Name

Professor

Course

Date

Suggested by Writer

Ritual Theory and Practice

A. Emperor Shun experiences a moral predicament

1. Premeditated choice

a. To marry or not to marry

2. Needs discernment

3. The teaching of judgement

a. Actual practice

b. Family

c. Teaching

d. Ritual

B. Ritual is a blend of actual practice, family, and teaching

C. Illustration: Sacrifice/Ancestry

1. Virtue and sacrifice: righteous accomplishment

Ritual – Illustration

A. The cycle of life

a. Conception

b. Coming of Age

c. Matrimony

d. Death and commemoration

e. Family ceremonies

B. Public ceremonies

a. National days

b. New Year's (Seasonal) revering models

c. Elections

C. Rituals converge meaning in a moment

Rituals are:

A. Rule-bound script

B. Collection action

C. Moment (Beginning, Middle, End). Like any ritual, it asserts dominance. Also, it has power and directs everyone to the same moment of meaning

D. Of Concentrated meaning

i. The nation

ii. Family responsibility

iii. Virtuous achievement

iv. Models

Forms of Ritual

A. Symbolic

a. Respecting the flag

B. Causative

a. Cause: Influence (Change in people, righteousness, and the world)

b. Prayer (in some)

C. Cognitive Learning through doing and through doing changing

a. Developing character

Ritual of the Confucian

A. Cognitive

B. Learning principles of Institutional and self-design

a. Borrowing from family roles

b. Self-cultivation

c. Internalizing incentives

I. Justice as mutuality

II. Responsibility

III. Ingenuity

d. Ritual offers a guide for the world on actions

Enduring legacies: Ritual as:

A. Boundary creator

a. Family and Food

B. Attachment strategy

a. Ritualized gift exchange

C. Political ceremonies

a. National days

b. New Years

D. Centre of contemporary religion

a. Buddhism

b. Taoism

To understand ritual theory and practice, it is better to provide an illustration. When it begins to snow in the small township of Kikonai in northern Japan, a multitude meets at the courtyard of a Shinto shrine. This crowd is concentrated on the doorway of the shrine building that is placed perfectly against the mountain side. Afterward, four young men that have serious looks arise, standing with folded arms across their chests. They are confronting the cold and are naked except for thin cloth hats and bright white loin cloths. The young men bite on pieces of cloth to ensure that their teeth are not prattling. After pausing, the four men go down the stone steps of the shrine and ascent to a raised straw stage (Dresser).

While facing the multitude, each man kneels down, with the most senior of their group pouring cold water on their naked backs. This process is imitated three times and ultimately water is slowly poured on the heads of the four mean. When the process is finalized, these men quietly climb down to the shrine building, with steam evaporating from their red backs. However, they have not endured the whole procedure as they will come back in around two hours to start the whole thing again. This pattern is done again every few hours for two days. Moreover, every participant promises to repeat the two-day ordeal for four successive years, a pledge that none has broken in the 150 years of the practice (Dresser).

The display of resolution is a part of a Shinto water-purification ritual called the misogi. This is the main performance of a known local event in Kikonai. This specific festival is uncommon for the strictness of the ritual performance involved but in other regards it is completely characteristic of the forms of festival ceremonies (matsuri) practiced throughout Japan (Dresser). The popular matsuri event in large cities can lure multitudes of bystanders and these festivals are one of the most essential annual events in remote villages.

How does one determine whether the matsuri events are religious, communal, or cultural? This kind of an explanation depends on placing a permanent obstruction between religion and culture, and also neglects a variety on inopportune truths. Many of these matsuri events take place in temples or shrines, are arranged by associated volunteers and clerics, are full of religious representation/ worshipful prayers, and depend on metaphysical ideas such as purification. Additionally, there are candidly secular rituals in Japan like the Yosakoi Soran dance performances where teams compete through organized dances. This increases the salience of the religiosity of matsuri and other similar events (Dresser). This leads to the questioning of whether Japan is non-religious considering the strong rituals that part of its culture.

There are two primary religious traditions in Japan: Buddhism which extended from Korea and China to Japan approximately 1500 years ago and Shintoism which is a native religion concentrated on spirits that are known as kami. These two traditions are part of the matsuri events because many festivals are related to particular temples and are planned to correspond with religious holidays such as Shōgatsu (New Year festivities) and Obon (a Buddhist event revering ancestors) (Dresser). However, it is also a fact that few matsuri attendees are knowledgeable about the doctrines inherent, including the specific spirits that a festival is meant for. Regardless of the reputation of ritual events and the commonness of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan, it might be fair to say that Japan is a secular nation with reduced concern for religion.

Self-cultivation

Self-cultivation is a multifaceted procedure that incorporates guiding the essential breath (zhiqi), sustaining life (yangsheng), nurturing one's character and reinforcing the self (xiushen ziqiang). Additionally, self-cultivation should be directed through the ideologies of ritual and

devotion. If there is an observance of the necessities of ritual and gauges conduct by truth, good order infiltrates each aspect of their life (Yao 80).

The way of learning is a method of self-cultivation that amasses virtue and expands the moral senses. Self-cultivation not only upholds instinctive good nature, but is also a means of offering service to heaven. Mengzi states that having offered complete attainment to the heart, a person is capable of comprehending his/her nature; if one comprehends personal nature, one understands heaven; if one preserves the heart and cultivates his/her nature, this is offering service to heaven (Yao 80).

Through self-cultivation, an individual attains absolute transformation and greatness that would give one the title sage. Through this, Mengzi communicates his enthusiastic perspective of human fate by stating that everybody can be a sage and popular sages are normal people (Yao 80).

Xunzi's discussion on self-cultivation and learning focuses his standpoint of the significance of ritual: a person without ritual will not thrive; any activity devoid of ritual will not be accomplished; and a country lacking ritual shall not have peace (Yao 80).

Moreover, through self-cultivation and learning, it becomes possible to comprehend the instructions of sages, and have the ability to confine selfish needs and changing personal nature. Individual inborn desires can be met according to principles, whereas personal actions, when governed by ritual, could satisfy a person's life (Yao 80).

Self-cultivation is understood by Yulgok as the basis of a cordial and peaceful society. Yulgok recommended solid doctrines, for instance, having the intention of being a sage; correcting the body through proper conduct; reading and contemplating on the standards, and maintaining calmness to uphold the mind/heart (Yao 121).

Personal choice is the director in self-cultivation. The challenge in being nurtured and then reaching to the principle results firstly from individuals' inherent limitations, for instance, from opting for sexual contentment to moral transformation or becoming less motivated to seek learning than to pursue the fulfilment of physical desires. This difficulty might also come from our social susceptibility in an adverse environment. Protecting against corruption, it is vital to maintain our nature and the quest for uprightness in social collaboration. Because of this, the mind/heart has an important function in Confucian self-transformation (Yao 156).

When spiritual and moral predisposition intrinsic in human nature is aggravated by the intricacies of external reasons, the mind/heart is degraded. Although it is vital to eliminate these reasons (an explanation for why Confucianism prioritizes involvement in political life and the transformation of social frameworks), many Confucians assert that the social reasons for human corruption cannot be entirely eliminated unless most people have nurtured their nature and transformed their characters to be one of righteousness and truth (Yao 156).

Most Confucians believe that it is more imperative to begin acting on personal nature by participating in self-cultivation than to denounce others or other external forces for personal failure. Confucian discussions on the self question at a deeper level into a person's moral psychology. These discourses hold people accountable for their future and motivate them to explore their minds/hearts for the facilities of being good (Yao 157).

Lacking self-cultivation results in the authority of selfishness in personal relationships and to the misapprehension and suspicion of which leads to conflict if not handled properly (Yao 179).

Self-cultivation is the channel through which harmony and peace can be reflected in the world, and pursuing learning with the intention of self-realization makes one attain anything,

while pursuing learning for others makes one lose the self (Yao 213). Also, self-cultivation is not the external analysis of things but is mainly an internal procedure of examining the mind/heart and contemplating on instinctive sources of sagehood (Yao 220).

Works Cited

Dresser, Sam. "Can Religion Be Based on Ritual Practice Without Belief? Essays." *Aeon*, 15 Sept. 2016, aeon.co/essays/can-religion-be-based-on-ritual-practice-without-belief. Accessed 1 Aug. 2017.

Yao, Xinzhong. *An Introduction to Confucianism*. Cambridge, 2000.