardless of whether the above speculation concerning 11.15 is correct, given the number of references to informal, personal instruction, however, and the various references to “ascending to the hall and entering the room” it seems like at least some of the time Confucius spent with students was informal and that not everyone had this opportunity, or at very least, not often.

There are fewer descriptions easily identifiable as formal class settings, but the idea of “ascending to the hall” indicates there was somewhere to ascend from. Given also the number of listed students, it seems like there must have been some mechanism for teaching groups of students at one time. Even if we assume that only one twentieth of the given number of students were in attendance with the Master at any given time, that still leaves us with a group of one hundred fifty people who would have been seeking to learn from him. Some of this may have been mitigated by instruction at the hands of senior students, which we might draw from the fact various disciples are directly quoted for their

own words.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that Confucius addressed and instructed his students all together at least some of the time.

The need for common instruction is especially acute given the Confucian focus on ritual learning, which is as physical as it is intellectual or moral. Physical skills not used in daily life are efficiently taught and learned en-masse, where mimicking a particular model allows a larger number of people to observe and absorb a particular skill and to check their practice with other learners. Given that much of the ritual Confucians were expected to know was court ritual and ritual sacrifices, we may also expect that that there was time devoted to ritual practice. Given the extent to which Confucius seems to emphasize the ritualization of interpersonal interaction (12.1), ritual was probably also woven into the course of daily interaction as well as practiced during ritually-oriented, public instruction. The closest modern analogue we might have for the character of Confucian ritual lessons is probably to be found in martial arts schools, where physical skills are taught to a number of students at one time and practiced

¹⁸⁵ In chapter 1 alone, we see verses 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13 being the sayings of students rather than sayings of the Master himself.

together as a whole or in small groups, all while framed within ritualized rules of etiquette.¹⁸⁶

I would suggest that the communal learning, practice, and where appropriate, shared performance of ritual is where most of the intra-group bonding I described would take place. This bonding would have been primarily pre-conceptual, involving everything from “muscular bonding” (McNeill 1995) to the dynamics we saw in interaction ritual. Given the fact that flow arises from exercising a mastery of skills, it is also possible that unitive flow occurred during the ritual learning process, where students found their ritual skills matched the challenge presented by practicing or performing a ritual in the particular context of that day.

All of this paints an admittedly speculative, though plausible, picture of what Confucius’ school may have been like to attend and demonstrates some of the ways that local bonding might have happened in the original Confucian

¹⁸⁶ This ritual etiquette is the primary reason that I do not use the example of dance schools rather than martial arts schools. In most traditional martial arts schools there are still strong ritual elements in styles of dress, codes of conduct, and the way in which respect is accorded to teachers. At the same time, since Confucius and many of his disciples were of the *shi* class, roughly equivalent to a knightly class, it is not outside the realm of possibility that martial skills were also practiced at his school, particularly in the form of archery or charioteering, two of the six arts.

group. Even if this depiction is inaccurate, it would not diminish the bonding elements found in ritual, which could be generated to any two people who shared an interactive ritual. If this description has some element of truth to it, however, then part of what formed the Confucian group in its inception was precisely locally formed bonds of solidarity.

6.2 Confucian Conceptual Bonding

What this depiction of the physical school of Confucius omits, however, is the reason that Confucius had a school to begin with. Confucius' school is unlike most societies because no one (except, perhaps the children of these first Confucians) was born into it. Like circles of friends, classical Confucian groups (including this first group) were generally voluntary associations, joined for the sake of learning. In that community, students all came to study with the Master and likely lived within commuting distance or at a dormitory provided by the Master. The primary motivation and common goal for being part of the Master's community would have been to learn. This was the overarching, shared goal for the Confucian school, and this overarching goal likely determined the character of the interactions between the students themselves and between the students and the Master. This was certainly the character of the notes we find recorded in the *Analects*. We can thus understand Confucius' community as a group of

people brought together by the desire to learn the skills and knowledge—both conceptual and embodied—the master has to impart.

The *Analects* show that Confucius' own students were widely varied in their prior training, personality, focus, and likely their initial goals. However, though there were certainly things the students desired to gain from the school that accorded with their own goals, interests, and desires, the Master himself set both the standard for what was of value to learn, what was taught, and the method of instruction. He first determined who would and would not be part of the community based on who he thought would be able to learn from him (15.8), though this bar was fairly low—anyone who knew enough about Confucius' values to bring him a gift of meat was accepted (7.7). We then see him specifically reluctant to bring several topics into conversation: in 5.13 we see him reluctant to speak about nature (性 *xing*) and the way of Heaven (天道 *tian dao*),¹⁸⁷ in 7.21 he will not discuss miracles, feats of strength, disorder, and spirits. In 11.12 he pushes back against specific questions posed by a student who he deems unready to discuss the matter in question. Confucius himself determined which

¹⁸⁷ This passage is often interpreted to mean that these topics were too important to risk the inadequacy of language upon. This does not detract from the point I make here, which is to emphasize that Confucius was the key determinant in outlining what was valuable, as well as how and when a particular lesson would be taught.

particular desires were worth pursuing and when, and in so doing determined the overall goals for the group as a whole.¹⁸⁸ It is this shared goal that allows the group to cohere, to become a group both intelligible as a whole and a source of value. Confucius forms and constitutes those whom he teaches, doing his best to mold them into people of worth. He treats with students individually according to that student's particular needs, but he does so in a way that balances them and allows them to cohere more fully with each other and the Way. Propositional knowledge thus obviously plays a strong role in the construction of the classical Confucian community in the sense that those who remained part of the community were those who found at least part of what they were looking for there. Those who did not likely left.

It remains unclear, however, to what extent Confucian morality influenced continued membership in the community. We can assume from 15.8 that Confucius did reject some potential students on grounds of being incapable

¹⁸⁸ This is clearly different from the way Confucius answered rulers who asked him questions—his relationships cohere very differently when he is in court, and the ruler is appropriately the one who sets the tone. In this case, it is up to Confucius to decide whether or not he is coherent with the overarching values of the place, and when he determines this is not the case, he departs.

Perhaps this direct determination on Confucius' part is why there seems to be such a variety of figures listed as Confucian schools—each of those figures determined the specific direction or focal concern of the lineage in question. This is purely speculation, however.

of being taught, though the only clue we have regarding the criteria for being unable to be taught is found in 15.16 and 7.8: lacking drive to learn and cultivate the self. We also know that Confucius often avoided association with figures of poor moral character and had and his disciples had a conception of associative moral purity. We find this in the term 清 *qing* which is used to describe Chen Wen in 5.19, who refused to associate with bad officials. This concept may also have been at play when Zilu was displeased with Confucius' audience with the morally suspect Nanzi, a consort of the Duke of Wei. In a similar vein, Confucius recommends that his students have no friends that are unequal to oneself (無友不如己者 1.8, 9.25).

In spite of these passages, I believe we should also not mistake the early Confucian community to be overly similar to a sect in the sense that Max Weber originally used it, which is to say as a group requiring purity of morals:

If one wishes to make a conceptual distinction between a sect and a church, a sect is not an institution (*Anstadt*) like a church, but a community of the religiously qualified. ... Everything which arose later from sects is linked in the decisive points to the demand for purity, the *ecclesia pura*—a community consisting only of those members whose mode of conduct and life style do not carry public signs of heavenly disfavour, but proclaim the glory of God. The churches, in contrast, permit their light to shine on the just and unjust alike (1973, 141-142)

None of Confucius students, many of whom he considered friends, could match him, and Confucius himself denied that he himself was a match for his

star pupil, Yan Hui. The Confucian community was not a pure community of *junzi*—rather, it was a community of people learning and cultivating themselves so that they might become *junzi*. Furthermore, traditional commentaries imply that *qing* as moral purity was subordinate to *li*, which is why Confucius sought an audience with Nanzi. Sanctions and condemnations seem to have been reserved for the older students, as when Confucius disowns Ran Qiu for making poor moral decisions while in office. It is thus likely that common morality played a larger part in determining group boundaries than it might in a family of blood-kin; aside from this one instance, there are no instances in which we might see someone within the Confucian community being cast out, and it is unclear whether or not Confucius' outburst in this case was just an outburst or whether or not it had actual effects on Ran Qiu's status among the members of Confucius' community.

We have, then a very loosely drawn picture of Confucius' teaching community, which doubles as the first "Confucian" community and likely served as a pattern for other, future masters. There were likely instruction sessions featuring multiple students or even full lectures. There were also probably lessons in ritual and etiquette, and it was likely that there were formal rituals governing interactions between teacher and students as well as between the

students themselves. All of these areas would have been places where local bonding would have happened. Ritual lessons and practice in particular would have been a prime place for all three levels of bonding described in chapters three, four, and five to occur. Confucius stands at the center of this community, directs it and serves as the purpose for its existence- it coheres around a desire for his wisdom and skills. Above all, he sets the tone and direction for the school.

6.3 The Original Confucian Community as a Social Coherence

6.3.1 Coherence Revisited

Part of what this analysis reveals is that the early Confucian community can be understood as a social coherence—a harmonic grouping of people that arises around a particular desire and serves as a source of value. Coherence is a term I have referenced across this study as a bridge between the cognitive philosophy I have been discussing and Confucian thought. Coherence was given a fairly detailed description in section 3.2, but there are aspects of the term that need to be clarified further. This section attempts to clarify the concept of coherence through the example of the family. The family, after all, is the prototype model for almost all early Chinese forms of social organization and is fundamental to Confucian society. It is also sufficiently complex to force the full exercise of the concept of coherence in its analysis and thus serves as the ideal

focus for its conceptual clarification. Embedded in this analysis, however, is the underlying analogy between the Confucian group and the family presented in chapter 1. I analyze the family here in part to demonstrate that the early Confucian community should also be understood to exhibit the same general characteristics.

As mentioned briefly, coherences are types of harmonic grouping. This is to say that coherences are groups that form around some directed purpose. More narrowly, coherences are those groups which are specifically directed toward human desires for pleasure, continuance, and flourishing. The family is the first human harmonic grouping, the primordial whole that most fundamentally and naturally solves all three of the valences of value as described above. Family is rooted in the relationship between husband and wife, and it is this paired relationship that arises around the core values. As described in the *Liji*,

敬慎、重正，而後親之，禮之大體，而所以成男女之別，而立夫婦之義也。
。男女有別，而後夫婦有義；夫婦有義，而後父子有親；父子有親，而後君臣有正。故曰：昏禮者，禮之本也。

Man and women are differentiated, and because of this there is an appropriate rightness in the pairing of husband and wife. Only when there is the rightness of the husband and wife, can there be closeness between father and son. Only when there is closeness between father and son can there be uprightness between ruler and minister. Therefore it is said, the marriage ritual is the root of ritual. ("Hun Yi" 44.3)

This passage is taken from the “Meaning of the Wedding Ritual” chapter of the *Liji*, just after the ceremony itself is described, when husband and wife drink from the same cup and take up their roles as affectionate family (親之 *qin zhi*). Thus in its ideal form, this relationship is pleasurable and literally allows the continuance of the family:

婦順備而後內和理；內和理而後家可長久也

Therefore when the wife is accordant, the house is harmonious and ordered; when the house is harmonious and ordered, the family can last. (“Hun Yi” 44.6)

This passage in context describes how the wife taking a place in the family is precisely what allows it to continue. Furthermore, the word translated as “ordered” above is actually the term 理 *li* which we have been describing as a specific type of coherence. At the writing of the *Liji* it is unclear whether or not the full philosophical weight of its later usage had been developed yet. Nevertheless, the term can be easily be translated that way without altering the meaning of the passage overmuch: “When the wife is accordant, the house becomes harmoniously coherent, and when the house is harmoniously coherent, the family can last.” Translating the term as “coherence” merely specifies the type of order the family becomes. Given its vital, direct, and foundational role in bringing about value as pleasure, continuance, and flourishing, we can say that

family is one of the most basic coherences there is, perhaps *the* prototypical coherence.

There are three further aspects of coherence that need revisiting. The first of these is the assertion that all coherences have virtual centers that allow them to be recognized as coherent wholes. As cited, in the “Great Learning” chapter of the *Liji*, we are given the ideal virtues through which a father is known to the son, and the son is known to the father. A son is known as a son through his filial reverence (孝 *xiao*) and a father is known as a father through his compassionate care (慈 *ci*). When we see filial care harmonizing the relationship between father and son, we see that center which makes a son a son. Note, however, that the center relates between two halves of the coherence, one side of which is not traditionally considered part of the concept. In this case, father and son are dyadic parts of the coherence “son.” A son cannot be a son without cohering in this way with his father, and his resting in filial reverence is what allows him to cohere in that relationship, ultimately making him a son in the father-son relationship. Conversely, a father is also a “father-son” group, though fatherhood is governed by compassionate care rather than filial reverence. This means that there are *two* centers governing a father-son dyad, one governing each side of the relational pole. What allows the father to cohere with his son is different from

what allows the son to cohere with his father, but both must be operating from their appropriate centers for the relationship to come together as a whole. There is, in other words, a complementarity to the two-parts of a coherence. There cannot be two people acting with filial reverence for the relationship to be intelligible as a father-son relationship, nor can both be acting with a fatherly care.

Once we begin to add more cohering parts, however, we see the layers and number of centers become far more complex. This brings me to the next aspect of coherences that is of consequence to this discussion. According to Ziporyn, a coherence is always understood in dyadic terms. This is not the claim that there are only two distinguishable pieces to each coherence, but that in order to understand a coherence fully, we must understand all of the different dyads within that coherence. A family of four, for example, has four discernable members, each coherent as a whole person. When attempting to understand the family as a whole, however, we need to understand the lattice of dyads that form it. Father-son example above is a two-part relationship. In a family of four, parents-children is also a two-part relationship, with each part consisting of two people conceived as a whole and joined together. The men of the family might be considered one whole, while the women are another whole. We can also see

“father/mother/elder brother”-younger sister as a dyad (perhaps respectively modeled on the centers of “protective care” and whatever we might imagine strings together the virtues of a daughter and younger sister), or father-“wife/son/daughter” as a dyad, and so on. Each of these dyads forms the family whole in a different way, from a different angle, and each has a recognizable center that makes it a family.

The classical masters tended to highlight the father-wife/sons/daughters dyad as the reigning dyad of the family, the “central” center among all the various possible dyadic centers of the family. Here prototype thinking helps again; each of the above dyads represents one possible way of understanding the family whole, but the Chinese prototype sees the father-wives/sons/daughters as the central prototype.

君者、國之隆也，父者、家之隆也。隆一而治，二而亂。

The gentleman is exalted in the country. The father is exalted in the family. Where only one is exalted there is order; two and there will be chaos (53/14/22-23)

The center gives the “one part” that is raised up and made visible. What the exalting of the father does is to help mediate the relationships around it. The clan patriarch as the head of the household is the “concert master,” the one who sets the goals, style, pace, and tone of family interactions, the example upon which

the family customarily models itself. Without him, the family theoretically can cohere as a single properly functioning entity, but not in the primary way understood by the early Confucians.¹⁸⁹

Nevertheless, the family is not *only* the central center. The concept of a center implies a range within which there are non-central elements, and this is the case with all coherences. The wife-“husband/sons/daughters” dyad (and all centers involved) is just as critical to the whole of the family as the father-wife/sons/daughters dyad, it is just less visible. We see these dynamics in the

¹⁸⁹ Historical realities and the unavoidably hierarchical nature of classical Confucian relationships mean that families were usually recognized and represented by the family patriarch, whose responsibility it is to ensure that his family is well ordered by his own conduct and his guidance. Extracted from historical context, however, the teachings of the classical masters, however, seem to indicate that the center of the family is, in reality, the virtuous center, regardless of who that person might be, male or female, old or young. Further analysis of the Great Learning 11 reveals this. In its immediate context, it is clear that the “one family” under discussion is the family of the ruler, which serves as the most visible focal point of the state. The ruler, serving as the model, instructs his kingdom, thereby ordering the kingdom by ordering the family. Visibility makes the ruler the most obvious focus for this passage, but in classical Confucianism, visibility is a variable quality that increases or decreases according to a person’s virtue. One of the primary changes that Confucius makes is to change the ideal prototype of the *junzi* from someone who rules primarily by right of blood to someone who rules primarily through the effects of virtue. Thus, despite this overt focus on the ruling family, the Great Learning is also insistent that it is the responsibility of all people, from the Son of Heaven to the multitudes of people (庶人 *shu ren*) to cultivate themselves according to ritual. By extension then, everyone cultivated can theoretically serve as the model for the kingdom and the family so long as that person is the person that causes the family to act coherently as a family.

commentary on the Jiaren (Household) hexagram¹⁹⁰ of the *Yijing* from the

Tuanzhuang wing:

家人，女正位乎內，男正位乎外，男女正，天地之大義也。家人有嚴君焉，父母之謂也。父父，子子，兄兄，弟弟，夫夫，婦婦，而家道正；正家而天下定矣。

Household:

Woman's proper position is inside [the house],
[a yin line is central in the lower trigram]
man's proper position is outside [the house]
[a yang line is central in the upper trigram].

Man and woman correctly placed
show the great will of heaven and earth.
A household (jiaren) has strict rulers,
meaning father and mother [the 2nd and 5th lines].

Let a father act as a father,
a son as a son,
an elder brother as an elder brother,
a younger brother as a younger brother,
a husband as a husband,
and a wife as a wife:
then the dao of the household will be right;
and a right household means a world at rights. (Rutt 2002, 378)

¹⁹⁰ The figure in question is presented below. We can see the unbroken *yang* line in line 2 and the broken *yin* line in line five:



Though this formulation was probably composed after the classical period itself, it clearly draws on and summarizes thought proper to the Warring States period, drawing heavily on the ideas from both the *Great Learning* and the *Analects'* "rectification of names" passage. This passage highlights the fact that a family can be recognized by the smooth functioning of each of the relationships in the family. Though the passage highlights the central role of the parents in ordering the house, the proper function of the parents is precisely to help the rest of the family cohere in their own, proper ways. The mother's place inside and the father's place outside completes the ordering hierarchy. It is in this way that the family coheres and becomes a single unit. Each of the parts of the family must cohere before the whole itself can cohere.

Moving on from simple coherence to 理 *li* proper, we can note that the family also causes further coherences. The Great Learning writes that the family as a whole unit influences the state: 一家仁，一國興仁；一家讓，一國興讓
 "When one family becomes *ren*, an entire country flourishes in *ren*. When one family shows deference, the entire country becomes deferent." (*Liji* "Daxue" 11)
 Unlike chapter 7 of the Great Learning, we are not given one particular virtue, but a mode of influential interrelation. Part of what this implies is that a family that rests in its center inspires others to emulate it, to cohere to whatever flavor

of the Good that it exemplifies. More precisely, we could note that the family center seems to involve not a specific virtue, but the way that virtues well lived respond to each other, namely harmonic reciprocity. Families and states also respond to each other.

Given the vague, intersubjective boundaries of the Confucian tradition, and our discussion of *cheng* in section 3.2, we can also note that the whole, complete virtuous functioning of the patriarch implies the whole, complete functioning of the family—one does not arise without the other. Excellence is relational, and individual and group are thus mutually implicative. Because of this, the next portion of this selection discussing the family and the state is a discussion of the virtue of a single man—sages like Yao and Shun were able to embody *ren*, and the kingdom followed them. Similarly, tyrants like Jie and Zhou (the last rulers of the Xia and Shang dynasties respectively) exemplified violence for the kingdom and the kingdom also followed (*Liji* “Daxue” 11). Throughout this passage we see thus see the family discussed through the medium of the virtue of a single person—the head of the household. What one person models serves as the model for the whole family. When the house head is respectful to his elders his children learn respect. When the house head treats his children with compassionate care, the elders of his family learn from his virtue. In the

Great Learning, then, we see the head of the family serving as the center of the clan. The converse is also true, what we see implied in the virtuous man is the proper functioning of his family.

Compare this with the funeral of the criminal in the *Xunzi*:

刑餘罪人之喪，不得合族黨，獨屬妻子，棺槨三寸，衣衾三領，不得飾棺，不得晝行，以昏殮，凡緣而往埋之，反無哭泣之節，無衰麻之服，無親疏月數之等，各反其平，各復其始，已葬埋，若無喪者而止，夫是之謂至辱。

The funeral of a castrated criminal does not involve uniting his family and neighbors, but brings together only his wife and children. His inner and outer coffins are but three inches thick, with only three thicknesses of grave cloth covering his corpse and with no decorations permitted on the inner coffin. His procession is not permitted to proceed by day, but they must bury him under the cover of darkness. They wear everyday clothing when they follow along going to bury the corpse. When they return from the burial, there is no term of weeping and wailing, no sack-cloth mourning clothes, no gradations of proper lengths of mourning for near and distant relatives. Each returns to the ordinary course of his life and resumes his business as before. As soon as his body is interred in the earth, everything ends as though there had never been a funeral. Truly, this is the ultimate disgrace. (71/19/51-54, Knoblock translation)

The criminal is minimally recognized. Linguistically speaking, those who bury him are not the collective groups of the 族 *zu* (family/clan) or 黨 *dang*, but his relations, noted severally: his wife (妻) and children (子). Ritually speaking, he does not cause his community to cohere, nor is there focused emotion or a disruption of daily life. His lack of virtue is ritually represented with disunity. In fact, as far as rituals go, this is as close to a non-ritual as is ritually possible—this

ceremony fundamentally mandates that a criminal be gotten rid of and forgotten. It lays the responsibility for that upon the wife and children, for whom there are theoretically still bonds of reciprocity. However, as a whole we can say that this ritual is representative of the fact that his life failed to create community, and no community is there to mourn him.

Although we may seem to have two separate notions of the “center” in the coherent family—harmonic reciprocity and the clan head—these should not be considered two severally. Rather it is the clan head that makes visible his family’s well-functioning harmonic reciprocity through his behavior. The clan head is the clan, and straying too far from the beat set by his virtue causes a clan member to become detached from the whole.

The center of a coherence is directly related to efficacy in fulfilling the desire which prompted the grouping in the first place. If the grouping fulfills the desire, it coheres. If it fulfills the desire an optimally efficacious way, it reveals a center (Ziporyn 2012, 82). The center is thus normative without being fixed; efficacy depends on context. If Timmy is at a sleepover or Crystal is playing in the school football game at dinnertime, insisting they play their part in setting up for dinner according to the normal script would be destructive; Crystal can take over setting the table for the evening, just as Timmy pours drinks in Crystal’s

place every Friday. The ideal center thus changes according to circumstance. Silk is cheaper than hemp and functions just as well in context, so the use of a silk cap is an acceptable change given the change in context (*Analects* 9.3).¹⁹¹ Critically, this appeal to ideal efficacy found in the concept of the center implies (though does not technically require) a relationship to second order coherences — the solving of the immediate goal is relatively useless and meaningless if it is not nested within a broader schema that ultimately leads to ultimate values.

The concept of second-order coherences brings us to the final note — that coherences have a contextual scope that aligns with a particular desire or goal as we saw in section 3.2. The more immediate the desire or goal, the more immediate and transient the coherence may be. Families are long-term coherences that endure because they contribute directly to the ultimate triad of value desires we have been discussing. However, even non-Confucian,

¹⁹¹ A ritual script thus provides *an* ideal, but the immediate context might require change and adaptation. Thus while the script gives a prototype, the prototype is understood to be a contextual prototype. It is the most efficacious way to do things provided certain contextual elements are present. Masters of ritual know the center of the ritual and are adept at bringing that center out of the elements available in the immediate context. Note that this does not mean that “anything goes” — the value at the heart of ritual (which determines its center) must remain the same. This is why a someone who is not a true king cannot perform the ritual sacrifice on Mount Tai — a true king ultimately performs the ritual for the sake of the kingdom and its harmonious flourishing. When a usurper performs it, he performs it for the sake of his own legitimacy, which makes it a different ritual whole entirely. When someone with good intentions but an improper station performs it, he undercuts the proper harmonious order, preventing coherence.

contemporary families come together in specific, immediate contexts as a whole to complete a particular task—preparing a holiday feast, for example, or clearing up after a family meal. Within the scope of this very small context, the family functions as a coherent whole, the group arising around a desire to finish the immediate task. There may not be a concrete name for the coherence, as is the case with a group of people putting things away, but this does not change the fact that it is a coherent grouping with an unnamed center. This is an ad-hoc coherence that comes and goes and therefore needs no specific name.¹⁹² More immediate coherences then nest into larger coherences based upon the role they play in attaining value. Friday night football is a coherence that addresses a desire for exercise, which in turn is a coherence that addresses a desire for health, which in turn coheres around the desire for physical continuance and stability.

6.3.2 Coherence Summarized

We have seen that coherences are harmonic, intelligible groupings arising around a desire for value. Because the grouping fulfills that desire, it is itself a source of value. Similarly, human desire is what makes coherences intelligible as

¹⁹² We can note, however, that when we change contexts to a formal setting, the same functional group might cohere as the “wait staff” or the “kitchen staff.”

a grouping. As discussed above and in section 3.2, Coherences are centric in nature and draw their center from the way in which this desire is fulfilled by the grouping. The center in turn provides a consequentially-based, normative valence that governs the actual, often non-ideal instantiations of a particular coherence. Coherences are also centric and dyadic in nature, though multipart coherences may have one central dyad among many possible dyadic divisions. Coherences may also result in second-order coherences. That is to say that one grouping may naturally prompt coherence with other coherences—this is a key aspect of the term *li* 理, which Ziporyn specifies as a coherence that creates more coherence.

6.3.3 The Confucian Coherence: goals and efficacy

The purpose of the above analysis was to show that Confucian ritual groups can be read as coherences. As we saw in our examination of the Confucian community painted by the *Analects* above, the community coheres around a desire for Confucius' knowledge. As discussed above, Confucius sets the value orientation for his school, serving, if you will, as the concert master for his group, much in the same way that the patriarch does for the family. His knowledge is in turn oriented toward value writ large: the continuance, pleasure, and flourishing of early China and mankind as a whole. While the biological

family contributes to human continuance, pleasure, and flourishing on an individual basis, the Confucian school contributes to the same values on a social basis. Confucius' school further exhibits many of the same relationships that we find in the family, in terms of the analogized father-son relationship between Confucius and his students, and elder-younger siblings within the student body.

Doing a finer analysis, however, we can also note that the original Confucian group was undoubtedly a ritual community. To say that the Confucian group is a ritual community is also to say that they shared a desire for ritual performance that is solved by that particular grouping of people. The grouping of *those* people, people who believe in the centrality of ritual in the pursuit of value, is thus valuable in the fulfillment of the desire to perform ritual. The Confucian group, insofar as it is a ritual group, thus *becomes what it is*, that is, becomes intelligible as the Confucian group, partly in the performance of ritual.

On the other hand, we can also approach the Confucian group as a coherence on grounds of efficacy. If efficacy, here understood simply as the capacity to bring about a desired goal, is a key to the continued unity of harmonic associations, we should see branches in community based not upon similarities or differences in character or values, but based upon differences in

the efficacy various Confucians are willing to grant particular methods, beliefs, or ideas in their ability to broaden the Way's influence in the world.

The Confucian ritual group, for example, can be considered more efficacious (according to its own thought) than other possible modes of social organization because it allows and generates secondary coherences, at least in theory. Confucians not only find that ritual is the most efficacious means by which value can be attained, they also note that it allows more secondary coherences than other forms of social organization. Coercion, laws, and punishments may be modes of getting society together, but they are not seen to be ideal modes precisely because they do not produce further coherence:

Confucius said, "If people are led by laws and ordered by punishments, the people will become evasive and shameless. If led by Virtue and ordered by ritual, they will have shame and a model [for virtue].

子曰：「道之以政，齊之以刑，民免而無恥；道之以德，齊之以禮，有恥且格。」

In Confucius' view, punishments and laws do create a type of order. But ritual not only solves the problem of order, it also creates conditions for the people to *cohere* harmoniously with that order. Punishments, on the other hand, actively create the conditions for their own failure because they fail to address the greater moral context, and it is the mergence of people with the moral context that causes the community to cohere naturally, with the obligatory becoming the

desirable. Ritual communities thus allow the performance of ritual, which in turn allows the greater cohesion of early Chinese society as a whole.

6.4 The Diversity of Classical Confucianism

The above analysis serves to characterize the social structure of the Confucian school. Though I suggest that later communities that arose around classical Confucian authors may have emulated this social structure, the work of later Confucians found in texts like the *Mencius*, *Liji*, and *Xunzi*, however, each describe varying elaborations on the themes that Confucius began to highlight. The variance in the moral community that results from the stances of each of the later figures may not always be as great as what we saw between Mencius and Xunzi. It is likely, however, that teachers who created their own schools created systems of ritual and ethics that were internally consistent, but may or may not have been in harmony with other Confucian schools or the teachings of Confucius himself.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ In fact, the discrepancies between even the heavily edited received texts of the *san li* are well known. In light of this, multiple versions of ritual rooted in different interpreters during the warring states period would likely have been commonplace. In spite of this, I am willing to suggest that social structure remained the same while thought and specific rituals may have not in part because physical modes of living and interacting tend to become habitual in ways that propositional thinking may not. Because propositions generally stand at a higher level than

Two lines of analysis confirm the fact that schools may have cohered around specific figures. First, if the original Confucian community functioned as a social coherence that served as a model for later groups, the application of that same structural lens to other masters suggests that later schools were patterned after the aims, desires, and values of particular teachers, just as Confucius governed the values of his own school. Though later teachers learned from Confucius, they did not necessarily share his background, personality, breadth of learning or depth of vision. Later teachers also did not share Confucius' general social context. They would thus have trained their own students according to their own abilities and wisdom, with their own particular focus, direction, and aim, in accordance with the particular needs of the time and place in which they lived.¹⁹⁴ The desires and goals of each school would thus have been at least slightly different, and each of these groups would thus have cohered slightly differently from the original and from others like it. The greater the difference in context the larger these differences are likely to have been.

physical habit, they tend to be more subject to revision. Social organization thus tends to vary less, particularly if many of the physical aspects of the spaces it governs are the same.

¹⁹⁴ See section 1.1.1 for a brief discussion from Brooks and Brooks (1998) and Nylan (2003) on how Confucian scholars are best interpreted as varying their positions according to historical need.

Seeing classical Confucianism in terms of singular coherences that arise around particular masters requires us to treat each of the classical Confucian masters (and their respective schools) on their own terms and to examine the practice and philosophy of each thinker in terms of the goals they had, guided by the wisdom of the past but oriented toward the immediate, particular context of the time. This in turn allows us to explain why there is such a breadth of difference between the thought of later scholars.

Second, sociological analysis confirms this viewpoint as well. Each of these communities that arise around particular masters bears most resemblance to a community arising purely around charismatic authority. This is key because this charisma is not turned into a charisma of office by Confucius; there is no official pan-Confucian institution in the classical period, and no institution separate from the state in the imperial period. This does not change over the course of over two millennia.¹⁹⁵ This is precisely what C.K. Yang describes in his

¹⁹⁵ As we will see below, there are indeed lineages named after first and second generation disciples of Confucius, and that each of these lineages has its own particular focus. It may be that these students of Confucius did actually establish some version of Weber's charisma of office that ossified the desires and aims of future generations of that particular lineage. This would have, in effect, created an institution of sorts. These institutions, however, were not primarily "Confucian" (though it might have fit under that broader umbrella) but "Zizhang-ian," because their founding authority travels only back as far as one particular disciple and not all the way to Confucius himself. This is speculative, of course, but meshes well with the fact that while

depiction of Confucianism as a diffused religion: Confucianism's organizational structure was entirely "diffused" into the institution of the state.

The historical records of the scholars who follow Confucius tend to bear this out as well. Though then-contemporary references give us only a sketchy picture of the activity of the Confucian disciples, and only in the form of particular figures, a quick sampling shows a wide band of variation. In "Against the Twelve Masters" *Xunzi* lists a total of four categories of Confucian *ru*, those of Zigong 子貢 (who he sees as the true successor to Confucius), Zizhang 子張, Zixia 子夏, and Ziyou 子游 (言偃 Yan Yan). The *Hanfeizi* lists eight branches of Confucians: Zi Zhang, Zi Si 子思, Yan Shi 顏氏, Meng Shi 孟氏, Qidiao Shi 漆雕氏, Zhongliang Shi 仲良氏, Sun Shi 孫氏, and Yuezheng Shi 樂正氏. The *Lushi Chunqiu* seems to follow the *Xunzi* more closely than the *Hanfeizi*, listing three first generation disciples, each with one student: Zigong taught Tian Zifan, Zixia taught Duangan Mu, and Zengzi 曾子 (Zeng Shen 曾參/Ziyu 子輿) taught Wu Qi.

we see phrases like *Zizhang zhi ru* ("the *ru* of Zizhang") we only see Confucius disciples as *Kongzi zhi menren* ("the people of the gate of Confucius.") This version of events is also supported Confucius' disciples seemed far more concerned about preserving the events of the Master's life for posterity than he himself does. It thus makes more sense for them to have been concerned about the preservation of lineages and something approaching orthodox thought than Confucius was. Possible rivalries concerning orthodoxy among later groups may explain the reason for the appearance of interpolations in the text of the *Analects* and other documents as has been suggested by many scholars.

This gives us a brief and very limited lineage sketch.¹⁹⁶ Even this brief listing is telling in its general lack of overlap. Of the figures listed or implied to be Confucian teachers, only Zigong, Zizhang, and Zixia appear more than once. Though all of these figures are recognized Confucians, they are not all recognized by the same people. The reasons for this are unclear, though it does point to differing standards for determining who is or is not appropriately categorized as a significant figure in the tradition, both from those inside the tradition and from those without. In each of these cases, the Confucian *ru* are categorized according to a particular figure, perhaps the exemplar figure for the group or the one who determined the focus or emphasis for that particular brand of Confucians.¹⁹⁷

Later records are also equally varied. The *Han Shu* lists only a total of seven texts written by early Confucian disciples, three by first generation disciples, and four by second generation. A redacted form of the Zengzi is the

¹⁹⁶ Beyond this, though the text does mention that the “heirs” (後學 *hou xue*) of both Confucius and Mozi who have made a name for themselves are many.

¹⁹⁷ If the Yan Shi 顏氏 listed is a reference to Yan Hui 顏回, then it is more likely that the figures were determining exemplars rather than founders, as Yan Hui’s death predates that of Confucius.

only extant text. The others, the *Qidiaozi* 漆雕子, *Mizi* 宓子, *Jingzi* 景子, *Shizi* 世子, *Li Ke* 李克, and *Gongsunnizi* 公孫尼子 make up the remaining six, of which we know every little. These texts suggest that each of these figures were teachers in their own right, or at least had people who were willing to use their model as the model for their group. Here again, however, we have another list of masters, of which Zengzi and Qidiaozi are the only figures mentioned in the pre-Qin sources. It could be that these scholars are the only ones whose works remained at the time, or that other teachers did not leave behind texts. But even if this were the case, this list still gives us an additional five names that were not included in the listings above.¹⁹⁸

If we include Xunzi at the end of this listing of scholars, we have twenty one figures mentioned in one early Han and three late classical records, with a

¹⁹⁸ There are, of course, more comprehensive listings of Confucius' disciples, such as can be found in the "Zhongni dizi liezhuan" 仲尼弟子列傳 chapter of the *Hanshu* (listing 76 names) and in the "Qishier dizi jie" 七十二弟子解 chapter of the *Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語 (which, oddly enough, also lists 76 names). Between these two lists, there are a total of ninety six names mentioned, roughly twenty names of which which appear in one document and not the other, indicating that ten names on each list were different. The variance here is not as great as the shorter lists, but there are still differences. These lists, however, are not as useful to this discussion as the other sources mentioned because they seem to be relatively monochromatic in their purpose. They are meant to record those who studied with Confucius rather than highlight those who were active practitioners with groups of their own as well as being just associated with Confucius himself. Nevertheless, the limited number of advanced students given in these lists does suggest that there was a hierarchy to the group and that this hierarchy was based at least partly upon the students' internalization of Confucian values.

bare minimum of overlap between lists- only five of these figures are seen more than once (Zengzi, Ziyou, Zizhang, Zigong, and Qidaozi). This lack of standardization is scant but nevertheless telling evidence that there was no clear-cut way of telling who was or was not truly an “heir” to Confucius. This in turn lends credence to the idea that even in the classical period there is more than merely lineage or doctrine at work in shaping how the early Chinese saw the line of thought that would eventually unequivocally become “Confucianism.”

We also know that both Mencius and Xunzi were members of the Jixia Academy, and from the sheer number of scholars who were supported at the academy, it seems likely that other possible Confucians were supported by the patronage of Qi.¹⁹⁹ There may thus have been some interaction here, but we really do not have enough comprehensive historical information to make concrete, grounded claims about possible structure or relationships within or between any of these various categories of *ru*. Mencius and Xunzi’s work has almost no discussion of teacher-student interactions. In the *Mencius* we see mostly discussions between Mencius and rulers, debates with other thinkers, and

¹⁹⁹ Randall Collins (2000, 143) notes that at its height, there were seventy-six scholars supported with titles and emoluments at the Jixia academy, and hundreds of other scholars were invited to participate at academy activities.

records of general theories. Xunzi's work loses the narrative element entirely, becoming characteristically systematic instead. Both of these works thus present almost no indication of what social structure other Confucian *ru* might have adopted other than to identify the fact that lineages were often named after first or second generation disciples of Confucius. Given Nylan and Czikszenmihalyi's (2003) concerns about pre-Han *textual* lineages, it seems likely that while most of these figures supported disciples of their own and there were lineages of formal master-student relationships, such relationships were not strict doctrinal lineages of orthodox textual thought.²⁰⁰

If we follow the pattern of Confucius' school, we might be accurate in suggesting that each school started by one of Confucius' successors was its own community, *internally* consistent both ritually and morally. The description in the Xunzi of the *ru* of Zizhang, Ziyou, and Zixia suggest that each of these communities each was distinctive in some way. Though the brief lines afforded

²⁰⁰ The discovery of the *Wuxing* text (attributed to Zisi and thought to be the Wuxing doctrine criticized by Xunzi) in the same bundle as portions of the Guodian *Laozi* also suggest that the polemic between what we now see as "schools" of thinkers was less polarizing and divisive than the texts themselves might suggest. Holloway (2005) theorizes that these early thinkers might have been far more eclectic in their sources than originally imagined, lending further credence to the position that early Confucian groups had ambiguous, often non-propositionally formed boundaries.

each were likely caricatures, they do seem suggest that each group had its own identifiable focus and direction. The fact that Xunzi knew enough about them to make these distinctions probably means he encountered them sometime during his life, possibly in connection with his time at the Jixia Academy. This further suggests that each of the Confucian groups may have had some contact with each other, though the extent of the interaction between these groups is probably lost to time.

Eno gives the most concise picture of this in his speculation that the early Confucian community was “a network of study groups, [but] ... by no means a united network.” (1990, 54-55) If classical Confucianism was a network of study groups, there might have been connections between them given mutual acquaintances as is sketchily suggested by the Xunzi, but there also might not have been any connection between them except for a debt to Confucius or other seminal figures. I would argue that Eno is largely correct in this aspect of his description, but that his characterization of Confucianism as an intentionally apolitical, non-philosophical group is not as tenable.²⁰¹ As I have argued, it

²⁰¹ Numerous reviewers have already taken Eno to task on this particular point, and their criticisms need not be rehashed here, except to state that the majority of them protest what they take Eno’s overly narrow understanding of what the term “philosophy” may include. See in particular Ivanhoe (1991) and Czikszenmihalyi (1992).

would be difficult to make claims about all of Confucius' spiritual descendants. Furthermore, the idea that Confucius and his followers were not engaged in philosophy just because their emphasis was on ritual practice and learning does not follow. Even in the comparatively cogitative western philosophy, Aristotle's *phronesis*, practical wisdom, is just as much a part of the philosophical court as is *theoria* or any other form of philosophizing.

Thus while I keep his insights concerning the social structure of classical Confucianism, I refrain from making detailed comments concerning the focus, intent, and direction of these "study groups." If each community was beholden to the aims a particular master, then without writings to guide us as to what that master's thoughts might have been, there is truly no way of telling what the primary concern of that master might be. Reclusive, apolitical but intensely moral communities would have been possible (cohering around the desire for a good life embodied on a local level), but intensely political and office oriented schools could have arisen as well (cohering around desires for direct political influence). The broad range of possible aims and concerns of Confucian groups was likely moderated by the type of people Confucius chose to teach and his role in forming them to his Way. It is unlikely (though possible), for example, that any of his disciples that founded their own school discarded ritual entirely.

Despite this, there are many facets of Confucius' thought, and any one of them might have been selected for focus in the next few generations of disciples.

An appeal to efficacy is also what we see in the character of many classical Confucian disagreements. Xunzi's work illustrates this point most clearly in his criticism of the twelve masters: "In the current era, there are people who ornament perverse doctrines and embellish vile teachings, such that they disturb and disorder the whole world. Their exaggerated, twisted, and overly subtle arguments cause all under Heaven to be muddled and not know wherein right and wrong and order and disorder are contained" (15/6/1, Hutton translation). Here, it is not that their doctrines are incorrect that causes Xunzi's ire, but that they cause chaos and disorder. In other words, it is not that their words are untrue and therefore ineffective, it is that their words are ineffective and therefore ill advised. Mencius and Zisi are excluded on these grounds as well. Though they are attributed grand intentions (6.53), Xunzi claims their grasp of Confucius' Way is too weak to bring proper order and thus excludes them from the Confucian line on grounds of their inability to bring about the Way. Dedication to the Way alone is not enough for Xunzi to include them in the lineage; rather, it is the capacity of their ideas to bring the Way into the world

that causes Xunzi to exclude the Zi-Meng transmission from the authentic line of transmission.

We can also note that though Xunzi sees himself as the Confucian torch-bearer for his time, his endorsement of laws and punishments diverges from Confucius' own distaste for coerced uprightness (*Analects* 2.3). Xunzi nevertheless sees his own Way as Confucius' Way because they are engaged in producing the same results, even though he advocates for methods that Confucius himself believes will be ineffective. Xunzi can thus exclude the Zi-Meng lineage on grounds of inefficacy while including himself within the lineage despite his differences with the master because he believes his methods to be the most efficacious for bringing about the Way.

6.5 Intergroup Conflict and Ritual Differences

Whatever the full range of concerns and foci driving Confucian groups might have been, the ones that we have information about were all ritual schools. This represents the first challenge to my thesis that ritual scripting might have served as a mode of interpersonal bonding between strangers. The differences in the masters guiding each school makes it likely that they either interpreted

rituals differently, or, more seriously, arbitrated ritual change differently, resulting in one ritual with multiple forms between schools.

While both the differing interpretation of ritual and the differences in ritual scripting are both possible challenges to the idea that ritual serves as a primary source of Confucian bonding, the claim that ritual scripts would have been different between groups may require defense, as the tendency in viewing ritual systems seems to be that ritual was invariant, requiring change by an authorized figure before rituals became different.

There are two angles from which I seek to defend this point. The first of these regards the nature of ritual transmission in this period. I have emphasized ritual scripts, but have not, as of yet, discussed how these ritual scripts may have been passed down beyond a cursory comment to the effect that it was likely a combination of physical practice, written sources, and oral commentary. Unfortunately, extant archeological sources providing evidence of written ritual scripts is more or less non-existent for the Chunqiu period, and research on the resources that exist for the later Warring States period is just beginning as new archeological finds come to light. We do have written references from the period to works called the *Li* 禮 (*Ritual*) or the *Ji* 記 (*Records*) and sometimes the *Liji*, but we do not know how extensive these records were, what form they might have

taken, how they were circulated, or what relationship they might have had with the ritual texts received in the *san li* (again, comprised of the *Liji*, *Yili*, and *Zhouli*).

We do know that at least parts of the *San Li* were extant during the Warring States period, and the *Liji* itself refers to three hundred major rituals and three thousand minor rituals (10:22). Rituals were so complex and numerous that rulers needed a host of ritual experts. Without a full accounting of what rituals existed, we cannot say how likely it is for any one person to have mastered all three thousand three hundred rituals, but for the sake of preservation, it is likely that many of these rituals existed in written form.

The latest contemporary scholarship does agree, however, that what texts were extant in the period were likely composite in nature, and may not even have been encountered as complete volumes at all. Yu Jiaxi (1884-1955) made the claim long ago that many *pian* (segments which in the collected received texts often serve as chapter sections) probably circulated individually rather than as a corporate work, at least prior to the *Analects*, which he considers the first exception to this rule (Cook 2015, 300). Makeham (1995, 1) claimed that this was not even the case for the *Analects*, which he suggests came together as a single work only in the second century BCE. If this is the case, which Scott Cook also supports (2015, 300-301) we can assume that even if ritual compilations did exist

at the time, users of the ritual texts likely did not encounter them whole. This scattered transmission further implies that there is no way to authenticate the “true version” of parallel versions of the same ritual text exhibiting discrepancies since there was no standardized, authoritative version of the text.

In Mathias Richter’s (2013) study of the *Min zhi fumu*, a text parallel to both the 孔子閒居 “Kongzi Xian Ju” (Confucius Resting at Home) chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 and the “Lunli” 論禮 (Speaking of Ritual) chapter of the *Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語, he also asserts that texts in this period were highly fluid, both because of copy and memory errors, but also because there was no standardizing force, recipients of the text could take great license in reproducing it, bending the text to their own ends. Following Boltz’s (2005) composite text theory in which longer texts are compiled from paragraph long or shorter “building blocks” of texts, Richter suggests that parallel texts in different works should probably be taken as two different texts entirely, and the differences between the works taken seriously as intentional rather than incidental mistakes (2013, 60-70). Even if Richter’s accounts of the liberties taken with the texts are exaggerated, just a small percentage of people making changes would produce potentially divisive changes in transmitted ritual scripts. This has further implications that I will pick up again in the following section, but for now we can note that if single *pian*

circulations were the norm for this time, then it is unlikely that ritual scripts were an exception.²⁰²

The second method of examining ritual variance is historically and sociologically based. I would suggest that the idea that ritual is invariant until choices are intentionally made is a feasible stance to take for rituals that are protected as a sacred by a society or institution with strong taboos against change and the authority (the legitimate power) to enforce those taboos. The rituals of institutions are prime examples of such societies. Catholic rituals change only as much as the institution of the Church, led by the Magisterium and the bishop of Rome, allow it. Rituals are protected against change by policy, then by sanctions and taboos.²⁰³

Though this stance is proper to take considering imperial Confucianism, this is not the situation we face in classical China. In the *Analects* we are

²⁰² Interestingly enough, this begs the question as to who or what exactly Confucius was learning from. We have few if any records of his early life, though the aspersions cast upon him via his birthplace in *Analects* 3:15 indicate that he was born in a culturally poor area. It may be that his famed love of learning allowed him to collect circulating rituals piecemeal from their written form, or it may be that he was an avid seeker of other ritual masters to learn from. We have no way of telling whether or not rituals were recorded in written form at his time, though given his alleged mastery of all things ritual, it would make sense that he was able to draw upon multiple different sources and that circulating texts was one such source.

²⁰³ The swift excommunication of those ordaining women priests, for example, is one illustration of this.

presented with a ritual corpus already in the midst of change. The Zhou were no longer a power, and their taboos were no longer enforceable. This meant that ritual standards were being violated, and rituals themselves were being changed or were in danger of being abandoned completely. Some of these transgressions were more dangerous to the social order envisioned by Confucius than others. The violation of ritual standards in attempt to usurp a greater position, such as we see in 3.1 and 3.6 are not as dangerous as ritual change or ritual abandonment. The lord who used eight rows of dancers instead of the correct three and the family that went to sacrifice on Mount Tai actually reinforce the ritual tradition by continuing to legitimize those rituals as authoritative.

This is the very dynamic Roy Rappaport writes about in his study, *Religion and Ritual in the Making of Humanity* (1989). As discussed in the last chapter, ritual carries with it an entire slew of encoded meanings and messages. The canonical messages embedded in ritual practice and sent when the ritual is performed imply the whole of the system, including its cosmology and social order. Rappaport notes that this order, what he calls a “liturgical order” is, in his words, “realized –made real, into a *res* – only when those [ritual] acts are performed and those utterances voiced.” (1989, 118) In effect, without ritual performance, a tradition and the orders they represent, social or cosmic, no longer truly exist.

The universe in which Zeus rules from Olympus has vanished because the liturgies and rituals that made them social realities are no longer enacted. We may know about them, but that universe is no longer a lived universe (regardless of whatever its metaphysical truth status might be).

Thus there is a reciprocal relationship, a reciprocity between ritual and its performer or participant. On one hand the performer imposes the canon encoded by ritual upon himself and becomes a part of the order referenced by liturgy's canonical messages. On the other, he realizes and reifies the liturgical order of the ritual:

This relationship of the act of performance to that which is being performed – that it brings it into being – cannot help but specify as well the relationship of the performer to that which he is performing. He is not merely transmitting messages he finds encoded in the liturgy. He is participating in- that is, becoming part of – the order to which his own body and breath give life. (1989, 119)

More simply, by performing or participating in a ritual, a person becomes part of the order referenced by ritual and by the same performative action *creates* the ritual order. While games and the classroom set down new rules for behavior within their time and space, ritual performance instantiates an entire universe

rather than temporarily changing social norms.²⁰⁴ Performances of rituals, even inappropriate performances such as those performed in *Analects* 3.1 or 3.6, do more than *acknowledge* the connection between ritual practice and social legitimacy, they *create* the lived reality in which lines of dancers signify social position and the legitimate king sacrifices at Mount Tai.

Ritual change and the abandonment of ritual represent a much greater threat. Both represent a degradation of the values that help to hold society together and a shift to an alternate social order. Some ritual change can represent the encroachment of non-ritual priorities into the sacred space of the ritual world. Sometimes the encroachment is economic or otherwise pragmatic in nature, as we see in 3.17, where Zigong wants to omit the sacrifice of a lamb. Other times the change is a moral change, a shift to a different sacred or a loss of the sense of sacrality altogether. In 3:18 Confucius notes that serving one's lord to the full extent of *li* is now counted as flattery. Diligence (*zhong*) has been traded for a more self-centered value such that what was once admirable and respected is now seen to be inappropriate.

²⁰⁴ Alternatively, we could say that ritual invokes and foregrounds one among many of the potential ways of envisioning an ordered world.

Confucius has to engage in the process of arbitrating ritual change—he allows some changes because he sees them as peripheral to what he determines as the central (sacred) meaning of the ritual while fixing what is central in other cases. Sociologically speaking, this may be the most significant aspect of 9.3—not the fact that Confucius *allowed* a ritual change, but that he was forced to play referee for the changes that were *already happening*. As mentioned in the first chapter, tradition is not just something that is decoded and repeated by each successive generation. If nothing prevents it, it is subject to change and appropriation by the individuals who practice it for pragmatic or other purposes. Confucius needed protect the Way from degradation and loss by protecting the core of ritual, one of the primary ways the Way is embodied and made real in the world. Even Zai Wo, one of Confucius’ top students (at least compared to the unnamed of the three thousand) attempts to shorten the three years of mourning to one through an appeal to the survival of ritual and music.²⁰⁵ Confucius rejects this change as ultimately self-defeating; shortening the ritual undercuts what he sees as the natural resonant “echo” of the worthy man’s toward his parents’ first

²⁰⁵ 君子三年不為禮，禮必壞；三年不為樂，樂必崩。“If gentlemen do not perform ritual for three years, ritual will perish. If they do not play music for three years, music will crumble.” (Analects 17:21)

three years of love for their child. Changing the ritual would thus destroy part of the order Zai Wo claims to be trying to save. Even if we read Zai Wo's concern as simply a façade for laziness (possible, given his noted reputation for sleeping in), the fact that he thought that this would be a reasonable excuse lends credence to the precarious state of the ritual order. If Zai Wo's concern was sincere, then it becomes all the more powerful an indicator.

The situation becomes even more tenuous in the centuries after Confucius' time. During Confucius' time, ritual was being violated but was known and practiced. Even Yang Huo, who took political power by rebelling against the family who had appointed him a retainer knew enough of the ritual order to manipulate a meeting with Confucius (*Analects 17.1*). The rise of alternative, non-ritualistic social policies and ethical philosophy was a further challenge to the Confucian ritual order. Many of these alternatives, such as those taught by the Mohists and Legalists, for example, recommended the abandonment of the ritual order completely. This was the setting for many later Confucian figures, including Mencius and Xunzi. The prevalence of these alternative teachings and their adoption by some political bodies meant that the ritual order was no longer a background that could readily be assumed or drawn upon.

Given all of this, variations in the ritual corpus between the different Confucian figures was not only likely, it was inevitable. This brings us to the second challenge to the claim that classical Confucian practice would have been able to incorporate strangers through the use of ritual. Simply stated, if there were different ritual versions, then the ritual script would have been different. How then could ritual scripting help with strangers?

There are thus two challenges stemming from the placement of Confucian ritual within the classical tradition that I will have to address here. The first is the challenge of differing ritual interpretations. The second, more serious challenge is that of differing ritual scripts. I will answer these challenges in the following sections.

6.5.1 Differing Interpretations of Ritual Meanings: Co-imagining a Shared Universe

The issue of differing ritual interpretations is clearly the lesser of the two issues, primarily because it does not affect the actual physical actions of ritual performance. As was the case with flow, one does not need to believe the same things as other people believe to enjoy bonding with them through physical practice or focused intersubjectivity. So long as certain conditions are met, these modes of bonding cut across boundaries created by proposition-based grouping,

such as religious belief, national loyalty, or authoritative orthodoxies. The conditions, however, are the bracketing of those meaning structures for the space of the ritual performance and the temporary decision not to select and privilege one possible meaning among the many available. Fortunately, the characteristics of ritual as a mode of engagement help with this process, and we see this most clearly in the subjunctive theory of ritual, formulated and presented by Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, Michael Puett, and Bennet Simon (2008), and briefly elaborated on in Seligman (2010) and Seligman and Weller (2012).

Because of our naturally undefined and unordered experience of reality, Seligman et al. present the performance of ritual as a process of world *creation*. Building on the idea of the liturgical order as reified by ritual performance, they claim ritual performance creates not just a liturgical order, but a “subjunctive universe,” an understanding of a reality that *could be*, which may or may not align with reality as experienced. One of their simplest and most helpful examples relies on our understanding of politeness and courtesy as ritualistic:

The courtesy and politeness of daily life are also modes of ritual action. The truth value of such ritual invocations (like saying “please” and “thank you”) is not very important. We are inviting our interlocutor to join us in a particular symbolic universe within which to construe our actions. When I frame my requests with please and thank you, I am not giving a command ... but I am very much recognizing your agency. ... “Please” creates the illusion of equality by recognizing the other’s power to decline. ... (2008, 21)

The ritual “please” thus invokes a reality in which all are equal and in which all accepted requests are voluntarily accepted. The continued existence of this “subjunctive” universe, however, relies on the continued performance of the world’s ritual dictates. Once the performance stops, the subjunctive universe ends, just as an unperformed liturgical order no longer exists.

In the following continued quotation, the child’s exercise of his or her putative ability to refuse prompts us to cease performing that world of equality and call another reality to the forefront.²⁰⁶

...when we ask our children to please feed the dog and they refuse, we may get angry and shout, “DAMN IT, FEED THE DOG NOW!” At this point we both leave the illusionary world of mutuality and respect for the one of brute power. We fall back into a world from which politeness had saved us. (2008, 22)

Note that Seligman et al. assert that this reality is illusionary; the subjunctive universe is an alternative to the “real” rather than just one understanding of it. In keeping with this, they often frame the subjunctive as standing in direct contradistinction to reality as experienced and in “self-

²⁰⁶ Depending on our understanding of the rules of politeness, we can also understand the child’s refusal as the factor that precipitated the collapse of the ritual subjunctive. If the polite thing to do is to accept, the child’s refusal to do so, even given the option to refuse, means that the child has stopped performing the ritual world and has brought a different reality to bear. This would further mean that the rules of the ritual world must be followed for it to continue to exist. Regardless, the relevant point remains the same; ritual realities exist only so long as they are performed.

conscious tension with non-ritual worlds.” (2008, 20-21) The way in which this plays out in the example of ritual politeness is as follows:

Note that even in the imagined equalities of American courtesy, the power to decline may not be real. When we ask our children to please clear their plates or our students to please open their books, declining is not a normal option. Nevertheless, we ask as if the behavior were voluntary, because that ritual creates the social world that allows our interactions to continue in peace. Rituals such as saying “please” and “thank you” create an illusion, but with no attempt to deceive.... (2008, 21-22)

Ritual thus creates an imaginative world. This, they claim, is part of its power; because it is a space of shared imagination, performers with broadly different experiences and perceptions of the ritual being performed can still join together in a shared ritual world. I can light candles with Crystal, Sruti, Daisuke, and Dekermue as a ritual of bonding, and so long as our ritual remains on the level of shared action, we can all imagine that we are engaged in the same activity despite the fact that Crystal is a Catholic who sees the Easter Vigil’s fire in candlelight, Daisuke sees fire in terms of Shinto *harai* rituals, Sruti just finished observing a Vedic fire sacrifice, and Dekermue just associates fire with his family fireplace. The solidarity that arises from this can remain until someone says something kin to, “I’m so glad we’re all here to share in the light of Christ” at which point the illusion is shattered, the differences revealed, and the solidarity broken.

The illusion of sharing may thus seem like a thin bonding agent and a poor way of generating empathy or solidarity. Nevertheless, in alignment with Seligman et al. I do think the obvious alternative to the illusion of sharing, that is to say “really sharing,” is fraught with more complications than is readily admitted. I discussed much of this in section 5.1.1, where I noted that meaning is experience dependent and thus context dependent. Since context is different for everyone, meaning is different for everyone. Even if the candle lighting company above were all Catholic and all thinking of the Easter vigil flame, the flame might have different associations for each of them, and their experience of God might be different as well. Thus sharing proposition merely displaces the illusion; it does not eliminate it entirely.

The urge to “really share” belongs to a mode Seligman et al. call the “sincere mode.” The sincere mode eschews the formal for the informal and the premeditated for the spontaneous in effort to get at what is “really there.” In its purest (ideal) form, not only would Crystal have made her comment about the light of Christ, she would have had to explain exactly what she really meant by “light,” “Christ,” and the connector “of.” If this did not match the experience of the others, the sharing experience would not have been authentic—would not have been sincerely shared. Thus to “truly share” one has to be completely

transparent and unambiguous in motivation and intent. It is the person who is unblemished by duality of mind and who expresses his or her intentions and motivations without deception or other obfuscation that operates most fully in the sincere mode. This sincere mode is heavily criticized by Seligman and Weller (2012, 97):

Single-minded adherence to the “sincere” model of existence in the world does not allow for a somber and realistic vision of just how complicated, contradictory, and ambiguous the source of action, feeling, claims-making, and intent really are. Rather, it results in the continual production of a hypocritical consciousness that holds up as a model what is essentially a deeply compromised, narcissistic, and unrealizable ideal. It adheres to a vision of wholeness that is not of this world ...

What the sincere modality fails to account for, they claim, is the thickness of ambiguity inherent in any particular person.

I would argue that this ambiguity arises in part from the fractured multiplicity of the worldviews through which we encounter life, and which ritual helps to screen away for a short time, in a small space. This multiplicity of worldviews we encounter over the course of our lives complicates the already vast differences in context between each person. Each worldview we encounter has its own claim over our desires and experiences. As we navigate within and through each of the worldviews we encounter and we encounter the circumstances that are unique to us, each of us generates our own context over

time, and every context generates a different set of personal meanings. Fully sharing these meanings thus involves the impossibility of sharing the totality of one's history filtered through the multiplicity of worldviews we adopted up until the current moment. Even were that possible, we are then faced with a barrier of language that never quite gets at what it indexes.

"Really sharing" direct experience is thus impossible, and all sharing is, to a certain extent, illusory. The ritual "subjunctive" space as presented above acknowledges this and eschews the urge to "really share" a worldview in exchange for an opportunity to create the experience of solidarity through an acknowledged illusion. In reality, each of us have our own singular experience of the world, and though we can do our best to bring our meanings into alignment with others, an exact match, a perfect overlap of meanings is never possible. We nevertheless *experience* unity through the workings of the imagination. Though based on an illusion, this experience is real and actual and can create real and actual solidarity.

This model of ritual practice would, at first glance, seem to have limited applicability for Confucians. After all, being *cheng* is precisely being *whole*, unblemished by duality of mind, and this is ultimately the goal of Confucian cultivation. It is depicted in *Analects* 2.4's description of Confucius at seventy

years of age as someone who is never insincere—he follows the desires of his heart without ever transgressing (從心所欲不踰矩). Sincerity seems to be a great part of Confucian ritual.

We should, however, recall two facts about Confucian ritual. First, Confucian ritual practice is meant to be expressive *and* impressive. Ritual is as much cultivation and practice as it is expression of one's inner feelings. To view the passage above from a different angle, even if the passage is to be taken literally, it took Confucius himself *seventy years* of ritual training before he was finally able to act completely sincerely, without ambiguous motivations. This means that for the previous sixty-nine years, Confucius was not completely sincere in his performance of ritual. This is perhaps part of why he states that in serving one's parents, it is the expression that is difficult; if the face expresses what one feels, any ambiguity at all will change one's expression (2.8). If we are to practice ritual cultivation as imperfect people, we need to allow for the illusion that the ritual is being performed with sincerity (at least to the best of one's ability) and that what is expressed in the ritual is honest. For most people, moments of unambiguous, sincere expression are rare.

Consider also Confucius' discussion with Zaiwo concerning shortening the mourning ritual for the death of one's parents. While Confucius does state

that if Zaiwo feels at ease eating good rice and wearing good clothes just a year after the death of his parents, he should go ahead and to those things against ritual prescriptions, he also holds up the model for what the gentleman feels and suggests that Zaiwo compare himself to that model. Here, Confucius is non-coercive in his application of ritual, but does suggest that Zaiwo should examine himself to see whether or not there would remain any unease about his parents' death after one year, any ambiguity which can be used to train the appropriate emotions. If there is nothing at all, and Zaiwo would be completely at ease, then he might as well be sincere in his practice—there is nothing there to train. But if he thinks there would be anything left of his feelings for his parents, he is encouraged to reflect on that. Here, ambiguity is *necessary* for Confucian ritual training; pure sincerity is a sign that Zaiwo cannot be cultivated on this point. Again, this may not be his fault—bad parents do not evoke the same emotions as good parents (17.21).

Second, consider the fact that ritual serves as etiquette, and has a lot to do with what is socially appropriate. Polite society requires the form, and this form is often in direct contrast to what we feel on the inside. This is why etiquette is often first taught procedurally, without the meaning behind the ritual. When children grow up and we train them to say “please” and “thank you,” we do not

first go through a lengthy explanation of the egalitarian nature of “please” or require they understand or even feel gratitude before they learn to say “thank you.” We just make them say it so that they can speak appropriately to others. This is part of the nature of ritual as cultured intercourse. Confucius exhibits this side of ritual as well, in 17.20, where he makes the polite, ritually correct response to Ru Bei in saying that he is ill, but then makes sure Ru Bei knows that he is not ill by playing the zither and singing. Similarly, in 17.1, Confucius’ return visit to Yang Huo is not a sincere visit, made from honest gratitude; it is purely formal, proven by the fact that he tries to make the visit while Yang Huo is out.

Despite the fact that sincerity appears as the final goal of Confucian ritual, most of Confucian ritual cultivation and some ritual interaction is performed subjunctively, *as if* it were actual.²⁰⁷ The ritual performance invokes a world in

²⁰⁷ At the same time, one purpose of ritual practice is to *reduce* the disparity between what is enacted and what is felt, or to use the terms of this discussion, to reduce the subjunctivity of the ritual for the performer. *Li* correctly performed impresses itself upon someone, shaping that performer so that his or her inner states match the outer form.

Thus in the Confucian tradition, the universe created by a particular ritual is experienced as subjunctive only for as long as it fails to transform the performer. Upon being transformed, the performer continues to enact and create the universe of *li*; however, he is no longer creating an “as if” in tension with the experienced world, but is externalizing an “as is” respect which follows social conventions. Ideally, ritual both expresses and performs, and *li* in the Confucian tradition serves as a strong argument that ritual is at its best when both modes are operating and the enacted universe matches with the “as is” sincere universe.

which things “could be.” All ordered, monolithic conceptions of reality are subjunctive to a certain extent; all worldviews are a vision of the way the world *may* or *could* be, formed from the ambiguous, ambivalent morass of experience and posited in the absence of clear access to ultimate truth. When a child refuses to clear the plates or a student continues browsing Facebook rather than opening his text, he is refusing the invoked ritual world, possibly causing it to collapse in the process. The world remains undefined until we invoke another imagined order to take its place—perhaps one of power (“Feed the damn dog now!”), or one of morals (“A good child *honors* his father and mother!”), or perhaps we

Nevertheless, it remains true that each person cannot produce exactly his or her own experience in another, and sincere as they may be each person remains separate. Even when both parties are as sincere in their ritual practice as possible, the subjunctive imagination is still present in terms of sharing between people, but the figurative gap between the experienced and the imagined is less, and the shared subjunctive is correspondingly less fragile. The more each Confucian is able to transform his internal state to match the socially encoded *li*, the closer the quality of the experience they imagine themselves to share. Though true sharing can never be truly achieved, it can be approached.

Though this emotional valence is acknowledged by Seligman and Weller, subjunctive ritual theory can do relatively little with the emotional aspect of ritual performance. Aside from noting that it helps draw a person back into the ritual world and that the willing creation of an imaginative subjunctive sometimes has a restorative effect, the ritual subjunctive has little to do with feelings and emotions. This is by design; the subjunctive is a powerful way of understanding ritual action precisely because it does not require specific internal states from the performers, just the correct performance of the ritual and perhaps the willingness to refrain from comparing exactly what is being shared within the ritual. This does, however, leave much of what happens in ritual unexamined, and it further cannot explain sufficiently the Confucian insistence that ritual practice is *transformative*.

merely re-invoke the ritual frame one more time and ask politely again. Note that in stating that these orders are imagined, I am not denying the reality of their constituent parts. A world in which might deserves to rule is an order that is grounded in certain recognizable facts of the observable world. Those aspects — perhaps the amorality of the natural world — are not imagined. They are actually present. Rather, I merely suggest that any concrete way of tying them together is one coherent, possible order among many, one way of pulling inchoate experience or action into recognizable wholes. The order created by Confucian ritual is one such subjunctive, and part of the illusory nature of this subjunctive is that its ritual is sincerely performed.

The tension between the subjunctive and the sincere is strongest in the *Analects*, where we see both sides of the balance clearly, the impressive and the expressive. Mencius and Xunzi each tend to develop one side of this. The Zi-Meng lineage strongly develops the sincere, expressive modality of ritual, grounding this in the goodness of human nature, while Xunzi develops the impressive, subjunctive side of ritual performance, focusing as he does on the reformative aspects of cultivation. Nevertheless, both the subjunctive and the sincere are necessary to Confucian cultivation. Subjunctivity provides a layer of cushioning between a person's social presentation — laden as it is with

intersubjective power—and his internal states, which in all likelihood are not yet sage-like. On the other hand, the drive toward sincerity prevents the formality of ritual from becoming stagnant and *purely* formal. It makes the canonical meaning of ritual relevant to individual *interiority*, rather than shackling it to acceptance of social obligation and social position alone.

The subjunctive aspect of Confucian ritual is, however, what allows people with differing understandings of ritual to begin to build bonds with each other. Just as one first learns to say “thank you,” then practices feeling the gratitude that comes with it, Confucians first interact their rituals, then analyze for meaning. With a stranger, discussions of ritual meanings may not arise until a stranger is no longer a stranger, at which point personal familiarity can begin to govern the relationship. Differences in ritual meaning may eventually prove to be irreconcilable, but this may not prevent the pre-conceptual aspects of bonding to occur so long as both parties agree to the pretense that they are engaged in the same activity, even though they might believe their actions mean different things.

The principle of yielding (讓 *rang*, often translated “deference”) helps in this regard. Important in the position of all the major classical Confucian thinkers, Mencius’ position is, perhaps, the most intriguing in the current

context, given that Mencius is the one of the three whose philosophy bends most toward sincerity and the expressive nature of ritual.²⁰⁸ The word *rang* appears only four times in the *Mencius*, but it occupies a critical position as the “seed of ritual” (辭讓之心，禮之端也 3A6). Yielding is that virtue that curtails

²⁰⁸ This is not to say, however, that Mencian ritual does not feature “impressive” aspects. We see this stated in its strongest form in 4A1, where Mencius states that not even those with the greatest natural endowments are able to properly carry out their tasks without the help of customary guides and patterns. Carpenters need their compass, musicians their pitch-pipe and rulers need the ways of the ancient kings. Impressing oneself with these standards amplifies the natural capabilities of each of these figures, but more importantly for this discussion, it prevents error.

The expressive stance of Mencius relies upon the understanding of the unity of heaven and man (discussed in section 1.1.1) and the idea that some of Heaven is inscribed upon our pure natures. Nevertheless, regardless of whether Heaven is accessed from heteronomous mandates or is found within one’s own nature, understanding it requires interpretation, and this is where even the brightest of individuals can go astray. In 4B12, for example, we note that Mencius claims, “Great men need not keep their word, nor do their actions need to reach a result; they only follow what is appropriate/right (*yi* 義).” Here we have the idea that even great people might begin on one path only to change it at a later time—and this implies either a change in circumstances or an initial misreading of what was appropriate to the situation. This passage recognizes that even the incipient promptings of heaven can be misunderstood, misapplied, or completely missed by our conscious minds and simple (or even considered) reliance on the natural promptings of ours spontaneous impulses can be prone to error.

This is what we saw in 1A7, where King Xuan of Qi acted on Heaven’s impulses within him when he spared the ox, but did not understand the full implications of his own actions. Mencius was the one to parse this issue out for him. He engages in this same interpretive process in 6B15, and states that “The organ of the heart can think. If it thinks, then it will get it, if it does not think then it will not get it.” (心之官則思，思則得之，不思則不得也) We must interpret our own natures, and this is why the genius of the sage kings is so important—they were endowed with the greatest natural capacities and thus can best make known the promptings of the heaven-given human nature. This brings us full circle, back to 4A1, where Mencius quotes the odes: 《詩》云：『不愆不忘，率由舊章。』遵先王之法而過者，未之有也。 “The odes say: ‘Not transgressing, not forgetting, follow the model of old.’ Never has there been a case of one who followed the ways for the ancient kings and crossed into error.”

overbearing or aggressive behavior by allowing others to have their way rather than asserting one's own. Lee Yearly writes,

Both intelligent awareness [智 *zhi*] and courage [勇 *yong*] ... are corrupted by the absence of yielding. Yielding underlies intelligent awareness because only through yielding can people become truly sensitive to external situations. Only the practice of it allows them to overcome the inclination to project their desires and ideas on to the world. Moreover, Mencius uses the idea of yielding to transform those ideas of courage that stress aggressive assertion. (1990, 42)

Yielding is thus precisely that virtue which allows the pretense of unity to exist where sincere unity does not, for it allows the holding of one opinion while another is publicly expressed. Yielding is the seed of ritual, which often both expresses yielding and is an actual act of yielding as the self submits to the ritual order. To be too assertive concerning the meaning of ritual would thus be self-defeating. One may think oneself to be correct, but yielding as a ritual mode allows a bit of insincerity as a matter of good form, in the service of building smooth relationships.²⁰⁹ In terms of alternative ritual interpretations, then, the

²⁰⁹ Similar types of situations in which yielding and socially beneficial insincerity continue down to today, in the form of face work (see Goffman 2005/1967, 29 in particular) and what Seligman and Weller (2012) aptly call "thin disguises." One example among many given involves a case in Taiwan where ritually displaying very fat pigs as a sign of divine favor was forbidden by the new Nationalist government in 1945. The village announced their acceptance of the law, but instead staged an agricultural competition at the appropriate ritual time, in which the fattest pigs and their handlers were honored in front of the temple for the best agricultural practices. As Seligman and Weller note, the pretext fooled no one, but it created a thin illusion that allowed the government to continue permitting local customs (190-191). Again here, for the

nature of ritual itself as a performed action and a shared experience allows the masking of difference such that it need not stand as an impediment to pre-conceptual ritual bonding.²¹⁰

6.5.2 Differing Ritual Scripting

As noted before, different masters in the classical period would likely have arbitrated ritual changes in a different way, and rituals that were not specifically governed by a *ru* committed to the preservation of the Zhou ways had the potential for even further degradation. Fortunately, the *Analects* gives a first step for how one is to enter into a foreign community of ritual—one first asks about the prevailing customs.

入大廟，每事問。或曰：「孰謂鄒人之子知禮乎？入大廟，每事問。」子聞之曰：「是禮也。」

Entering the great temple, Confucius asked about every matter. Someone asked, “Who says this son of a man from Zou knows ritual? Upon

sake of good relations, meaning is allowed to be ambiguous. I would argue that the Confucian emphasis on yielding is one of the factors that contributed to the prevalence of solutions like these in contemporary China and Taiwan, and that similar solutions may have been found in the time of Confucius himself.

²¹⁰ Robert Neville’s (2013) suggestion that contemporary Confucianism develop rituals that would allow *ren* to operate across social barriers indexes dynamics similar to those described in this section: “One contribution to overcoming the barriers to multiply focused humaneness among people and groups is the development of rituals that allow them to interact with one another in ‘harmony’ even while competing and disagreeing over fundamental values.” (303) This course relies on the ambiguity of symbols and symbolic interaction, so that each practitioner can attribute meaning to a particular ritual in his or her own way while interacting with other performers as fellow cultured ritualists. I will address Neville’s work more thoroughly in the conclusion, where I discuss this study’s possible implications for contemporary Confucianism.

entering the great temple, he asks about every matter.” Hearing this, Confucius replied, “That *is* ritual.” (3.15)²¹¹

This passage is often interpreted to mean that Confucius already knew the rituals, and was merely asking out of politeness.²¹² Though I do believe that asking was ritual politeness, I am less sanguine about the claim that Confucius already knew the rituals, or, more specifically, that he knew the exact way that rituals were performed in the places he came to. There are two reasons for this, both of which have come up—first, rituals can never repeated exactly as the script suggests, and different contexts require different emendations to the ritual form. Asking about rituals is not only polite, it ensures that a new or visiting ritualist is properly synchronized with any changes and may have been required by a specific ritual space.²¹³ Second, as just narrated, Confucius was in a time of ritual change. He may or may not have known the ritual practices of the place

²¹¹ See also 10.8

²¹² Slingerland, for example, cites Kong Anguo, who writes that “Although Confucius knew the ritual, it was appropriate for him to ask questions about it nonetheless—this is the height of carefulness” (2003, 23).

²¹³ Li Feng (2013, 145) writes that the Grand Temple was first built in the pre-dynastic period in Qiyi and that a cluster of four other temples was built around it after the Zhou conquest. This cluster was then replicated in other major cities and locales so that the cluster of five temples could serve as an ancestral temple for the Zhou elite. It is thus unclear which grand temple Confucius entered when he asked this question. Following the Qing dynasty commentator Liu Fenglu, Slingerland notes that if we read this passage together with 3.10 and 3.11, this questioning may be a continuation of his criticism of Duke Xi’s performance of the *di* ritual, thus placing 3.15 in the Grand Temple at Lu. This is speculation, however.

because many of the rituals may have changed. Ritual scripts are not always assiduously followed.²¹⁴

Learning ritual variants, however, present problems of their own. As discussed above, Confucius allows some changes, but does not allow others. In 9.3 he allows the change to silk, but blocks bowing at the top of the platform rather than the bottom because it alters the expressive messages of the ritual. Confucius does not follow the change to bow at the top of the stairs rather than the bottom because it changes the expressive meaning of the ritual. As Brooks and Brooks aptly note, bowing at the bottom is kin to asking permission to ascend, whereas bowing at the top presumes it (1998, 51). Here, we have two different versions of a ritual script, one of which has a meaning that is unacceptable to Confucius. This illustrates the fact that cases of differing ritual scripts are potentially not just a conflicts of interpretation, but clashes in worldview. Confucius cannot bow at the top of the stairs because his worldview prevents it. The limit of symbolic ambiguity has been reached, and the result is a completely different ritual, both physically and propositionally speaking. How

²¹⁴*Analects* 3.10 shows a case in which Confucius takes issue with the execution of a particular ritual, such that he cannot bear to watch.

then, would a good Confucian proceed? Propositional meaning here seems to become a stronger challenge to the pre-conceptual ritual bonding I have advocated for.

My sense is that Confucius would submit to the particular rules of a place provided the offence was not too great. In *Analects* 19:10, Zixia notes that a minister must earn the trust of his lord before remonstrating with him, which would indicate that the chance to correct an incorrect ritual must wait until one has a lord's trust. Though less directly applicable, in 4.18 Confucius notes that children must respectfully work for and obey their parents, even after their remonstrations with them have no effect. Following the analogy of the country as a family, ministers must also respect and obey their lord so long as they remain in his service. Thus Confucius might, in service to a greater good, have been willing to participate in an incorrect ritual until he gained the authority to change the ritual. We might also make such a claim under the principle of timeliness, in which one makes careful plans and approaches affairs with fear and caution (7.11) and in which one waits for the proper, most efficacious moment. The virtue of yielding discussed above also tends to lend itself to such an interpretation. Severe violations, of course, cannot be tolerated, and Confucius usually conveys this by resigning and leaving a country. Confucius also tends to

leave if his advice is not heeded after a certain amount of time. Confucius does not compromise to no end, nor is he interested in merely “getting along” for the sake of order.

If we refuse to believe, however, that Confucius would sully himself by performing a ritual that was not correct, then we are at an impasse of sorts. In cases like this, where there is no compromise to be made, then interactive ritual bonding becomes impossible for that particular ritual. This would also help to explain why there were so many different schools founded by Confucian disciples—arguments over which rituals are to be performed what way would have prevented a more “ecumenical” mergence of the various different lineages.

We can note, however, that even though the rituals that each practiced might have been slightly different, these *ru* would likely have found each other more similar in thought and foundational concepts than non-ritualist *ru* because their basic mode of physicality would have been formed by similar ritual practice. Like most systems of education, Confucian training involves both propositional and experiential meaning. Pre-Han Confucianism in particular, in its emphasis on ritual practice, seems to favor experience over generalized learning. Ritual practice, in turn, is effectively a guided interaction that is designed to yield a particular experience. The limits inherent in ritual scripting

thus tend to generate a narrower and more inflexible band of experiences than open experimentation would. We can thus liken ritual practice to guided laboratory experiments of the kind we often find in colleges and high schools. There is a script to be followed that is supposed to yield a particular result.

Properly followed ritual scripts tend to remove much of the variability of open experimentation so that particular results can be reached. They guide one toward experiencing a particular aspect of the world rather than attempting to reference and depict that experience analogically. These standardized experiences in turn lead to more standardized meanings. While the true sharing of meaning is still out of reach, if meaning is built at least partially through ritual practice, all ritual practitioners will have a band of similar experiences from which their meanings are developed. This in turn will theoretically lead to a more closely matched set of meanings between subjects, even given slight variations. For example, in chapter 4, I discussed ways in which an *Yili* greeting ritual helps to generate the experience of solidarity through a particular interpersonal, intersubjective exchange. Such ritual exchanges can be taken as the basic units of interaction from which Confucian meaning—somatic markers inclusive—is derived. In such an interaction, the other is ideally experienced positively, as a partner just as engaged in the process of ritual practice as the

other, and it is this positive experience that changes our attitude toward that person. It is from these scripted experiences of the other that Confucian conceptual meaning can be built. Whether we meet that person at the bottom or the top of the steps does change how the ritual is experienced, but the change is far less great than if there had been no ritual synchronization at all.

The conceptual overlay that Confucianism provides can thus be likened to a guide concerning the proper outcome of a particular interaction: they provide a guide as to what one might expect. Confucius' comment concerning the joy of hearing the Way (*Analects* 4.8) is the most general of these but is certainly not the only one. As is often the case in scripted high-school chemistry experiments, sometimes a particular interaction may not yield the intended or expected results. Just as a good laboratory instructor might recommend in such a situation, the Confucian educational response is to repeat and refine the interaction until the appropriate results are achieved effortlessly. This is done by changing, as best one can, how one approaches that particular interaction and what one brings to it.

This suggests one possible way out of the conundrum of differing ritual scripts. Like a lab experiment procedure, the disputed ritual could be performed and experienced in both ways, with the experiential outcome of each ritual being

compared to the purported meaning of the ritual. The one that best evokes the meaning of the ritual experimentally might be given privilege of place. After all, Confucian conceptual meaning was never meant to be taken in isolation from the experiences upon which they were built, acceded to purely as a matter of authoritative deference. The *Analects* remind us of this in 17.14: “To murkily repeat something heard on the road is to throw virtue away.” In other words, one’s virtue, which is one’s grasp of the Way and the power that results from it, is undermined by the acceptance and transmission of unexamined propositions.²¹⁵ If ritually divergent strangers were to approach performance in the spirit of cooperative experimentation, even if they cannot agree on the correct ritual procedure, they will nevertheless have had the opportunity to cohere temporarily around a mutual goal—the ritual attempt to respectfully discover the most efficacious physical expression for the ritual in question. This in turn might be able to serve as a form of bonding in itself.

²¹⁵道聽而塗說、德之棄也。 This interpretation leans heavily on Slingerland’s (2003) gloss, but also coincides with most other translations, which read the passage as condemning the transmission of gossip and hearsay, both forms unsubstantiated knowledge. I do not mean to imply that this passage means that the ritual corpus should be continually reexamined or that faith should not be placed in what has been passed down. I do, however, mean to claim that Confucianism relies on a visceral link between experience and practice and that incases of conflict between two potentially authoritative sources, the above process might be a means of adjudication.

This process can also be aided or hindered by the method that ritual transmission took place during this time. Current scholarship gives no good indication as to whether rituals transmitted during Confucius' time were transferred through written scripts or whether they were passed on via direct instruction, through physical mimesis. My sense, however, is that for Confucius himself, ritual learning would most likely have come through direct tutelage and may have been supplemented by written texts. Though this claim may ultimately be impossible to prove, my reasoning stems from two facts. First, ritual is a source of power for its practitioners, and one that becomes less secure the more people are familiar with it. Rulers and officers sought out ritual experts to help them rule. If we assume that the urge to protect one's job security was as strong then as it is now, it follows that ritual knowledge, particularly knowledge about how to run courts, was fiercely protected. Confucius was, perhaps, well received in part because he was willing to change this paradigm, becoming the first teacher for the sake of the Way rather than following the Way for his own personal gain.²¹⁶ If this was the case, it is unlikely that court ritualists would

²¹⁶ Again, this is my reading of *Analects* 15.28: "It is man who enlarges the Way, not the Way that enlarges man." In other words, it is man's duty to broaden the Way's influence in the world, not the Way's place to aggrandize people.

have been pleased about the circulation of ritual texts, or would have written ritual texts in such a way that they would be difficult to learn without direct instruction.

The closest we can come to confirming this is to note that many of the extant rituals we are left with refer to specific space configurations. For example, the beginning instructions for a ceremonial banquet in the *Yili* are as follows:

The court steward prepares all the viands for the use of the various officials, to the east of the private apartments. The musicians suspend the bells and the musical stones. The used-water jar and cup-basket are set to the south-east of the east steps, and abreast the eastern rain-gutter. (11.1, Steele translation)

The definite nature of such a script relies upon a standardized space. One can only make sense of it if one stands within the prescribed area and sees the east steps and an eastern rain gutter, if one has a very detailed map, or if one has someone instructing them who is familiar with the space and is able to explain what the area should look like. This ritual is almost impossible to learn if the text alone is provided. The *Yili* is also fairly consistent in giving such precise locations for all of its rituals.²¹⁷ If bamboo strips were the likely means that Warring States

²¹⁷ Interestingly enough, if these instructions were meant to be followed by all officers (and if this ritual is anything like the ones that Confucius purported to follow), there must have been a high amount of ritual standardization involved in building the houses and official

rituals were recorded, ritual maps were likely out of the question, and it is also highly unlikely that officials allowed their homes and courts of power to be turned into ritual training grounds. This leaves as the only remaining choice a master familiar with the space (or at least familiar with someone who is familiar with the space) who can give instruction to a student so that he would not be out of his depth when called to court. This in turn would mean that the ritual text was meant to be taught in tandem with physical instruction, which in turn opens the script up to further variation based upon teaching styles and memory.

Note also that all things considered, the ritual script is fairly bare in this case. How does one walk when moving to set the water jar down? How is it held? Does one bend at the knees or at the waist? This script at least requires a whole background of physical sensibilities that are not included in the written text. In many ways, learning ritual ways of being is like learning an entirely different, baseline “penumbral” level of human cultural learning, which Neville locates in styles of walking, standing, and other largely physical and exceedingly basic conventions (1995, 166-167). Given that ritual action is distinctive and often

buildings of officers, dukes, and other officials, enough so that ritual manual could be comfortable in giving such specific instructions.

deliberately so, it is likely that ritual modes of physicality are different from the commonplace, popular penumbral modes. This is yet another argument for the fact that ritual needs to be learned first and foremost through mimesis. All of this is, of course, highly speculative.

At the same time, if even half of the rituals noted in the *Liji* were extant ant the time of Confucius (and supposing that number is accurate rather than embellished or symbolic) mastering them all would likely be impossible for a single person, particularly if we add the very specific dialogues that some rituals require. Written records were likely the best way of recording ritual dialogues, and if the rest of the ritual is also briefly described, had the added benefit of ensuring that the rituals would not be lost in case of unexpected deaths. This would also be impetus to teach a small group of students who can carry on one's work, but who will not be a threat to one's own position (much in the same way academic lineages appear in current day academies). Ritual learning in pre-Confucian times could thus have been carried out by individuals and supplemented by textual learning.

Such a theory is not so farfetched, especially if we consider the fact that ritual texts stand at the intersection between textual, oral, and physical

transmission. Richter argues for a reading of early Chinese texts that suggests that oral usages of texts affected their form and vice versa:

many texts from early China appear to have functioned as repositories of didactic material that was predominantly used in oral communication. To put it very pointedly, such texts were just as little intended to be read in full as one would read a cookbook from beginning to end. Rather, one chooses from among the respective recipes for the various courses of a meal such items as best fit the circumstances. Similarly, the user of such a written repository text would choose from among the often redundant material what he needed as a teacher in instruction or as a persuader in a political argument. (2013, 172)

On the one hand, texts did not need to be gathered together in a large, cohesive text in part because it was not meant to be used that way to begin with. On the other hand, the piecemeal transmission of texts discussed above likely promoted their piecemeal use in oral conversation or argumentation. Ritual scripts have the added dimension of physicality and physical practice that may have played its own part in changing the way they were recorded and used. This is particularly the case because writing is probably the least comprehensive way of recording a ritual and an exceedingly difficult way of learning one. Personal, physical instruction conveys far more information than can be covered in notational form. It would make more sense, then, for ritual texts to have been supplemental to interpersonal ritual instruction, “intercorporeally” passed on as the case may have been.

After Confucius established his school and re-introduced his Way to the world, it is likely that the circulation of ritual texts increased as a “missionary” means of expanding the Way. This is again, purely speculative. I would suggest, however, that the primary means of teaching ritual would likely have been still been through direct, physical instruction, and supplemented by whatever ritual texts were available through circulation.

Returning to the crucial matter of this section, what the above discussion argues is that students from different schools were likely most influenced by their own mimetic practices, in part because lived experience tends to be richer and more influential than textual scripting, and in part because textual scripting is sparse, abstract, and requires a thick layer of physical, ritual sensibilities that scripts cannot possibly convey. Differences in scripted practice would thus also have to deal with the fact that physical habit and the created feeling of “rightness” that it imparts and that performing the ritual in a different way may run afoul of this. Nevertheless, it is also possible that a practitioner will also find alternate ritual scripts for individual rituals cause that performance to cohere better with his overall position and that the new ritual script feels better when considering the ritual whole.

If there is no compromise to be made, however, the other possibility in such a situation is that ritual strangers will discover that although there is a difference in their scripted practice, they find they ascribe the same or similar meanings to the ritual and play it out in different ways. In such a case, these people would be able to bond over shared propositional meaning, even as they disagree over the proper mode of embodying that meaning. Thus although proposition has come between them and the pre-conceptual bonding offered by ritual practice, they still are able to avail themselves of the more fragile empathy generated by broadly sharing goals and meanings.

6.6 Conclusions: Two Modes of Bonding with Strangers

In this chapter I discussed challenges presented to the idea that Confucianism handles the ethical treatment of strangers in part through pre-conceptual bonding. The challenges presented by propositional meaning to pre-conceptual bonding mark off the two possible areas that strangers have to bond with a particular Confucian person or group—either through non-propositional bonding that elides differences in propositional meaning, or through the loose sharing of propositional meaning. This, in turn, brings us full circle, back to where we finished at the end of chapter one, this time, with a greater

appreciation for the mechanics involved in pre-conceptual bonding and how propositional meaning may or may not hinder that process by placing it in a more inclusive framework of meaning.

Though it has not been within the scope of this paper, we have noted that propositional meaning offers one possible mode of bonding, fragile though it may be. We also noted that so long as the ritual script remains the same for both performers, pre-conceptual bonding is available for both parties to access through the familiarity afforded by the ritual script. Contextually mandated variations on the script can be signaled or inquired upon in advance, as is the case when Confucius enters the grand temple.

One route or the other or both may be possible, but when both align, I would suggest that it naturally begins to build the foundations of what can turn into the powerful, flow or co-presence-like experience of radical empathy. As mentioned in the penultimate section of the last chapter (5.5.1), ritual can be analogized to a dance, but a dance in which not only physical, pre-conceptual meanings can join in harmony, but in which the pre-conceptual feeds and *generates* conceptual and propositional meanings. Because these propositions remain connected to their embodied source, they are likely the closest two people can approach the true sharing of conceptual meaning. We all know, or at least

can imagine, what it is like to know someone so well that we can spontaneously finish their sentences. When someone is attuned with ritual, we *can* actually finish their sentences for the space of the ritual, and even if what they mean and what we think they mean when they say those ritual words or perform those ritual acts does not match completely (close thought they might be), the ritual as performance makes that irrelevant with a veil of subjunctivity which allows the experience of a visceral, multi-level unity. Rituals then, not only allow us to think in harmony with another person but to feel and move in harmony with them as well. This is made possible because we know them not only through our thoughts, but through the push and pull of physical experience.

In such a case, intersubjectivity finds itself mediated through ritual scripting both on the person to person level through the medium of interaction ritual and through a whole group of ritual practitioners via the dynamics highlighted Collins' interaction ritual. With a little further interactive practice, this has the potential to become the experience of radical unity we found within flow frames. More than this, however, once we attach a framework of propositional meaning, participants will also find that they have access to the *experience* all of the empathy and solidarity that comes from sharing propositions and the same subjunctive, "liturgical" order. Within this is the sense of a shared

goal not just limited to the immediate moment but that is shared throughout the length of life as a whole.

There is thus no doubt that the strongest bonds will be found between those who share the most time together and are most closely aligned morally. But we also find two inroads for strangers — that road provided by physical co-performance of a scripted ritual, and that provided by shared proposition. Either one is a powerful means by which empathy or solidarity can be created. Both of these together, however, create a nested sense of directed unity. First we have the experience unity around ritual performance, which orders ritual practitioners to complete a particular goal at hand and functions with or without the aid of greater meaning structures. Then we also have the greater framework of propositional meaning, which takes the solidarity found in this particular ritual instance and frames it within a greater Good and makes it useful (rather than hurtful) to a broader context. In the language of coherence, the greater meaning is what causes the smaller frame to cohere with ultimate values and the Good, however conceived.

Conclusion: Strangers, Ambiguity, and Difference

子曰：「回也非助我者也，於吾言無所
不說。」

The master said, "Yan Hui is of no help
to me; there is nothing I say that he
does not delight in."

-*Analects* 11:4

When Ambrose King wrote his article in 1985, it was with an eye to the future of Confucian development in the modern and post-modern world. While dealing with strangers has been an issue for most if not all of human history, modern technological advances have made the issue of an ethics for strangers far more pressing than they used to be. This is, perhaps, why King's article still holds saliency for contemporary scholars, and why his very brief work continues to be cited in works ranging from discussions of Confucian democracy (Hall and Ames 1999, Tan 2003) to child development in China (J. Li 2006).

In raising the issue of strangers in Confucianism King directs our attention what I see as the greatest challenges that strangers present. The first of these is the issue of categorical ambiguity—strangers do not fit into any category at all and are thus a source of ambiguity and liminality. As King notes, strangers do

not fit into any particular role and are thus outside the obvious bounds of Confucian social structure. In fact, strangers defy most categories. Even the word *stranger*, rooted in “strangeness” implies a lack of fitting into the bounds of that which we know and are therefore comfortable with. Strangers could be anything—long-lost relatives, or haberdashers, or mass murderers, or speakers of Hungarian. Their strangeness belies classification. From this point of view, King’s criticism is that Confucianism has no means of dealing with what is outside of its boundaries—no contingency for the ambiguity of those who are not part of one’s context and yet are at the same time.

The second challenge that strangers present is that they are often different in non-trivial ways. Strangers are often strange in the colloquial sense: different in race, custom, social class, age, mental and physical capacities, preference, belief, allegiance, and in many other areas besides. Difference naturally blocks empathy—the more different the other is, the less of ourselves we are able to see. One mode of responding to difference would be to deny or trivialize it, and we often see this in the modern, liberal approach to dealing with difference: men and women are really just humans, homosexual love is equivalent to heterosexual love (often represented symbolically by a lone = sign), and all religions are really just saying the same thing, which is what philosophical ethics

says too. Erasing the recognition of difference restores some capacity for empathy but ultimately deprives the world of its full richness. Moreover, not all difference can be erased by a simple change in perspective. Rather than ignore or avoid difference, we need to learn ways of encouraging or living with it without the crutch of false similarity. The issue of difference was unavoidable once we began to examine the nature of Confucian grouping and attempting to understand how its boundaries were drawn. Ambiguity and difference are thus primary themes of this study, and a review of how we have seen early Confucianism to respond to these issues will serve to help elicit some of the philosophical and practical implications upon which this study will close.

Strangers and Ambiguity

Strangers are ambiguous. They are neither friend nor foe, not yet brother and not yet other. Strangers have no roles, known relationships, or known allegiances. How does Confucianism respond to someone who is, structurally speaking, no one? How does a tradition undergirded by reciprocity deal with one who has no reciprocal ties?

The first and most facile answer is that no one is unconnected. We discovered that the boundaries of Confucian groups drawn by prototype and

coherence thinking tend to be hazy, and this leads to the perhaps overly-discussed conclusion that everyone is interconnected. The categories and groups drawn by Confucianism are only contextual, never absolute. We have seen this illustrated at every stage in the formation of the Confucian self. Individuals are primarily intersubjective and thus have porous personal boundaries that are partially constituted by all people encountered. Early Chinese thought implies that that we are all subject to the push and pull of intersubjective dynamics and that everyone is responsible in part for the co-creation of those around them. Because of this, the character of our contact with *everyone* with whom we cross paths, from our parents to total strangers, is a constitutive exchange of meaning. Though those most thickly intertwined with each other will have the greatest role in the process of mutual co-formation, every interpersonal encounter has the potential to inform a person's identity.

Just as the creation of the nexus of relationships we call a person is a contextually driven process, so too is the creation of the family. We have seen that families arise as a grouping that helps to fulfill the fundamental human desires for pleasure, continuance, and flourishing. However, according to coherence theory, the family only becomes intelligible as a true family when its internal harmony inspires other family groups to emulate it in such a way that it

causes the neighborhood (made up of all families together) to come together as a functioning whole. This process continues up in scale until the true kingdom brings peace to the world. According to this schema, all identities, large and small are dependent upon the proper functioning of a larger whole. Identities and thus boundaries also include the greater context as a constituent part of itself, meaning that boundaries are only a matter of contextual perspective. The successful coherence of one person implies the successful coherence of all, and the dysfunction of one ultimately means the incompleteness of all.

From this foundational theory of Confucian interrelatedness, we can safely say that Confucianism cannot treat our interactions with strangers as inconsequential. Whether we like it or not, the people whom we encounter are already contributing to our intersubjective constitution and vice versa—in short, all encounters are necessarily relational. This point of view neatly rules out the aggressive behavior that King fears will be exhibited by Confucians “who are no longer structurally situated in a relation-based web” (1985, 65). In truth, this point of view suggests that Confucians are never not structurally situated in a relation-based web; the fact that we are physically present and able to greet a stranger *already* implies a connection and reciprocal exchange of meaning. Though it might be true that structure and relationship are both minimal in

relationships with strangers, even when abroad, Confucians are continually engaged in reciprocal connectivity, and it is at this point that Confucian ritual begins its work of thickening and harmonizing that connection by guiding and scripting that interaction.

Ritual allows the quickening of solidarity in part by tapping into the ambiguity of strangers. Ritual and the subjunctive that it creates allows worlds that are “both-and.” This is, in fact, precisely the dynamic that allows growth and transformation through ritual. Self-cultivation (which is also other-cultivation) aims at the perfect, whole, sincere world, but it also recognizes that such a state is an end goal, impossible for the initiate. Moreover, as its own mythological history shows, even if such a world could be attained (as it presumably was during the rule of the sage kings), it is easily lost. It is not, then, primarily through the crystalline clarity of abstract, context-less categories that Confucianism approaches the world, but through the hazy, both-and, imaginative mode of rituality. From the Confucian point of view, as we strive to cultivate ourselves, we have the freedom to be both filial *and* angry, respectful *and* resentful, so long as the proper form of the ritual is fulfilled (and so long as we recognize that such practice is not ideal). And while the ultimate goal may be

perfect sincerity, I would suggest that it is only by living in the hazy, potential space of what *could be* that transformation is possible.

So when we approach strangers through ritual, we respond to the ambiguity of the strange with ambiguity of our own. Strangers are not part of our world, and yet by their presence they also are. Ritual allows us to respond by pretending that they are known while knowing that their meaning for us has not yet been determined. It is also in this hazy, potential, intersubjective space that ritual friends can really become friends. Ritual blurs the boundaries of outsider and insider by treating outsiders *as if* they were insiders who have roles to play and reciprocal ties and in the process, opens the potential space for the as if frame to become the most strongly experienced reality.

This is aided by the boundary blurring dynamics of physical interaction discussed in chapters three, four, and five. While physical interaction can be a mode of disambiguation—knowing someone on an embodied level can help us determine who they are more deeply than just knowing their thoughts—it also opens the door to the crossing of boundaries in other ways. For example, in chapter three we examined how we are biologically wired to experience the movement of others as our own movement. When observing the movement of others, mirror neurons stimulate the neurons within our own brain that we

would need to use to mimic that movement, thus blurring the lines between the movement of others and our own movement. Framed physical interaction, such as we saw in Collins' IR theory built upon such basic biological processes and ultimately demonstrated how framed, synchronous physical activity tends to blur the lines between self and other, creating the sensation of group unity. Similar dynamics in Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow created a similar effect in activity far more precise, directed, and dramatic than what we found in Collins' IR examples.

All interactive, physical ritual has the potential to participate in all of these dynamics to a greater or lesser extent, and it is in these dynamics that the theoretical ambiguity of personal boundaries noted in coherence theory can become experienced, salient boundaries. In both IR and flow, personal boundaries fade and the boundaries of the group (framed by the immediate frame of action) become the boundaries of the communal self, of the social coherence. In such a state, boundaries of sameness and difference are blurred — we are united into one glorious, coherent gestalt, but each are our own part of the whole. IR and flow stand on two sides of a spectrum. Flow represents the intense bonding possible between people exceedingly well attuned to their context (including others within that context), but generally requires a certain

level of expertise and mastery. IR requires only a token level of skill but requires external sources to direct the solidarity it requires. Confucian ritual enters this spectrum at all points. It runs the gamut in terms of required mastery, from simply bowing on a chariot (*Analects* 10.25) to the highly intricate liturgy described in the *san li*, and it situates the actions all within a frame of meaning. Thus, although ritual experts were more likely to be able to access the experience of group unity in a wider variety of situations, everyone--strangers and family members, commoners and ritual experts alike—can enter into this mode of bonding.

In addition to discussing physical differences, I also discussed the doctrinal ambiguity allowed by the lack of a central charismatic office separate from the state in Confucianism. This allowed a wide variety of developments between various figures over the years. There is little to be said on this particular point in regard to the question of strangers, other than the fact that the effect of doctrinal differences on community boundaries was likely diluted by the sheer number of other factors involved in community creation—physical proximity, ritual familiarity, personal and educational lineage, and shared goals among them. Strangers thus have many more inroads in such a situation than they would with a sect (understood in Weberian terms) of another religion.

It is true that strangers are ambiguous. But so are the ways in which we cause our worlds to cohere around us. Thus while it may be true that strangers have no explicit role in Confucian social categories and structures, it is untrue that they would stand outside of the Confucian network of relationality, and it is untrue that they can be treated disrespectfully simply because of their systematic ambiguity or their relatively tenuous local ties. Ultimately it is ambiguity that allows movement between categories and thus ambiguity that protects strangers and allows them to be quickly incorporated into the Confucian system. Hazy, porous, contextual boundaries such as we have seen mean that, theoretically at least, no one is ever absolutely on the outside. Ritual is transformative and creative in its performativity. If every ritual performance creates a subjunctive universe, every ritual interaction is a way of re-drawing the world around us, a way of creating a miniature coherence full of new possibilities and new relationships. Self and stranger can be made to cohere through ritual practice.

We cannot live without categories; the world would be too chaotic and unpredictable a place to live if we were unable to order its vastness and variability. But attempting to create a totalistic system of ultimately clear and true categories is an impossible endeavor. King's implied suggestion that Confucianism needs to clarify conceptual boundaries and make transparent the

relationship of the individual to the relationship of the group is one possible route to go, and it may be a fruitful one. But I would suggest that it is equally important for modern Confucians and everyone else to learn how to think in ambiguous terms and play with what *could be* rather than insist upon hard categorical lines delineating what is and what is not. The modern flight from ambiguity, which has affected both Asia and the West to varying degrees, has obscured the usefulness of such play, which allows the flexibility to manage all sorts of strangeness, not just the one source we find in strangers.

Strangers and Difference

As I attempted to draw the threads of this dissertation together and comment on the implications of this study for Confucian thought, a number of representative passages presented themselves to me for this section's keynote quotation. *Analects* 13.23 and the classic "harmonious but not same" formulation was possibly the best alternative to the passage I quoted above, but ultimately I decided that it was phrased in too abstract a manner to carry the full implications of this study. 11:4 on the other hand, expresses the same ideal in the vivid language of concrete interpersonal interactions and directly speaks to many of the main themes of this study.

On one hand, Confucius seems to criticize Yan Hui for his vigorous approval of all of Confucius' teachings. What is there to be learned from someone who agrees all of the time? In many ways, this speaks to the main point of this dissertation, that "sameness" —conceptual or otherwise—need not be the main or even primary mode of bonding between people, and that the contours of group boundaries can be sketched along lines of directed cooperation, not just along lines of agreement. On the other hand, Yan Hui is Confucius' favorite student, whom Confucius mourns like a son when his life is cut short. While embodied, goal oriented solidarity is a powerful bonding agent, there are limits to what it can accomplish without the help of more comprehensive systems of meaning. In this short passage and its context, we see both the Confucian valorization of harmonious difference and the intense closeness of those who see eye to eye on the matters of most import.

11.4 is thus mildly playful in its delightful ambiguity, and it serves as yet another reminder that crystalline clarity is not necessarily the best means of understanding or presenting a world of sociality that is itself complex and ambivalent. As we have seen above, ambiguity underpins many of the various dynamics we have discussed this far in this paper, and it serves as an important resource in understanding the Confucian approach to difference.

As we see in coherence thinking, one Confucian reaction to difference is to identify how a thing fits into and contributes to a larger coherence. This is, in some ways a mode of incorporation, and is not the same thing as denying difference by shunting the “true essence” of the objects in question to a broader level of categorization (e.g. Women and men are really just humans). Coherences are often made up of cooperating opposites—the idea of health, for example, must contain minor sicknesses like excretion as part of health itself. Sickness here is taken as different from health but contributory to health. Ideally, other forms of difference would be understood to be necessary contributors to a greater whole, just as disagreement with Confucius would help his cultivation. This approach thus attempts to highlight the underlying harmony between two different things as a method of dealing with difference. Under this rubric, strangers who are different might be valued for their difference and their ability to contribute to a greater project.

This attitude tends to underlie many of the criticisms Confucians level at their opponents. Confucian thought tends to see them not as being wrong, but one-sided. For example, Xunzi criticizes the Daoist Zhuangzi for knowing the ways of Heaven, but not knowing the ways of man and being unaware of the necessary separation of roles between the two. Zhuangzi is not wrong, per se, he

just does not have the whole picture, and thus cannot make the most efficacious recommendations as to how we ought to live. Difference is thus allowed a place, but contextualized in such a way as to contribute to the Confucian cause.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have the outright rejection of difference, and this also has a place in the Confucian tradition. Most dramatically, we have seen that some Confucian exemplars retreating from a world that has lost the Way in an outright rejection of contact. There they abide until such time as the world is once again compatible with the Way and their services are once again needed. In many ways their chosen seclusion is echoed by religious communities—some communities of Orthodox Jews, for example—who have also chosen to live meaningfully separately from the world, as much as is possible. Ultimately, however, particularly in the contemporary world, true separation is impossible, and the more obvious the boundaries drawn, the more present alterity and its dangers make themselves known. Though such a reaction is understandable, in the context of this study, I consider it the least interesting and the least useful of the possible responses to strangers this study of Confucianism offers us. The systematic refusal to treat with difference is ultimately a defensive measure, and unless one particular community truly has

the perfect system—a wholeness we have stated is not of this world—such isolation results in the impoverishment of everyone, stranger and brother alike.

The Confucian response outlined in this study that walks the gray area between integration and rejection relies heavily on ambiguity. We discussed ritual subjunctivity in the first section of this study, and it serves just as well in dealing with difference as it does dealing with ambiguity. Ritual allows us to treat difference as if it were similarity so long as the formal requirements are met and if we do not delve too deeply into the illusion created by formal convention. Moving on from there, we can also mention deference and yielding (*rang* 讓) as a Confucian virtue and the “seed” of ritual.

As we have seen, yielding is its own type of ambiguity, its own subjunctive, in which pride of place is given to another as a matter of civility. In such an exchange, yielding is a matter of form, and as such is both full of content and without content. On one hand, the symbolic meaning of yielding is that the position of the other is of more worth than one’s own and therefore deserves pride of place. On the other hand, like the “Fine!” response to the American “How are you?” the formal meaning and the intentions of the performer may not necessarily match. “Fine” actually conveys nothing of content beyond the fact that the respondent is willing to accede to ritual dictates. Because of this, yielding

allows a person to disagree violently with someone else while continuing to interact with them in a positive way. Yielding to strangers, then, involves giving pride of place to the other without sacrificing one's own hierarchy of values. It does not reduce the differences of the other to a shared commonality, nor does it refuse their position or attempt to convert it. Rather, yielding allows the stranger a place within one's own system, offering a chance for dialogue and communication with difference.

Since yielding is the seed of ritual, we also properly see it underwriting Confucian ritual as a whole, and this is particularly important concerning ritual as communal standard. Rituals attempt to order experience but do so by creating a general template that needs to be adjusted to concrete contexts. Unlike abstract categories, which require the creation of ever more specific categories when they applied to the details (Which blue shirt did you want? The azure one or the robin's-egg-blue one?), Confucian ritual requires a ritual "artist," one who knows how to merge concept with context. This is to say that it is a halfway point between fixed, abstract, universal categories (which are context-less) and the immediacy of the current context. Rituals are portable between contexts and have adjustment built into the concept as a whole. We have reviewed this in terms of ritual fluency (the ability to fluently make changes to the ritual script),

the analogy between ritual and grammar, the relationship between *li* and *yi* as appropriateness, and a brief comparison between fluency and casuistry as modes of applying general templates to specific contexts.

What we see, then, is that the script provided by ritual is vague, or “underdetermined” as Neville puts it. This in turn means that ritual as a standard has a built in ambiguity that changes according to circumstance. This was invoked most clearly in *Analects* 3.15, in which Confucius deferentially asks about the rituals to be performed at the Grand Temple. In my reading this was not only a matter of etiquette, it also served to orient Confucius to any local changes in the ritual process that had arisen as a result of contextual differences. What this means is that the reading of ritual understood as a single standard demanding that disparate contexts conform for membership in the community of ritual is actually a distortion of Confucius’ original intentions. In this reading, ritual conforms to the needs of context as much as context is required to conform to it. This view is further backed by the view of the *Liji* which clearly states that

ritual follows what is appropriate, and when “discharging a mission to another state, its customs are to be observed.”²¹⁸

The orientation of *li* toward fitting into context thus presents a fascinating method of dealing with difference. *Li* yields to difference, allowing its practitioners to dialogue with others and perform acts that are not strictly canonical in order to defer to others. These non-canonical acts, however, are still *li*. Through yielding, *li* incorporates the customs of others into itself for the sake of building community. Those customs are framed away from the main corpus of *li* and kept locked in specific contexts so that they do not pollute the remainder of the Confucian corpus, but at the edges and borders we see that *li* manages to both include and frame away the customs of others through the method of yielding. In many ways, this is reminiscent of the “wild card” modality Ziporyn uses to describe Zhuangzi’s pivot of the way perspective (2009, online supplement). Just as the wild card changes to fit whatever context it finds itself

²¹⁸禮從宜，使從俗。(Liji “Qu Li Shang” 1.4.) Note that here the word “customs” is the same word *su* used to describe customs that were not included within the corpus of *li*, but serving according to those customs when abroad is *li*, perhaps because it is appropriate. Given that *li* is rooted in yielding and deference, we can see from this short passage that there are probably times when complete, sincere transparency in performing a ritual is not what Confucians would suggest, particularly when foreign customs are inimical to Confucian sensibilities.

in, so too does the perspective of the Daoist sage pivot to match. What I suggest is that in the process of yielding and deferring, *li* holds its own version of a wild card. Expanding on this metaphor, we can say that *Li* is like a full deck, with stable cards of its own that cannot be changed by others (the main corpus of *li*), but that it also contains wild cards that it can play in order to allow interaction with difference (*li* undertaken in the presence of strangers). In this, *li* allows Confucians to be Confucian by acting like non-Confucians in non-Confucian settings, even if such rituals run against the Confucian grain.

We can take this thinking one step further. If foreign rituals are not compatible with Confucianism, Confucian practitioners will frame them for use only when abroad in those foreign lands. On the other hand, if foreign customs and values can be harmonized with Confucian values, this view implies that they might be able to undergo a “translation” process between contexts. We can easily imagine ritual attempting to impress and express its values in multiple languages and through multiple forms that appropriate to the context. Contexts with strangers in them are always different from contexts without strangers. We have seen that intelligibility is part of the purpose of ritual; the ritual forms allow the sweetening of porridge with dates to be considered filial (*Liji* “Neize” 12.3), or sitting on the front edge of one’s mat to be considered respectful (“Qu Li

Shang” 1.19). Just as it is impolite to speak in a language foreign to a guest, we might see Confucian ritual change slightly to honor and defer to those who are not completely familiar with it, and so that it might remain intelligible. This should not be understood as Confucianism compromising itself so much as properly fulfilling its purpose within context by communicating in a way that is intelligible. At the extreme edge of this line of thinking, we might find rituals that look nothing like the Confucian originals but are true to the meaning of the original ritual and thus might also be considered to shelter underneath the broad Confucian umbrella of *li*. Deference thus does not imply compromising the core of Confucianism; rather, it allows Confucian ritual to engage with difference and potentially assume other guises.

No culture is without ritual, even those that valorize sincerity and eschew the formalism of ritual. What I suggest here that yielding allows Confucianism either to enter into other cultures via their own sources of compatible ritual, or at least dance with other cultures while keeping them separate from the core of the tradition. This suggestion is in line with what Robert Neville has previously suggested—that “Instead of thinking about world history or our societies in terms of narratives, we should learn to think of them in terms of vast, complicated dances of multiple, interacting rituals.” (Neville 2012, 305) All

narratives, Neville notes, include some people while excluding others from the story a particular society would like to tell about itself. Engaging others at the level of multiple interacting rituals—theirs and ours—avoids the exclusionary process of propositional narrative telling, and forces us to engage with the other seriously within their own experience, perspective, and social location.

Given that the issue of living with difference is possibly one of the most pressing issues in contemporary times, this discussion of difference brings us finally to the last section of this conclusion, which comments briefly on the possible implications this study has for contemporary Confucian practice.

Contemporary Confucianism

Just as early Confucian communities seem to have been, contemporary Confucianism is ensconced in a cocoon of ambiguity and difference. For better or for worse, Confucianism has been cut loose from many of the tethers that kept it stable since the Han dynasty adopted it as a legitimizing influence. John Makeham's book *Lost Soul* on contemporary Confucianism popularized Yu Yingshi's 1988 metaphor of Confucianism as a lost soul, loosed from the institutional structures that had both controlled it and given it expression. Yu worried about whether it would be able to return to some embodied form and if it did what form it would take (Makeham 2008).

Almost thirty years later, we are now just beginning to see Confucian revivals taking a number of forms, many of which are vastly different from the forms we have discussed in this study on early Confucianism. Many of these draw upon accretions that have joined the flow of Confucianism over the last two thousand years of its history. As a result, we see a much broader range of Confucian activities now than we likely would have seen in early China. Confucius temples, for example, have since become mainstream (according to Wilson 2002, first beginning in the fifth century CE), and we are now beginning to see a return of rites performed with Confucius as an object of veneration. Sometimes this takes the more traditional form of offerings at the temples themselves and certainly large ceremonial offerings at Confucius' hometown of Qufu (which date back to the Han dynasty), but other novel rituals are beginning to surface, such as the Confucian marriage renewal ceremonies noted by Anna Sun (2013, 324-326). In 2004, 180 married couples stood before a statue of Confucius and recited a newly authored "Manifesto of True Marital Love," promising to be faithful and never divorce. Other current manifestations have included the creation of "classics reading courses" (讀經班 *dujing ban*), the appearance of small Confucian primary and secondary education institutions, and the spread of the *Rules for Students and Children* (弟子規 *dizigui*), a Qing

dynasty document filling out the guidelines for young people given in *Analects*

1.6. In contemporary times, this has become popular as a manual for teaching children how to act morally (Sun 2013, 324). This is just a very brief survey, but even this small slice of contemporary Confucianism offers a bewildering array of difference.

Each of these manifestations of Confucianism is radically different from the others and have their roots in different times, practices, and aims. If we continue to apply prototype theory and the fuzzy boundary understanding of group formation to each of these manifestations, we can allow each the Confucian name without forcing it to fit some preconceived mold of what Confucianism ought to be, with the caveat that each will likely be categorized as a certain “type” of Confucianism sooner or later. This is one of the fruitful aspects of the current layer of ambiguity surrounding Confucianism today; without a central institution creating “core” propositions or writing the main narrative of Confucianism, none of these different manifestations of Confucian life can be excluded from the main narrative, and each has its own claim to being authentic Confucianism that does not deny or trivialize the claims of others. This amount of difference within Confucianism today does present challenges, particularly for interactions between these various understandings of the

Confucian tradition. This dynamic also mirrors the greater issue of cultural, religious, and social difference that we see becoming more and more pressing an issue in global dynamics. This is also a place where this study might offer some small suggestions as to how to proceed.

The great temptation of this project has been to overstate the potential that pre-conceptual bonding provides a key resource for inter-cultural, inter-religious interaction. Nevertheless, because pre-conceptual bonding does not require agreement concerning conceptual interpretation or greater meaning structures, so long as it is sensibly applied, we can say that it provides an avenue for people to generate solidarity across the boundaries of propositionally-based groups. Muslims and Buddhists, Americans and Nigerians, American Democrats and American Republicans, communists and capitalists could theoretically build a solidarity between them by creating the appropriately civilized rituals to govern their interactions.

This is a project that Robert Neville has been advocating for many years. We can see the nascent formations of this in his discussion of ritual in *Normative Cultures* (1995) which in large part addresses the issue of a diversity of cultures, each of which claims to be normative. His discussion of ritual in this volume sees ritual as a means of surpassing instrumental rationalism and entering high

civilization. Following Xunzi, Neville notes that ritual as a class of action is cross-culturally normative in part because it allows the actualization and fulfillment of basic human desires, sensibilities, and endowments. They refine animal impulses and give them their fullest, most human expression by directing and channeling them appropriately and beautifully, thus allowing their satisfactory fulfillment. Joy at finding a partner is made sublime through the sharing of that joy in marriage and the rituals of family life. Similarly, grief at loss of a loved one is channeled, relieved and woven into who we are by our rituals—the obituary, the eulogy, the funeral and other rituals. In this ability to give grace and fulfillment to the raw, underdetermined stuff of human nature, ritual becomes a unifying trait that exists on a pan-human level. (174-176).

In recent years, Neville has explicitly advocated for ritual's ability to extend humaneness across social barriers. Continuing to follow Xunzi, Neville notes that

Xunzi sought for large-scale social rituals within which each social class could function in a harmonious dance with the others, paying deference to the others even when not sharing the values or interests of the others. The sharp point of Xunzi's conception of ritual is that the individuals and groups participating in the rituals do not need to share common interests and in fact can be in deep conflict, so long as they play the rituals together so as to keep and effective political economy going. (2013, 302)

Xunzi's project, Neville suggests, should be our project; we need to find rituals that allow engagement across social barriers, whatever their source. This is no easy task. In *Normative Cultures*, Neville also demonstrated exactly how difficult finding such rituals are. Even something as simple as a handshake between a Korean student and an American professor involves deep negotiations in how respect is appropriately shown—while Americans appreciate respect expressed in the openness of eye contact, Koreans express respect to a social superior by means of deferential avoidance of eye contact, perhaps on the assumption that it would imply equality and thus be presumptuous from a social inferior to a superior. Thus where Americans might see Koreans as being shifty, those acclimated to Korean culture would see American habits as presumptuous (1995, 172). My discussion of differences in ritual scripting and meaning in the previous chapter is, in some respects, a re-articulation of this point—that the conceptual aspects of ritual interaction must be aligned or the differences imagined away before they can serve as a mode of bonding.

It is to this point in Neville's project that my discussion of pre-conceptual ritual bonding and the ritual subjunctive might be able to provide some contribution, for it provides some tentative guidelines as to the nature of how such rituals might be settled upon. On one hand, scripted rituals can be self-

consciously bracketed, so as to allow an open interpretation as to their meaning. So long as overt discussion of the ritual's meaning is also ritually taboo, the ritual subjunctive can allow the free play of the imagination to build solidarity. The lighting of candles mentioned in section 6.5.1 is a very simple example of this, but need not stop there. These boundary-crossing rituals can also take the further step of specifically incorporating a physicality that engages the various modes of pre-conceptual bonding discussed in chapters four and five. While consciously incorporating such elements might seem to make such rituals feel unnatural, this need not be the case. Groups often create such rituals as almost instinctive forms of bonding. Gang greeting rituals, for example, are often lengthy, challenging, highly physical performances that incorporate natural, physical movements into complex, synchronous patterns. Part of the bonding in such cases is the ready awareness that knowing the greeting creates obvious in-group boundaries. The physicality of the resultant interaction does also play a part, however; it becomes a miniature interaction ritual that creates low levels of physical and emotional entrainment. While creating universal greeting rituals along similarly physical lines would lose the bonding that comes from in-group exclusivity, they would retain the benefits of physical entrainment and IR. More physically complex

rituals are more cumbersome, but have a decidedly higher yield when it comes to social bonding.²¹⁹

Over and above this difficulty, however, Neville notes that though finding commonly performable rituals is vital, it is not sufficient by itself.

We need the rituals so that people across social barriers can engage one another. But that also is not enough. We need to learn to play those rituals so that in the very engagement with those others we can come to recognize and defer to the others in their particular subjectivities. This includes recognizing conflicting interests and perhaps even deep hatred. (2013, 306)

This is perhaps where our discussion of deference comes to be of aid—as discussed above, deference is that which allows us to engage ritually with others on their own terms. Perhaps, given time, we might find, develop, or translate rituals to serve as ritual bridges that belong both to Confucianism and its interlocutors (or between different groups within Confucianism).²²⁰ These rituals could serve as a “potential space” within which solidarity can be built while

²¹⁹ The concept of intercultural greeting rituals has the same problem as the concept of a universal language: namely that it is difficult to get people to learn it if it is not an integral part of their birth culture. Even China, which imposes Mandarin as a common tongue, has difficulty in educating all of its citizens in Mandarin, and it has state authority backing its efforts. Without a central authority requiring a second language or set of customs, it is perhaps difficult to

²²⁰ Saying that a ritual belongs to both is to say that it belongs entirely to neither of them. Just as stated about the subjunctive of the baseball game in chapter six, since no one can claim authority over the baseball game as a whole, no one can affix their own meaning to the ball game (“baseball is only for exercise, not fun!”) to the exclusion of those assigned by other participants.

allowing each the subjunctive space to understand the rituals in its own way. Part of what this study also suggests, however, is that moving to universal, “global” rituals may not be the most appropriate first extension of this idea. Since bonding happens most readily on the local scale, rituals specifically oriented toward or translated for interacting with one other culture would likely see the most efficacy.

I will make one final, parting suggestion, this one dedicated to my fellow academic researchers of Confucianism. Over twenty years ago, Zheng Jiadong warned that the intellectualization of Confucianism was a threat to the core of its identity. Zheng saw the systemization of *ru* thought into ordered, abstract, academic theory as a divergence from the core of *rujia*, which he understood to rely on practical testing in lived situations rather than on systematic logic for its veracity. He was particularly worried about the separation of knowledge from moral action and sensed that concern and responsibility for the world were aspects of the tradition that lay outside the scope of the “New Confucian Studies” spearheaded by New Confucian scholars such as Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili, Feng Youlan, and Mou Zongsan (Makeham 2008, 139-141).

As noted in the introduction to this work, King’s article, written nine years before Zheng’s first article on the subject in 1994, also contributes to this

intellectualized understanding of Confucianism by focusing only on the conceptual aspects of the tradition, and by searching the early works of Confucianism for moral theory. Given that Confucianism had not been fully practiced for many years at that point, and could not be verified by a cultivated Confucian engaged in lived situations, this was a reasonable approach for King to take. Nevertheless, this approach obscures all of the richness of the embodied modes of interaction discussed in this study.

At heart, then, this study is a defense of Zheng Jiadong's position on the character of Confucianism as a lived tradition concerned with the promotion of the way rather than an intellectual exercise in abstracted ethics. Regardless of how deeply we as scholars dredge the Confucian textual canons to highlight constructive conceptual resources (certainly an admirable pursuit), we cannot fully understand what Confucianism (or any lived tradition) means without considering how the richness of direct experience and daily life form the background for any concept, theory, or system of meaning. This study represents one small step in attempting to fill a very large gap concerning the embodied aspects of daily life and daily interaction, but there is certainly more to be done, particularly in the area of Confucian ritual interaction. Confucianism is not to be

found only in the pages of its canon, but in the way the content of those pages intersects the richness of experience, physicality, and interpersonal connection.

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EDUCATION:

BOSTON UNIVERSITY, Boston, MA, Fall 2006 - Present

Graduate Division of Religions Studies

Ph.D Candidate, projected dissertation defense: May 2016

- Dissertation: *Confucian Ritual and Solidarity: Physicality, Meaning, and Connection in Classical Confucianism*. (Major Advisors: John Berthrong, Robert Weller)
- Comprehensive exams:
 - *Classical Chinese Philosophy: Li (ritual) and Cheng (sincerity)*
 - *Religion in Contemporary China*
 - *Ritual Theory*

TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY, Beijing, People's Republic of China

Enrolled non-degree student, Department of Foreign Languages,
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Major: History, concentration Asia

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

EMMANUEL COLLEGE, Boston, MA

Adjunct Faculty, Department of Theology and Religious Studies,
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- Taught Chinese Religion (HRS2215), covering Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, as Shang divination, popular religion, and contemporary religious practice in China from both textual and anthropological perspectives

BOSTON UNIVERSITY, Boston, MA

Adjunct Faculty, Boston University Writing Program, 2012-2013
and **BU Graduate Writing Fellow**, August 2010- Fall 2013

- Courses developed and taught:

WR100: *The Immortal and the Sage: Self Cultivation in Classical China*

WR150: *To Embody the Way: Studies in Early Chinese Spirituality*

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Lecturer, Department of Religion, Summer 2012

- Taught World Religions East (RN103). Covered Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto through the lenses of cosmology, ultimate concerns, and the sacred/profane dichotomy

Teaching Fellow/Research Assistant, August 2007- May 2010

TA Courses: RN100: Religion and Culture

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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

- “Yielding Joy: Charismatic Authority in Classical Confucianism,” accepted for the 2016 annual meeting.
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ACADEMIC SERVICE:

ASIAN ETHNOLOGY, Nanzan University, Japan and Boston University

Journal Editorial Assistant, September 2012 - present

- Provide editorial assistance in the form of article reviews, style editing, and copyediting.
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WORK EXPERIENCE:

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Program Coordinator, Program in Scripture and the Arts, 2015-2016

- Coordinate with speakers concerning lecture topics and logistics
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