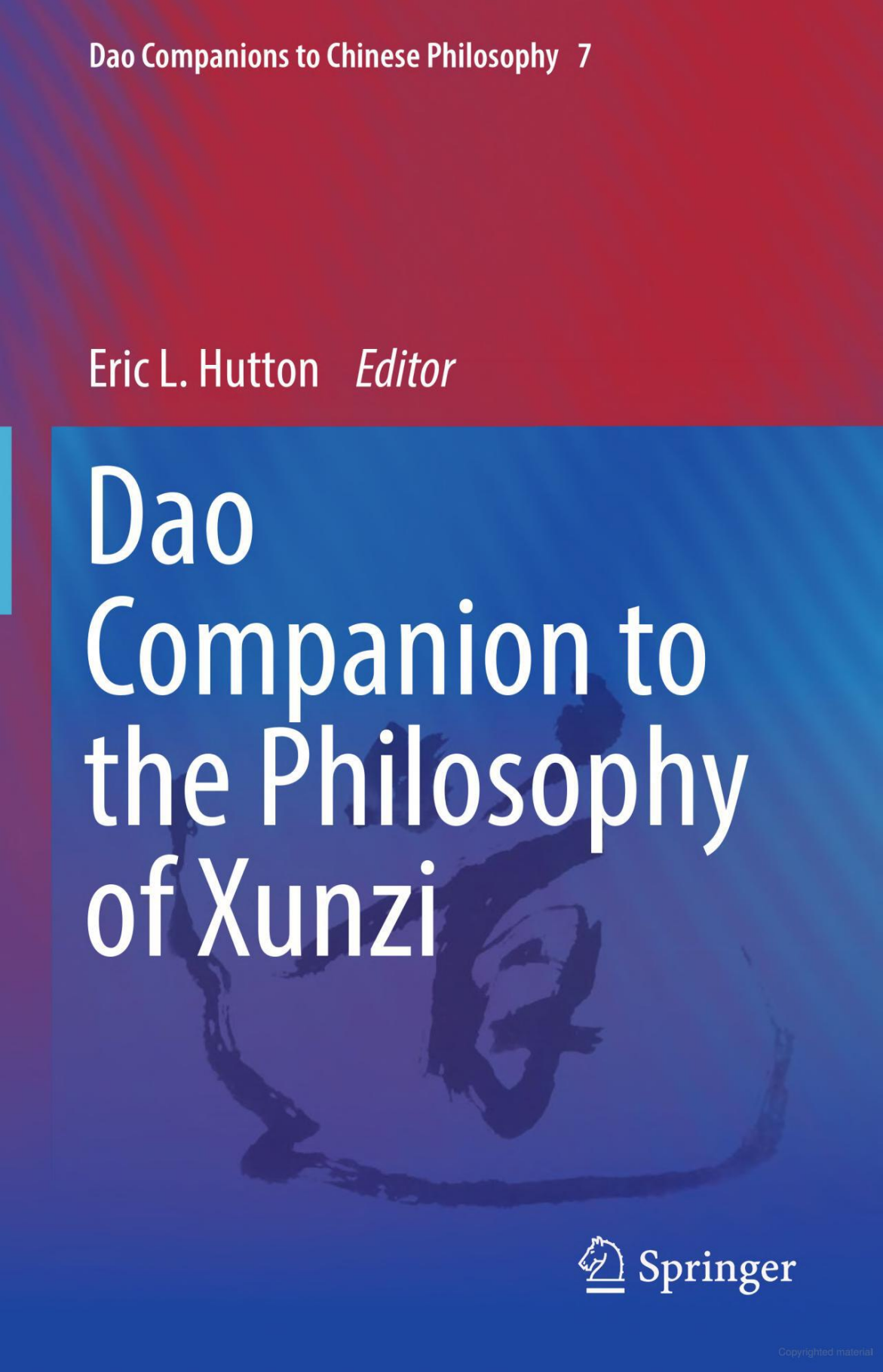
Dao Companions to Chinese Philosophy 7

Eric L. Hutton *Editor*

Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi



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Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi

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Michael Nylan is professor of history at Berkeley. Her books discuss urban history, pleasure theories, and reception of the classics, with two translations, and a third, the *Documents*, in progress. Her essays discuss empire, economics, forgeries and reproductions, the legalities of sex, historiography and rhetoric, and feminism.

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Abbreviations

In order to facilitate consistency of references across chapters and to aid readers in locating passages from the *Xunzi*, the following abbreviations for references are observed throughout this volume.

For the Chinese text of the *Xunzi*:

HKCS Lau, D.C. 劉殿爵, and F.C. Chen 陳方正, eds. 1996. *A Concordance to the Xunzi* 荀子逐字索引. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press 商務印書館. Cited according to the numbering system used in the concordance: chapter number/page number/line number(s).
(*Note: Not all authors in this volume follow the exact edition of the text given in this concordance, so the listing of these numbers should not be taken as an endorsement of that edition on their part but is rather primarily for reference purposes*.)

For English translations of the *Xunzi*:

H Hutton, Eric. 2014. *Xunzi: The Complete Text*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Cited as: page number, or page number.line number.

K Knoblock, John. 1988–94. *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 3 volumes (vol. 1: 1988, vol. 2: 1990, vol. 3: 1994). Stanford: Stanford University Press. Cited as: volume number in Roman numerals. page number, sometimes followed by further reference given as chapter number.paragraph number per Knoblock's translation.

W Watson, Burton. 2003. *Xunzi: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press. Cited as: page number.[1]

[1] Note: the pagination of this edition differs slightly from the earlier 1963 edition of Watson's translation.

Introduction

Eric L. Hutton

Among surviving texts from ancient China, the *Xunzi* 荀子 is one of the richest, but often its ideas and their impact on East Asian thinkers have not been adequately appreciated. As anyone well versed in Chinese history will know, this situation is due in large part to the views of a number of important Chinese scholars in the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE). They regarded the text and its purported author Xunzi, after whom it is named, as presenting an "impure" or even "heretical" version of Confucianism that threatened to obscure what they took to be the authentic tradition that Confucius had transmitted, and they therefore directed study away from the *Xunzi*. The adverse influence of these Song dynasty thinkers on subsequent scholars' interest in and assessment of the *Xunzi* has to some extent persisted even down to the present, but over the past few decades, that negative influence has been rapidly giving way to a newfound appreciation for the text.

This volume aims to further this trend and help open the text's riches to Western students and scholars, as well as to highlight the substantial impact the text has had on thinkers both inside and outside China, even on those who were critical of it. Those who are just beginning to study the *Xunzi* will hopefully find this book a valuable aid for deepening their understanding of it and some of the debates that surround it, but I believe even that those who have already devoted substantial time to examining the text will discover useful new insights among the various chapters.

Because the *Xunzi* touches on many different topics that are of interest to those in a number of different fields, no single disciplinary approach is adequate to do full justice to its broad and varied content. Hence, both in selecting the chapters to be written and in seeking contributors to write them, I have striven to include a variety of disciplines, though the overall design of the volume is weighted toward a philosophical perspective on the text, in accordance with the mission of the *Dao*

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Companion series. Here is not the place to offer an extended defense of this weighting, so for those who might question it or prefer some different weighting, for now I will merely say that no exclusive claim is intended—the arrangement here is *not* supposed to represent the only proper way to approach the text.

Along with the different disciplinary approaches adopted by the contributors, one will find here divergent interpretations of the *Xunzi*, and even among contributors from the same discipline, one will also find disagreements. Thus, this volume is far from presenting a unified view of the text: apart from the controversies in the interpretive literature reviewed *in* the individual chapters, one can see some of those controversies playing out *between* the chapters as well. The disagreements reveal that, as with any other classic, the *Xunzi* provides fertile ground for readers, from which they have drawn—and will continue to draw—different lessons.

In the first chapter, Martin Kern discusses the way that the *Xunzi* is put together as a text and the implications of its construction for how we should read it. In the course of giving a careful review of chapter 1 of the *Xunzi*, Kern points out how the text incorporates different stylistic elements, such as rhyming, parallel construction, and repetition. Furthermore, Kern highlights how the various pieces of the text do not form extended deductive arguments, continuous narratives, or didactic anecdotes, and in doing so, Kern cautions against reading the *Xunzi* as if it were a typical philosophical treatise, history, or mere collection of vignettes. Instead, Kern suggests, chapter 1 is "a chapter largely built around individual and mutually unrelated sections that dance around a set of common themes" (22), and he further suggests that "we are dealing not with an authored chapter, but with a compiled one that loosely connects elements from diverse sources" (23). On this basis, Kern concludes by arguing that insofar as chapter 1 displays such features (as do other chapters of the text), then it will be a mistake to think of the text as a whole as if it were authored by a single author with an individual point of view, and instead we should see it as mostly "a compilation of mutually independent illustrations of the principal ideas associated with Xunzi and his circle" (30).

Among such principal ideas, the proper approach to moral cultivation is a theme that runs throughout the *Xunzi* and can serve to thread together many of its discussions. Thus, Aaron Stalnaker's contribution, which comes after Kern's, not only offers an in-depth examination of this crucial theme but also provides a useful introduction to several topics that subsequent chapters in this volume cover more extensively. Stalnaker reviews the main elements of Xunzi's[1] proposed curriculum, namely, the study of classics, the practice of ritual, and performance and enjoyment of music, and he considers the important role that teachers are supposed to play in leading one through this curriculum. Stalnaker also explains the connections

[1] Despite the worries raised by Kern, here and below I will switch freely—as do many other authors in this volume—between speaking of ideas "in the *Xunzi*" and speaking of them as "Xunzi's ideas." I offer a partial explanation and defense of this latter way of speaking in the introduction to Hutton (2014). I do not, however, mean to imply that all the other authors here who also speak of "Xunzi's ideas" as I do share my exact same reasoning as articulated in that publication, though perhaps many of them would be sympathetic to my views stated there.

between these elements and human psychology in Xunzi's view, with particular attention to how these elements are supposed to transform a person's nature from its original, unlovely state and lead the person to goodness. On this latter point, Stalnaker also traces out Xunzi's conception of the stages of moral development that take one from being a *xiaoren* 小人 ("petty man") to being a *shi* 士 ("educated person"), then to being a *junzi* 君子 ("gentleman"), and finally to becoming a *sheng* 聖 ("sage"). Stalnaker ends with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Xunzi's position and suggests, among other points, that while Xunzi should have given more attention to those of our innate endowments that can contribute to moral development, on the other hand Xunzi's "insistence on the need to view people as embedded in networks of relationships with specific guidelines and responsibilities, fulfilling particular offices and roles" (64), is a particularly plausible view that can, for instance, help answer contemporary thinkers who, drawing from social psychology, have criticized virtue-based programs of moral education such as Xunzi's.

In the next chapter, I give an overview of Xunzi's approach to ethics. The overview concentrates on four major concepts in the text, *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *li* 禮, and *dao* 道, and considers their relation to four concepts that have figured prominently in Western ethical theory or in previous scholars' analysis of Xunzi's ethics, namely, virtues, social roles, rules for behavior, and consequences of action. I provide an interpretation of how the four Chinese concepts are related in Xunzi's thought and consider some of the similarities and differences between Xunzi's ethics and Western varieties of ethical theory. As part of this analysis, I argue that Xunzi believes that the proper way to live cannot be completely spelled out in any particular formula but can only be fully known and understood by becoming a virtuous person. The chapter ends with a consideration of the ways in which this aspect and other features of Xunzi's view may impact one's assessment of it as worth adopting or rejecting.

Eirik Harris' contribution addresses Xunzi's views on politics. Harris argues that although Xunzi never questions monarchy as a form of government, he does develop a sophisticated political philosophy that addresses fundamental questions of political legitimacy and political organization, which can be seen through analyzing Xunzi's discussions of why humans need to *qun* 群 ("form community"), why *fen* 分 ("allotments") are crucial for accomplishing that task, and what sorts of *fen* ought to be adopted. Contrary to some who have wanted to see Xunzi as a consequentialist, Harris proposes that Xunzi's political philosophy should be seen as an extension of his virtue-based approach to ethics, and he then uses this approach to explain Xunzi's views about the difference between the *wang* 王 ("true king") and the *ba* 霸 ("hegemon") and why the former is to be preferred over the latter on both moral and political grounds, an issue which is crucially important to Xunzi.

Among the more contentious questions in Xunzi scholarship is how to make sense of Xunzi's metaethical position, which is the subject of David Wong's contribution. Wong starts by identifying two pairs of opposed positions. The first is "constructivism" versus "realism." The second is "relativism" (which on Wong's definition includes what is frequently labeled "pluralism") versus "absolutism." Wong carefully reviews the textual evidence that might be used to support each of

these readings. He notes that while interpreters who view Xunzi as a constructivist tend to see him as also a relativist, and interpreters who read Xunzi as a realist tend to understand him as also an absolutist, Wong suggests that the textual evidence might also support a third combination that takes Xunzi to have a constructivist yet absolutist position. In the end, though, Wong argues that the text is ambiguous between these various positions and does not permit of a definitive classification of Xunzi's view one way or the other. Even so, Wong concludes that "posing metaethical questions about the *Xunzi* can shed further light on the text" and that doing so "forces us to interrogate our own conceptual categories and ask whether our habit of starkly dichotomizing the alternatives helps or hurts us in the task of understanding what is truly important" (162).

The topic of people's nature has been a focus of discussion among readers of the *Xunzi* for centuries—arguably, it has received more discussion than any other theme in the text. The reason for this attention, as is well known to scholars, is the text's infamous declaration that "people's nature is bad" and its criticism of Mencius (Mengzi 孟子) for claiming that "people's nature is good." It is primarily these features of the text that led Chinese scholars in the Song dynasty, who favored Mencius' position on the matter and who viewed Mencius as the inheritor of the authentic tradition of Confucius, to declare Xunzi an "impure" or "heretical" Confucian. However, as Tang Siufu notes in his chapter, one must not think that the meaning of such slogans about people's nature is obvious; rather, one must look carefully at the arguments and other claims made in support of them in order to assess what they really mean and whether they are really opposed. Tang reviews a number of controversies about Xunzi's views and offers a reconstruction of Xunzi's position based on the definitions offered in the text, along with careful analysis of a number of terms used by Xunzi in making his claims. On Tang's view, there is a genuine disagreement between Mencius and Xunzi, though he does not try to adjudicate between them. Rather, his main aim is to show that Xunzi's claim about the badness of people's nature is "a sensible part of Xunzi's conception of morality" (197).

Xunzi's conception of people's nature is one part of his broader picture of human psychology, and in the chapter after Tang's, I address some other parts of this picture by analyzing Xunzi's views on the psychology of virtuous agents. My discussion focuses on three important psychological notions in Xunzi's text: *qing* 情 ("dispositions"), *yu* 欲 ("desires"), and *ke* 可 ("approval"). Xunzi thinks that in virtuous people, these three align to produce a harmonious psychological state, and I examine the extent to which his view resembles Western ideas, such as one finds in Plato and Aristotle, that call for harmony between reason and the nonrational elements in a person, with reason leading the way. While allowing that there is a substantial similarity, I also argue that we should also be wary of completely assimilating Xunzi's ideal harmony to that picture. I conclude by discussing why Xunzi demands that virtuous people be free from inner conflict and point out that his view leaves unresolved an important question about how to diagnose and respond to the experience of disharmony, a problem which is crucial for those trying to cultivate themselves.

Although Xunzi is perhaps best known for his claims about people's nature, arguably it is ritual that is of far greater concern to him. In his contribution, Mark Berkson presents Xunzi as a theorist of ritual. Berkson notes how Xunzi rejects a literalist understanding of ritual (e.g., as engaging and manipulating supernatural forces such as spirits), without also rejecting all practice of ritual, and Berkson contrasts such Xunzi's attitude with that of Freud, who, in rejecting supernaturalism, wants to reject all religious practice. Pointing to Xunzi's use of the term *ru* 如 ("as if") in describing the mindset of proper ritual practice, Berkson suggests that for Xunzi, "Ritual participation can be seen . . . as a form of sophisticated pretending or play, artificial and invented," that, through its use of symbols, nevertheless has *real* and beneficial psychological effects on those performing and observing the rituals and is thus justified—even needed—"for conflicted and fragile beings such as ourselves" (248). At the same time, according to Berkson, this understanding of ritual provides Xunzi a critical distance from which to assess ritual and therefore allows him to avoid becoming a mere slave to tradition. Berkson ends by arguing that Xunzi's view provides a powerful response not only to critics of ritual from ancient China (e.g., the Mohists and Daoists) but also to a number of contemporary Western critics and that thus Xunzi's view offers a compelling explanation for how ritual is still very much relevant for people in the modern world.

Ritual is often paired with music in Xunzi's discussions of ethics, politics, and self-cultivation. In the chapter after Berkson's, James Harold and I discuss this pairing and analyze Xunzi's extended defense of music's importance in reply to Mohist criticisms of music. We start by examining how, on Xunzi's view, music affects people and how its effects in many ways resemble those of ritual yet also differ from ritual. We then outline four parts of Xunzi's defense of music: (1) an argument for the ineliminability of music from human life, (2) an argument that music is valuable for individuals, (3) an argument that music is valuable for society, and (4) an argument that rulers should enjoy elaborate musical performances. We argue that Xunzi's various remarks are at least on target in responding to the Mohists, though we do not evaluate the success of his arguments. By way of showing how Xunzi's views are far from irrelevant to contemporary concerns, we end by considering two recent Western thinkers—Allan Bloom and Roger Scruton—who, in the course of criticizing what they take to be the deleterious effects of modern music, articulate positions that are remarkably similar to Xunzi's. The comparisons with Bloom and Scruton bring out ways in which their ideas might illuminate aspects of Xunzi's thought and his ideas might in turn be used to supplement theirs, and the comparisons also highlight the challenges that all three face jointly in trying to distinguish morally "good" and "bad" music. While we do not try to defend Xunzi's position, we suggest that it contains much that is worth further reflection.

Chris Fraser's contribution analyzes Xunzi's views of language and disputation. Xunzi is concerned with these matters because of their impact on human behavior, especially the way they can contribute to social order or disorder, and he advocates that the government actively regulate language so as to prevent disorder. Following Xunzi's own concerns about language, Fraser's discussion ranges over ethics, metaethics, and politics as well. Fraser first considers how naming of things is supposed

to be done for Xunzi and whether Xunzi believes that the "kinds" of things to which the names are applied are themselves matters of convention or determined by nature. Xunzi is best understood, Fraser suggests, as holding that "divisions between kinds are instituted by cultural leaders, who impose an organizing pattern onto preexisting natural features. They do so not arbitrarily, but in a way that effectively corresponds with regular, enduring natural conditions" (300). Insofar as the kinds and the names that are applied to them serve as action-guiding norms, though, this seems to entail that Xunzi must have a similar stand in his ethics, metaethics, and politics. Fraser proposes seeing Xunzi as "a thoroughgoing conventionalist who nonetheless is dogmatically committed to one particular scheme of conventions" (306). (Compare this interpretation with that of Wong, noted earlier.) Fraser then considers how, for Xunzi, a correct grasp of names and naming practices is supposed to resolve a number of problems. He notes that Xunzi's view is in some ways an advance over Mohist views, though in other ways it does not adequately resolve the problems. Lastly, Fraser points out two competing conceptions of disputation in the *Xunzi*, one positive and the other negative, with the negative one more prominent. On the negative view, disputation is a useful but undesirable practice made necessary in times of chaos. Fraser ends by noting that views such as those promoted in the *Zhuangzi* could pose a potentially fatal objection to Xunzi's program of standardizing language. Fraser's ultimate assessment is that even if Xunzi's advocacy of political oversight of language is not justified, Xunzi's work is a rich resource for thinking about a number of issues in philosophy of language.

John Berthrong examines the religious dimension of Xunzi's thought in his contribution. Previously, scholarly discussions of this topic have often focused on the role of *tian* 天 ("Heaven") because of the deity-like characteristics that *tian* appears to have in some early Chinese texts. While he acknowledges this issue, Berthrong suggests that the religious element is more properly to be found elsewhere in Xunzi's view. In particular, Berthrong proposes to follow "Frederick Streng's definition of religion as a 'means to ultimate transformation,'" with the added qualification that "the ultimate is specific to each tradition in great diversity over time and place" (342). For Xunzi, the ultimate transformation is that which takes people from their ordinary, unrefined—even odious—state to becoming sages, by means of cultivation through studying the classics, performing rituals, and partaking of proper music, among other practices. On this basis, Berthrong argues for situating the spiritual aspect of Xunzi's view "in [Xunzi's treatment of] the human domain, in the sense that this is the location of religious thinking rather than a focus on *tian*" (343). As for *tian* itself, Berthrong notes that even though Xunzi does not particularly imbue *tian* with volition or responsiveness to human affairs, it still has religious significance for him. Namely, *tian* "represents the *dali* 大理 (the 'great pattern' or 'order') of the cosmos" (342), and this pattern "can be discerned by the cultivated heart/mind of a sage, a model of perfected order transposed to its proper place within the human domain. It can be inspiring enough to play a critical, even supernal, role in the Confucian path to ultimate transformation" (343). In this way, Berthrong's approach preserves a religious function for *tian* within Xunzi's view

while also attempting to broaden scholars' analysis of religious aspects of the text to include other elements of it as well.

One striking feature of the *Xunzi* is that it responds explicitly to most other major intellectual figures in Warring States China, largely criticizing them but sometimes borrowing from them as well. Comparisons with these other views can thus help throw into sharper relief certain aspects of Xunzi's thought, which the next two chapters provide by analyzing Xunzi's relations with rival thinkers. Hui-chieh Loy's essay discusses Xunzi's criticisms of the Mohists. Loy concentrates on two issues. One is the extent to which Xunzi successfully challenges Mohist views, especially the Mohists' advocacy of frugality. Loy argues that—given a charitable construal of both sides—there are a number of ways in which Xunzi's criticisms would fail to pose a genuine problem for the Mohists or even to distinguish his view from theirs. However, Loy goes on to note that there is at least one regard in which Xunzi *does* manage to raise a viable challenge to the Mohists:

> Xunzi's claim that [certain lavish rituals, music, and other expenditures] are necessary conditions for . . . social and political order is eminently sensible when seen from the perspective of . . . non-democratic regimes. . . . Mohist frugality—understood as entailing a rejection of the ruler's conspicuous display and distribution of sumptuous goods for privileged consumption—is vulnerable to Xunzi's criticism precisely because Mozi shares similar assumptions about what counts as a viable social and political form. (367–68)

At the same time, Loy suggests, because of its dependence on a form of authoritarian government, Xunzi's view remains open to challenge from a more democratic perspective, which is not Mozi's own position but is suggested by certain elements of Mohist thought, such as Mozi's idea that "the ruler . . . is answerable to . . . public, objective norms that are meant to be accessible to [all] . . . [and] endorsed by the people at large," and the idea that the common people are not just objects of moral transformation but "bearers of interests that should be protected" (368). The other main issue on which Loy focuses is the extent to which Xunzi disagrees not only with the Mohist proposals for how to achieve desirable social and political order but also what counts as desirable in the first place. Loy argues that, despite the fact that Xunzi adopts a consequentialist framework in many of his arguments against the Mohists, "there are also aspects of [Xunzi's] criticism that appeal to substantive value considerations not shared by Mohism" (369). Loy ends by noting that we should thus see Xunzi and Mozi as genuine competitors, but competitors within a shared ideological space, which is also how they were largely regarded by their contemporaries.

On the other hand, in his chapter, Paul Kjellberg considers Xunzi's relationship to Laozi and Zhuangzi. Kjellberg suggests that we view Xunzi as adopting two Daoist ways of thinking. The first is that of Heaven as indifferent to moral matters: we should not "count on any natural or supernatural power to intervene on behalf of what is right" (392). However, the Daoists had still taken Heaven as a model for how to conduct ourselves and thus had counseled the same sort of indifference to (at least ordinary) moral standards. In contrast, Kjellberg notes, Xunzi wants to maintain the kinds of moral standards repudiated by the Daoists and so rejects using Heaven as a model, but this means that "if we are going to persist with human val-

ues, we are going to have to do so on our own authority in an unhelpful and often dangerous world" (381). As Kjellberg argues, the key to doing so is the human heart, but the heart must be in the right state in order to perform this task successfully, and it is in this connection that Xunzi's second main borrowing from the Daoists is seen. Specifically, Xunzi borrows the terms they used to characterize the ideal state of the heart—"empty," "unified" (or "single-minded"), and "still"—as well as the basic idea behind these terms, namely, that what is required in order to successfully respond to a constantly changing, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous world is a kind of clear-sighted but flexible open-mindedness. Yet, whereas the Daoists seem to regard such a state of the heart as sufficient, because it brings one into accord with what is natural—Heaven, which they take as a model—Xunzi believes that something further is required, according to Kjellberg, namely, ritual. On Xunzi's view as reconstructed by Kjellberg, the reason for this further need is that people's natural motivations do *not* know what is "enough," i.e., what sorts of satisfactions to seek and what sorts of compromise to accept. In other words, contrary to what the Daoists think, our notion of sufficiency itself needs external, artificial guidance. Kjellberg ends by suggesting that although Xunzi might be right that one cannot rely on natural or supernatural forces to solve humanity's problems and that mere open-minded flexibility will not solve them either, Xunzi's own preferred guidelines (the Zhou dynasty rituals) are not plausible for those of us in the modern world, but neither do we necessarily have clearly superior guidelines of our own to employ, and so there is still an important challenge to be addressed.

Because of the disfavor with which Xunzi was regarded by many Confucians in the Song dynasty and thereafter—resulting in some instances where tablets bearing his name were physically removed from temples to Confucius, as a symbolic way of excising him from the Confucian tradition—many have been tempted to think that he exerted little influence on subsequent thinkers. The remaining chapters in this volume combat such a misperception by discussing the later reception of the *Xunzi* both inside and outside China. They reveal that not only did Xunzi's thought remain influential in various ways throughout later history but also that the issue of people's nature, which was so important to many Song and post-Song thinkers, was not the only lens through which readers approached the text.

In her contribution, Michael Nylan traces the influence of Xunzi in China from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty. She begins with some oft-cited facts used to claim substantial influence for Xunzi in the Han but proceeds to note that a number of complicating factors make it difficult to draw conclusions from those facts. Instead, she adopts an alternative approach:

> If we can establish that in early Western Han Xunzi was regarded as the 'ultimate ancestor' of several Han masters, that he had his arguments reworked in important new compilations, and that his prescriptions helped to define or shape the Western Han officialdom and laws, then we have gathered indisputable signs of the pre-Qin master's profound influence in Han times. (408)

Nylan then proceeds to show that there is substantial evidence for Xunzi's influence on each of these counts. As for the post-Han period, she notes that the case is harder

to judge because of the substantial loss of medieval Chinese texts, but nevertheless "Had Xunzi's writings really been eclipsed during the Six Dynasties, Sui, and Tang by those of his perceived rival Mencius, scholars would find it hard to account" for a number of features of the surviving literature (423). In particular, Nylan shows that, rather than focusing on Xunzi's view of people's nature, what many Chinese readers most paid attention to in his thought were his discussions of rituals and sumptuary regulations, laws and punishments, and general approach to governing, among other points. Perhaps one might say, borrowing Xunzi's own wording, that only if one is "fixated" on the issue of people's nature will one fail to see the large extent of Xunzi's other contributions to the Chinese tradition.

Justin Tiwald's essay, in turn, focuses on the Chinese Confucians of the Song dynasty and thereafter, who famously rejected Xunzi's view of people's nature and regarded him as being heretical or, in some cases, as not even worthy of being regarded as a Confucian. Like Nylan, Tiwald notes that the historical situation is complex: not all later Confucians rejected Xunzi, and even some of those who rejected his view of people's nature still found much else in his view to admire. Tiwald suggests that when it comes to the topic of people's nature, at a more subtle level Xunzi's view influenced even those who rejected his view, because they often understood the debate in terms set by Xunzi. To bring out this point, Tiwald compares the treatments of Xunzi by Zhu Xi 朱熹, who accepts that framework for debate, and Dai Zhen 戴震, who rejects it. Tiwald works through both of their criticisms of Xunzi and offers a charitable reconstruction of the debate between them that shows what is at stake in their disagreements, without trying to decide the matter. Tiwald ends by identifying what he takes to be a fundamental idea that underlies many of the later Confucian criticisms of Xunzi's view, the notion that "new moral knowledge must always have a certain relation to prior moral knowledge, so that the whole project of acquiring moral knowledge cannot even get off the ground without a certain amount of moral knowledge to start with" (465). In this way, Tiwald suggests, the clash over people's nature is far from being a sterile old metaphysical debate but rather brings us to "a dispute that reaches well into conceptual and empirical territory that is as contested today as it was then" (469).

Next, the essay by Lan Hung-Yueh 藍弘岳 takes us outside China, to Japan, and discusses the work of the influential Edo-period thinker Ogyū Sorai 狄生徂徠 (1666–1728), who had a tremendous appreciation for the *Xunzi* and inspired many subsequent Japanese thinkers and scholars to study the text as well. Lan rejects the claim that Sorai can be interpreted as simply a latter-day Japanese Xunzian. Instead, Lan identifies both how Sorai is influenced by Xunzi's thought, especially Xunzi's ideas about *zhengming* 正名 ("correct naming"), rituals, and Heaven, and how Sorai also departs from Xunzi to develop a distinctive position of his own. As Lan goes on to note, the value that Sorai attached to the *Xunzi* induced those who agreed with Sorai and even those who criticized him to likewise pay serious attention to the text, such that among those Japanese thinkers the *Xunzi* not only comes to serve as an aid "in understanding the ancient Chinese 'Way of the sages,' but is moreover a medium for understanding recent Western philosophy" (495).

In his contribution to this volume, Jung Jaesang 鄭宰相 analyzes the reception of Xunzi among Korean thinkers. In Korea, Zhu Xi's school of Confucian thought was especially influential, and hence many Korean Confucians followed Zhu's lead in criticizing Xunzi on the issue of people's nature, though with certain variations that Jung traces. At the same time, Jung shows, there was also a current of Korean thinkers who explicitly admired and defended aspects of Xunzi's thought. They were especially drawn to two parts of Xunzi's text. The first is the discussion in chapter 21 of the distinction between the *renxin* 人心 ("human heart/mind") and the *daoxin* 道心 ("the heart/mind that follows the Way"). This distinction, which was very important to Zhu Xi and other Confucians who followed him, was often seen as deriving from the *Documents*, but a number of Koreans instead saw Xunzi as the main promoter (or transmitter) of this crucial doctrine, thus placing him squarely in the Confucian intellectual lineage. The other passage in the *Xunzi* to which Korean thinkers devoted substantial attention is one from chapter 9 of the text that discusses the distinction between human beings and other animals. They used this passage in rather novel ways, such as employing it to elaborate on the distinction between the *renxin* and *daoxin* or employing it in criticism of Christian views. In this manner, Jung's essay shows that "both exclusion and acceptance of Xunzi coexisted" in Korea (531).

Two further points worth remarking emerge from these last four essays. First, to return to an issue that I mentioned at the beginning, while many Song and post-Song thinkers viewed Xunzi's thought as an impure or heretical view that deviated from the authentic tradition of Confucius, these essays highlight the many ways in which Xunzi *can* also be seen, and indeed *was* seen by numerous premodern thinkers, as solidly Confucian. When these observations are taken together with the similarities between Xunzi and Confucius noted in passing in several other essays in this volume, it should be clear that claims of Xunzi's supposed impurity or heresy should not be accepted uncritically, as such claims are neither unquestionable nor unchallenged in history. Second, Jung's and Lan's essays in particular show that Xunzi's influence extended well beyond China—his views (as with many other Chinese writings) became the *common intellectual property* of East Asian thinkers generally. I humbly hope that perhaps we will someday see Xunzi's thought become a similar shared resource for Western thinkers as well.

As a final note, one problem for those studying the *Xunzi* is that there is no standard way of dividing the text into sections that is shared among all editions and translations. There are two concordances to the text, an older one from the Harvard-Yenching Institute (now out of print) and a newer one from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, both of which give line numbers for the Chinese text and enable highly precise references, but they are not useable by those who do not read Chinese. In order to make this volume easy to use by specialists as well as by those who do not know Chinese, all references to the text of the *Xunzi* in this book are given with the concordance number from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (labeled "HKCS" as an abbreviation for "Hong Kong Concordance Series") and in most

cases are followed by a reference to a published English translation of the *Xunzi*.[2] An extensive index is given at the end of this volume that cross-references all the passages discussed by the contributors with three main English translations. This should enable those who do not know Chinese to find English versions of any passages not translated here. Moreover, for those who are working from an English translation and want to read what scholars have to say about a particular passage, this index will allow them to find whatever discussion of it appears here. In this way, this volume can provide English-speaking readers with something a bit like a running commentary on the *Xunzi*, which has previously been the kind of resource available only to those with knowledge of Asian languages.[3]

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[2] For those who can read Chinese but do not have access to a copy of the HKCS *Xunzi* volume, I note that (at the time of writing this) a website maintained by Donald Sturgeon offers a free function that allows one to look up the Chinese text of the *Xunzi* by HKCS numbers (labeled there as "ICS") or by the older Harvard-Yenching numbers. Go to: http://ctext.org/xunzi. Sturgeon's text does not always match that of the HKCS version exactly, however.

[3] In addition to thanking the contributors to this volume and Springer's reviewers and editorial staff, I would like to thank Eirik L. Harris, Huang Yong 黃勇, P.J. Ivanhoe, Colin J. Lewis, Mamiko C. Suzuki, and Jennifer Warriner, who provided valuable insights and other forms of assistance during the long process leading to the publication of this book.

Chapter 1
Style and Poetic Diction in the *Xunzi*

Martin Kern

The *Xunzi* is widely recognized as a book of well-developed expository prose,[1] even though its literary style has been called, perhaps unfairly, "at best … indifferent" (Lau 1970: 8). Unlike other texts of early Chinese philosophy—*Lunyu*, *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Mozi*, and others more—it does not pervasively use anecdotes or dialogues to stage or create its purported or real author as a particular persona (Lewis 1999: 58); its principal form is that of the discursive essay.[2] Instead of appearing as a speaker in third-person anecdotes the way Kongzi, Mozi, or Mengzi do (and have their personas created through these anecdotes), the *Xunzi's* expository prose speaks from the perspective of "arguing for his ideas and against his opponents" (Denecke 2010: 180).[3] In the third century BCE, the *Xunzi* thus participated in, and contributed to, the rise of the expository essay that can also be observed elsewhere, e.g., in parts of the *Zhuangzi*.[4] One must be careful, however, not to overemphasize the text's authorial voice as a

[1] Paul Rakita Goldin expresses a common attitude toward the text: "Xunzi's writing is succinct and lucid, his philosophical positions original and reasoned" (Goldin 1999: xiii).

[2] The only chapters that include mention of Xunzi (in the form of Sun Qing 孫卿, Sun Qingzi 孫卿子, or Xun Qingzi 荀卿子) are 8 ("Ru xiao" 儒效), 15 ("Yi bing" 議兵), and 16 ("Qiang guo" 彊國). In addition, the "Eulogy" (Knoblock) on Xunzi that may have come from a disciple or later scholar and is appended to the final chapter 32 ("Yao wen" 堯問) mentions him as Sun Qing. Because they speak of Xun Kuang in the third person, these chapters are often taken as the works of his disciples.

[3] See also William G. Boltz: "[L]iterary or essay-like texts, authored by a single writer, in the way we typically think of a text in the modern world, do not reflect the norm for early China but were, at best, the exception" (Boltz 2005: 59).

[4] Denecke might be overstating the case for the *Xunzi* when noting that its "new rhetorical format, the expository essay, constituted a radical change, an innovation that was to fundamentally alter the face of Masters Literature" (Denecke 2010: 180).

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personal one;[5] in many instances, the seemingly first-person pronoun is not a first-person pronoun at all but a general one that should be understood as "you" or "one" (Harbsmeier 1997: 181–220). Either way, the expository chapters of the *Xunzi* reflect a discursive and sometimes even combative style of argument that straightforwardly addresses a series of topics and—exceptional in early Chinese rhetoric—does so with "mundane pugnaciousness" (Harbsmeier 2001: 883). The individual chapters of the received text—arranged first by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and then by Yang Liang 楊倞 (ninth century)—appear as separate monographs on a range of issues, even though they are rarely, if ever, coherent from beginning to end.[6]

By examining in some detail a certain number of representative chapters, the present essay argues for a more nuanced appreciation of the *Xunzi*'s style; specifically, by tracing the considerable stylistic differences between individual chapters, it calls the idea of a single homogeneous "*Xunzi* style" into question. From the perspective of style, the text emerges more as an anthology of varied writings of *Xunzian* thought—if we admit to an overall *philosophical* coherence of the text—than as a unified work. Thus, we may either allow that Xun Kuang 荀況 employed a considerable range of distinctive styles in his writings, or we may need to reconsider and broaden our ideas about the authorship of the *Xunzi* (or both). While the present essay is not the place to address questions of authorship and authenticity, it still offers observations that might be useful to any such discussion.

To begin with, the core of the *Xunzi* is considered to comprise chapters 1 through 24; by contrast, the final eight chapters seem considerably different in nature. As scholars attribute the first twenty-four chapters to Xun Kuang and implicitly assume their authorial unity and coherence, the later chapters have often engendered serious doubt.[7] The chapters in question include two separate sets of poetry (chapters 25 and 26, "Cheng xiang" 成相 and "Fu" 賦);[8] one chapter of (in Knoblock's count) 115 brief maxims (chapter 27, "Da lüe" 大略), four chapters of Kongzi lore in the style of the *Lunyu* 論語 (chapters 28–31, "You zuo" 宥坐, "Zi dao" 子道, "Fa xing" 法行, and "Ai gong" 哀公), yet with just a single brief parallel in the received *Lunyu*;[9]

[5] Here, I disagree with Denecke's analysis as well as with Knoblock's translation.

[6] In his introduction, Knoblock offers an extensive discussion of the textual history of the text (K I.105–28).

[7] In this respect, the *Xunzi* is not different from many, if not most, other texts of the early philosophical tradition.

[8] For a detailed analysis of the *fu* poems see Knechtges (1989: 1–31); for a brief discussion of both the "working songs" (*cheng xiang* 成相) and the *fu*, see Denecke (2010: 188–95); for the "Cheng xiang" chapter alone, see Malmquist (1973b: 63–91) and Malmquist (1973a: 352–58). Scholars disagree as to whether the content of these chapters is "philosophical" (Knoblock) or not (Knechtges). For discussions of rhyme in the "Cheng xiang" chapter, see Li (2010: 89–93); Zhu (1957: 42–47).

[9] That parallel is the brief phrase *zhi zhi yue zhi zhi* 知之曰知之 (Knoblock 29.6) that appears as *zhi zhi wei zhi zhi* 知之為知之 in *Lunyu* 2.17 ("Wei zheng" 為政). By contrast, the four Xunzi chapters of Kongzi lore have numerous parallels especially in *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓氏外傳 and *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語, and to some lesser degree in *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 and *Shuiyuan* 說苑.

and a final chapter 32 ("Yao wen" 堯問) that contains anecdotal lore regarding both Kongzi and other early culture heroes. These eight chapters are extremely diverse, with the two "poetry chapters" in both form and content showing clear affinities to the southern *fu* style associated with the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Lyrics from Chu*) while also being related to Warring States and early Han *shui* 說 ("attempts at persuasion") (Knechtges 1989: 21–31). It may well be for this reason—and especially for the topos of the frustrated man *bu yu* 不遇 ("not meeting his time") when the world is morally corrupt and in a perverted state (Knechtges 1989: 21–31)—that in the bibliographic chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書, Qu Yuan 屈原 (trad. 340–278 BCE) and Xunzi are presented as the two originators of the *fu* genre. According to the account preserved in the *Hanshu*, the genre at once originated with and culminated in the works of these two authors, descending into a quick decline immediately thereafter (*Hanshu* 1987: 30.1750, 1756).[10]

Despite its title, the present analysis will focus on the first twenty-four chapters in the *Xunzi*, leaving the "Cheng xiang" and "Fu" chapters aside together with those that follow them. There are several reasons for this decision. To begin with, the heterogeneous nature and multiplicity of styles in these chapters has long been acknowledged. One would be hard pressed to argue that the "Cheng xiang" and "Fu" chapters belong to the core of the *Xunzi*. It was for sound reasons that Liu Xiang had relegated them to the end of his *Xunzi* compilation (K I.106–10), and even Yang Liang, who called them *za* 雜 ("miscellaneous"), placed them in the uneasy position between what he considered the authentic writings by Xun Kuang and the additional body of material (chapters 27–32) that he attributed to later disciples (K I.112).[11] Compared to the "discursive" *Xunzi* of chapters 1–24, the two "poetry" chapters seem curiously out of place, and their designations as "Cheng xiang" and "Fu" are dubious: while "Cheng xiang" is simply taken from the first line of the chapter and obscure in its meaning (K III.169),[12] the designation "Fu" did not originate with Xun Kuang but was quite possibly chosen by Liu Xiang (Knechtges 1989: 14–15).[13] Moreover, it appears that the two "poetry" chapters were not part of the *Xunzi* before Liu Xiang, or they were considered entirely marginal: unlike the majority of *Xunzi* chapters, they do not have any parallels in Western Han literature save for a single snippet from the "Fu" chapter that is quoted in the *Zhanguoce* 戰國策 (K I.105).[14]

[10] The *Hanshu* bibliographic monograph "Yiwenzhi" 藝文志, which in abbreviated form represents the catalogue of the imperial library at the end of the first century BCE, attributes twenty pieces of *fu* to Xunzi.

[11] The arrangement of presumed "inauthentic" material at the end of a Masters text is, of course, standard procedure and hence expresses unambiguously what both Liu Xiang and Yang Liang thought of the closing chapters.

[12] For a more contextualized discussion of the term *cheng xiang*, see Kern (2003: 407–9).

[13] Simply put, there was no literary "genre" called *fu* 賦 in Xun Kuang's time; see Kern (2003: 391–95).

[14] The quote is in the chapter "Chu ce si" 楚策四, "Ke shui Chunshen jun" 客說春申君.

The more interesting and more important reason to focus on chapters 1–24, however, is a different one: "poetry" in the *Xunzi* is not simply what can be found in chapters 25 and 26. Just as in many texts of expository *zhuzi* 諸子 ("masters") prose from the Warring States, it is not a certain body of text bearing the stylistic distinctions of a particular genre; instead, it is a mode of speech, or language use, that deeply pervades what is usually taken as "expository prose."[15] This mode of speech is ubiquitous in the *Xunzi*. To some extent, though not nearly sufficiently, Knoblock's translation shows efforts to identify those "poetic" passages that are distinguished by rhyme and meter. While still inadequate, this effort marks an important step forward, considering that scholarship on early Chinese philosophy and intellectual history has only recently begun to attend to linguistic form *as important for thought and argument*.[16] The occasional and sometimes even pervasive poetic style in the *Xunzi*, and in so many other early Chinese texts of expository prose, is neither a "genre" nor some sort of superficial, external embellishment of reasoned discourse (let alone impediment to logical expression and interpretation, or, as Angus C. Graham has noted for the *Zhuangzi*, a "collision of logic and poetry") (Graham 1991a: 214). Instead, this style of diction is also an intellectual style. It is the very medium through which large parts of the argument operate in the *Xunzi*, and as such it fulfills—as style in any rhetorical tradition—functions of persuasion and even of what philosophers are wont to call illocutionary force. Simply put, for the *Xunzi* and other early Chinese texts, to speak in verse is to speak in the voice of traditional authority and of an emphatic claim for truth.

Precisely because the *Xunzi* is considered a text driven by the desire for arguing, and because that arguing is not simply logical or analytic, its literary style is central to the quality not merely of its form of expression but of its argument itself. Linguistic rhythm itself, as the *youshui* 遊說 ("persuaders") of the Warring States period knew very well, carries a stylistic type of persuasive power by its mere formal structures of parallelism and repetition; this is especially true for a style of

[15] Günther Debon has repeatedly pointed to the presence and significance of rhymed sayings ("Spruchdichtung") in early Chinese expository prose; see Debon (1996: 36–42); on rhymed sayings especially in the *Xunzi*, see Debon (2002 vol.1: 21–30).

[16] In discussing the fallacies of the "rambling mode" in translations of the *Zhuangzi*, A. C. Graham has offered the most cogent critique of negligence toward the poetic features of early "expository prose," summarized in the sentence "The effect of assimilating the verse to prose is almost always catastrophic"; see Graham (1991b: 119–44, esp. 130–43). The groundbreaking work on rhyme in early expository prose is Jiang (1993); see also Long (1962–63, repr. 2009: 182–283), and Tan (1995: 12–19). The gradually increasing body of scholarship on the formal aspects of early Chinese philosophical texts includes Rudolf G. Wagner's analysis of "Interlocking Parallel Style," see Wagner (2000: 53–113), Dirk Meyer (2011), Raphals (1994: 103–16), Roth (1999), Queen (2008: 201–47), Baxter (1998: 231–53), Fischer (2009: 1–34), Boltz (2005: 50–78), Liu (1994), LaFargue (1994); see also Kern (2014), Xu (1990: 58–64), and Morrison (1981: 391–420). Aside from Knoblock's translation of the *Xunzi*, Hutton's new *Xunzi* translation also marks off the poetic parts of the text, as does the translation of the *Huainanzi* by John S. Major et al. (Major et al. 2010).

arguing, ubiquitous in the *Xunzi*, that is built around analogical patterns and in this conveys a strong *sense of order*.[17] It is therefore that the present essay focuses on the use of the poetic style in the discursive core chapters of the *Xunzi*.

Of course, concerns about the *Xunzi's* style go much beyond "poetry" as a particular type of language use. What the text lacks in literary flourish (especially by comparison with the *Zhuangzi*) or historical anecdotes (when compared to many other early philosophical texts), it often gains in focus and stringency of argument, as the individual chapters do tend to focus on their respective subject matter at least for their larger parts. This relative stringency, combined with an explicit diction that rarely uses esoteric anecdotes and elliptic sayings, makes the *Xunzi* into a text that is relatively easy to follow; it grants few of the pleasures of reading the *Zhuangzi* but also provokes none of the frustrations the *Lunyu* stirs in readers hoping to decipher the meaning of some particular passages (not to mention their position within a larger philosophical context). While scholars have considerable difficulty in situating the *Xunzi*'s philosophy between "Confucian" and "Legalist," occasionally resorting to phrases such as "realistic" or "authoritarian Confucian" (Rickett 1985: 3, 249, 412), they do not face the sort of wide-ranging diversity of thought that forces them to assign any of the twenty-four core chapters to different authors or "schools of thought." In short, the first twenty-four chapters of the *Xunzi* are commonly taken as mutually supportive and non-contradictory, expressing different aspects of a single coherent system of thought; their sometimes divergent viewpoints have been rationalized as coming from distinct periods (early, middle, late) of Xun Kuang's long life.[18]

On the whole, it also appears that while the text draws on a considerable amount of traditional source material, including numerous pieces of proverbial wisdom and rhetoric (K I.124–28), there is no direct evidence that it is pieced together from materials common to a wider range of texts. In Knoblock's view, the relatively large number of sections that the *Xunzi* shares with the *Hanshi waizhuan*, the *Da Dai Liji*, and the *Liji* is by and large the result of these texts borrowing from the pre-Liu Xiang *Xunzi* material, and not the other way around (K I.105–6). By implication, the *Xunzi* is then generally seen as (a) having existed in more or less its present form before the early Han and (b) being not a composite or compiled text but a truly authored and original one.[19] These widely shared assumptions do not imply that the

[17] Here, I allude to Ernst H. Gombrich for the power of formal structure in argument (Gombrich 1979); see also Bagley (1993: 34–55). For early Chinese rhetoric, see further Schaberg (2001: 21–56). As Schaberg observes, the "rhetoric of good order" applies to both speech and written prose; I would add that expository prose with its implied authorial voice is indeed built upon the techniques of persuasion that are first visible in discursive speech.

[18] See Knoblock's appendices "Composition of Each Book" in each of his three volumes.

[19] On "composite texts" as a common phenonemon during the time of the *Xunzi*, see Boltz (2005: 50–78). In saying "truly authored and original," I do not overlook that many scholars (e.g., Knoblock) have noticed what they call "borrowed" elements in the text. But to consciously borrow existing language is an intense form of authorship as it implies thoughtful and intentional decisions on the side of the author.

book was initially devised as a grand, unified whole as was the case with part of the *Lüshi chunqiu* (dated in part to 239 BCE) and the entire *Huainanzi* (139 BCE); there is evidence that at least some *Xunzi* chapters, or individual paragraphs, existed independently from their present context in the book. In fact, we have no reason to assume that Xun Kuang thought of his writings as constituting a "book." Any attempt to see a particular order in the arrangement of the existing chapters is defeated by the fact that the received *Xunzi* represents Yang Liang's re-arrangement of Liu Xiang's earlier compilation, which in turn was not the "original *Xunzi*" designed by Xun Kuang himself—a thing that most likely never existed in the first place. By necessity, the object of our analysis is the received text, with at least some of its chapters being internally in disarray. It may well be that some of the stylistic incoherence is the result of textual deterioration at an early stage, perhaps comparable to what happened, say, to the "Ziyi" 緇衣 ("Black Robes") text where the received *Liji* 禮記 version is decidedly inferior to the two manuscript versions from Guodian 郭店 and in the Shanghai Museum corpus, both dating from around 300 BCE.[20]

Be this as it may, it remains significant to observe distinct differences of style between and within the individual chapters of the text. In some brief but illuminating comments on chapter 1, Knoblock has argued that the first seven sections of the chapter (in his numbering, equaling roughly half of the chapter) are replete with traditional material that "is widely attested in other works dating from Xunzi's time and later" while sections eight through fourteen are "mostly the original composition of Xunzi and as such [are] much more rarely 'quoted'" (K I.124).[21] Such a conclusion should be phrased more carefully: whether or not the second half of the chapter is indeed "the original composition of Xunzi" is, in fact, impossible to decide. What cannot be disputed, on the other hand, is the fact that by and large, the latter half of the chapter is not shared with other texts, while the first half overwhelmingly is. Why? To some extent, the answer to this question may be found in the analysis of style—and such an analysis further reveals that the two halves of the chapter have little in common and perhaps should not be conceived of as an integrated whole.

In the present essay, I examine chapter 1 in some detail. This chapter shows significant stylistic features one also finds elsewhere in the *Xunzi*. Following this analysis, I comment briefly on specific features in several other chapters that are generally considered of central importance to the text as a whole. Whenever I quote from the original, I arrange the text in a way that reveals its formal structures.

[20] See Kern (2005: 293–332), and Kalinowski (2000–01: 141–48).

[21] In the present essay, I do not always follow the divisions into sections as given in the CHANT version (which is also largely coherent with Knoblock's division). I indicate where I differ from CHANT or Knoblock.

HKCS 1/1/3–5:

君子曰：學不可以已。

A *junzi* says: "In learning, one must not desist."

青、取之於藍, 而青於藍;
冰、水為之, 而寒於水。

Blue is taken from the indigo plant, yet it is bluer than indigo.
Ice is made from water, yet it is colder than water.

木直中繩, 輮以為輪, 其曲中規, 雖有槁暴, 不復挺者, 輮使之然也。

A piece of wood as straight as a chalk line can be rounded [by steaming]
to become a wheel; its curvature [will then] conform to the compass.
Even when dried in the sun, it will not return to its [former] straightness.
The process of rounding by steam has caused it to be like that.

故
木受繩則直,
金就礪則利。

Thus [it is said]:
If wood is aligned to the chalk line, it will be straight;
if metal is put to the whetstone, it will be sharp.

君子
博學而日參省乎己,
則
知明而行無過矣。

If the *junzi*
studies broadly and daily inspects himself on three counts,[22]
his understanding will be clear and his conduct without transgression.

[22] My translation follows Yang Liang's commentary and the parallel in *Lunyu* 1.4 ("Xue er" 學而): "Zengzi said: I inspect myself daily on three counts" (曾子曰:「吾日三省吾身」); later commentators on the *Xunzi* have interpreted the word *can* 參 (*N-sʕrum) not as *san* 三 (*srum; "on three counts") but as *yan* 驗 (*m-qʰr[a]m-s; "to examine") and have further argued that the two characters *xing hu* 省乎 ("inspect" plus directional preposition "at") are an interpolation. Thus, Knoblock translates as "the gentleman each day examines himself" (135). I see no need for this emendation, nor can I think of a good explanation for the purported interchangeability of *can* and *yan*.

The passage begins with the quotation of what David Schaberg has called a "platitude persona" (Schaberg 2005: 177–96), namely, the figure of the anonymous and unspecified *junzi* 君子 that appears also in numerous other texts of the time and, as Christoph Harbsmeier has noted, in general does not refer to any specific individual.[23] The quotation of his saying "In learning, one must not desist" is a gesture toward tradition: whoever the author of the chapter is, his opening words are not in his own voice but draw on pre-existing authority that, furthermore, is not located in a particular person but in a generalized *junzi*. His statement of received learned opinion is then followed by two sets of analogies: the first, on blue/indigo and ice/water is taken from the natural world; the second, and much more extensive one, is from the realm of craftsmanship that also figures prominently in the rhetoric of other early philosophical prose (De Reu 2010; Major 2014). Following the second of these analogies, the text returns to a general, indeed apodictic, statement on the matter of "learning": "If the *junzi* studies broadly and daily inspects himself on three counts, his understanding will be clear and his conduct without transgression."

In this sequence, the analogies in the middle part lead from the initial piece of traditional wisdom toward a statement on learning as transformation of the self by regular exercise of self-examination. The middle part is not built on explicit deductive logic but rather on the implicit inference from analogies, reinforced by repetition and parallelism, that by mere accumulation generate some rhetorical force. The first analogies of blue/indigo and ice/water, for example, are ready-for-use, disposable items from the general store of rhetorical analogies; the second analogy—the wood bent by steam and then remaining bent even when dried again—is a more original comparison to a person's permanent transformation by learning. It is followed by *gu* 故, an introductory sentence adverbial that often does not have a strong logical force (as in "therefore"), as it does not function as the hinge between the immediately preceding sentence or section and the subsequent one (Gassmann and Behr 2005 vol.1: 96). Instead, it frequently serves as the introduction of another piece of traditional wisdom: what follows *gu* (which I translate as "thus [it is said]" to indicate that the following is again a quotation or otherwise marked speech)[24] is a general maxim, usually bound by rhyme or rhythm, that is supported by the preceding illustration. Here it is important to remember that we are not in the style of deductive reasoning: while the maxim (in this case not rhymed, but a formulaic couplet governed strictly by *parallelismus membrorum*) picks up the analogy of wood, it actually takes it into the opposite direction. Now, wood is not bent but straightened, because this is how it is parallel to the knife that is sharpened. Finally, the text returns to the *junzi* but not necessarily to the one who was quoted in the beginning, and his theme is not—as in the initial proverb-style saying—learning that shall never end; instead, the focus is now on the regular practice of self-examination by which the *junzi* will permanently transform himself. However, for

[23] Personal communication, January 2012.

[24] On different types of quotation (and pertinent references), see Kern and Hunter (forthcoming).

the analogy to wood to operate properly, one would have to assume that the *junzi* acts on his inner self as on an object distinct from the examining mind: wood neither examines itself nor bends or straightens itself; it is acted upon so as to become permanently changed.

In short, this sequence alone includes five sections that are all (a) mutually independent and (b) formed in different ways. Any of these sections could easily be integrated into different contexts, and one might well want to ask how many of them are original to the *Xunzi*.[25] What holds the section together is the fact that it is framed by two maxims associated with the *junzi* and his learning, even though these maxims emphasize different aspects of his self-cultivation.

In the conventional division of the text,[26] the first section ends right here. This would be fine if it would not mean that the next section then had to start with another *gu*—the sentence adverbial to introduce a concluding commonplace. Yet the reasoning for starting a new section here is not implausible: the following lines seem, at best, only loosely related to the preceding text. Thus, the section introduced by *gu* may indeed not belong to the first section—but in this case, it may be altogether misplaced, or whatever may have preceded it originally is now lost. On the other hand, one might argue that its weak connection to the preceding text in the current version of the *Xunzi* is symptomatic of the entire first section which, as just shown, is altogether loosely integrated and possibly assembled from various bits and pieces. If the first section in its present form is indeed one author's original composition, it does not show him overly concerned with the cogency of his argument—or he relies on an audience of insiders capable of generating from his style a stringent line of thought.

Be this as it may, what follows the second *gu* is another piece of traditional wisdom strictly organized by syntactical patterning:

HKCS 1/1/7–10:

故
不登高山, 不知天之高也;
不臨深谿, 不知地之厚也;
不聞先王之遺言, 不知學問之大也。

Thus [it is said]:
If one does not climb a high mountain, one does not understand the height of heaven.[27]

[25] Here, I differ from Knoblock's assessment which is purely based on the comparison of the *Xunzi* with other transmitted sources. To say that these sources—especially the *Da Dai Liji* and the *Hanshi waizhuan*—seem to be quoting from the *Xunzi* and not vice versa is not the same as saying that whatever they quote did actually originate with the *Xunzi*.

[26] As reflected in the CHANT edition as well as in Knoblock's translation.

[27] Clearly, the metaphor refers to the "height of the sky," yet at the same time, the two sentences here invoke the "heaven/earth" cosmology.

If one does not look down into a deep valley, one does not understand the depth of the earth.
If one does not hear the words left by the former kings, one does not understand the greatness of learning.

于、越、夷、貉之子, 生而同聲, 長而異俗, 教使之然也。

As for the children of Yu, Yue, Yi, and Mo: at birth they make the same sounds; growing up, they differ in their customs. Education causes them to be like that.

詩曰:

嗟爾君子,	(*-ə)
無恆安息。	(*-ək)
靖共爾位,	(*-əp)
好是正直。	(*-ək)
神之聽之,	(*-ə)
介爾景福。	(*-ək)

An *Ode* says:
Ah, you noble men,
do not consider permanent your being at rest and at ease.
Be reverent and respectful of your positions,
be fond of those who are upright and straight.
Exert [your inner] spiritual capacity and adhere to it,
to increase your radiant blessings.

神莫大於化道,
福莫長於無禍。

Among one's spiritual capacities, there is none greater than the way of transformation.
Among blessings, there is none more enduring than being without misfortune.

Once again, the passage is structured by rhythm and semantic parallelism;[28] the only rhymes are in the quotation of the final stanza from *Ode* 207, "Xiao ming" 小明 ("Lesser Brightness"). The initial passage following *gu* ("Thus [it is said]") has no discernable connection to anything before or after except for its praise of learning from the words of the ancient sages. This, however, is then followed by an analogy that resonates closely with the earlier metaphor of wood that is permanently bent.

[28] The absence of rhyme, however, does not mean the absence of poetry; Baxter notes that "both rhyme and semantic patterning," especially including semantic parallelism, "are used as poetic devices" in the *Laozi* (Baxter 1998: 237).

In fact, the lines that conclude the earlier analogy of bent wood and the later one of acquired customs are strictly parallel:

輮使之然也。

The process of rounding by steam has caused it to be like that.

教使之然也。

Education causes them to be like that.

If anything, this direct and likely not accidental piece of parallelism suggests that the two parts of text do belong to a single section, even though there is additional material in it. In other words, the strict parallelism signals both unity and, perhaps, the addition of formerly unrelated material to that unity of expression. What follows the second analogy—the quotation from the *Odes* as well as the final statement on one's spiritual capacity and blessings—is only partially related to the main theme of cultivation through learning, namely, in its reference to transformation and possibly also to being *zhi* 直 ("straight"), but not at all in its reference to blessings. In its strict parallelism, the final statement appears once again as some sort of proverb and was possibly independent from the *Odes* quotation with which it is paired here. In sum, the first section, or sections, do not develop a cogent argument; instead, they embellish the principal thesis on the lasting influence of learning with various pieces of traditional wisdom culled from different sources.

Consider now the second (or third) section of the first chapter:

HKCS 1/1/12–15:

吾嘗終日而思矣, 不如須臾之所學也。
吾嘗跂而望矣, 不如登高之博見也。

I once spent the whole day thinking, but it was not as good as what I learned in an instant.
I once stood on my toes gazing into the distance, but it was not as good as what I broadly saw after ascending a place on high.

登高而招, 臂非加長也, 而見者遠;
順風而呼, 聲非加疾也, 而聞者彰。

By ascending a place on high and waving, the arm does not gain in length, yet its visibility reaches into the distance;
By shouting with the wind, the voice does not gain in strength, yet its audibility becomes more distinct.

假輿馬者, 非利足也, 而致千里;
假舟楫者, 非能水也, 而絕江河。

To make use of carriage and horses is not to benefit one's feet but to go a thousand *li*;
To make use of boat and oars is not to gain ability with water but to cross rivers and streams.

君子生非異也, 善假於物也。

The *junzi* is not different by birth; he is good at availing himself of external things.

This section consists of three statements, each composed of two parallel halves, and a concluding pronouncement on the *junzi*. Each such prose "couplet" has its own meter and rhythm, yet all three are unified in their extreme, mechanistic parallelism; and one leads to the next through the continuous use of a key phrase (*deng gao* 登高 in the transition from the first to the second statement, and the negative *fei* 非 from the second to the third). Each statement is an illustration of being "good at availing oneself of external things"; all three are then summarized in the statement on the *junzi.* What we see here, as before, is an accumulation of examples, a brief catalogue of mutually independent units.

Looking back at the first two (or three) sections discussed so far, the recurring element is the mention of the *junzi*:

1. A *junzi* says: "In learning, one must not desist."
2. If the *junzi* studies broadly and daily inspects himself on three counts, his understanding will be clear and his conduct without transgression.
3. The *junzi* is not different by birth; he is good at availing himself of external things.

Indeed, if there is a discernable theme in the beginning of the *Xunzi*, together with the emphasis on *xue* 學 ("learning"), it is the concern with the ideal of the *junzi*:[29] a person whose status is not inherent or inherited, but earned through effort and the ability to act upon himself and to draw on external things. Importantly, this ideal is an attainable choice—and hence can be argued for by way of persuasive rhetoric. Strictly speaking, everything beyond the three statements on the *junzi* is dispensable in the sense that any part of it could be dropped or replaced by something different. In these cumulative sections, the *Xunzi* does not develop an explicit deductive argument; rather, the text pronounces itself three times on the *junzi* and then, in seemingly random order, fills its columns with illustrations and formulaic pieces of traditional wisdom. Strikingly, none of these pieces—and nothing in the opening passages—involves the style of historical anecdote one is accustomed to

[29] Goldin sees this as the theme of the entire *Xunzi*: "The overarching preoccupation that binds together the diverse arguments and reflections in the text is the role of the *noble man*" (Goldin 1999: xi).

read in other early writings of expository prose, nor is there a single historical reference to anyone. The text here is not organized by chains of deductive arguments and conclusions but also not by the logic of narrative; nor is it in any way adjusted to any sort of historical context. This characteristic is true for much of the *Xunzi* and shared with a text like the *Laozi* 老子, but not with most other Warring States writings, including most of the recently excavated manuscripts of expository prose.[30]

The fourth (or fifth) section of "Exhortation to Learning" offers yet a different way of traditional discourse, namely, the use of rhyme that is found in many passages of the *Xunzi* (Debon 2002): without any introduction, this section is composed of tetrasyllabic lines and almost entirely rhymed, invoking the formal patterns of the *Odes*. The passage falls neatly into four sections of four lines each, which are distinguished by particular syntactic structures, further emphasizing the divisions already marked by rhyme change. These brief sections are four variations on a common theme:[31]

HKCS 1/2/3–5:

物類之起,	*-ə	A
必有所始。	*-ə	A
榮辱之來,	*-ək	B
必象其德。	*-ək	B

As the categories of things arise,
They always have something from which they begin.
As honor and disgrace arrive,
They always are manifestations of [the person's] virtuous power.

肉腐出蟲,	*-uŋ	x
魚枯生蠹。	*-ak	C
怠慢忘身,	*-iŋ	x
禍災乃作。	*-ak	C

Meat that is rotten brings forth worms,
Wood that is withered produces grubs.
When neglecting the self by being lazy and indolent,
Misfortune and disaster will arise.

[30] "Still another characteristic, finally, which separates the *Lao-tzu* from much of early Chinese philosophical discourse, is that it is entirely free of narration, in the sense that its statements are general and not anchored to any particular persons, times, or places. There is no indication of who is speaking, no direct reference to historical events. This contrasts strikingly with typical Confucian discourse" (Baxter 1998: 240).

[31] In my representation of the rhyme pattern, the small letter "x" represents a non-rhyming line. My simplified representation of the rhymes is derived from William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese Reconstruction (Version 1.00)*, online at http://crlao.ehess.fr/document.php?id=1217. Accessed January 23, 2012.

強自取柱,	*-o	D
柔自取束。	*-ok	D
邪穢在身,	*-iŋ	x
怨之所構。	*-o	D

What is strong gives itself as support,
What is soft gives itself for bundling.
When vileness and depravity reside in a person,
Resentment is what he brings upon himself.

施薪若一,	*-it	E
火就燥也,	*-aj	F
平地若一,	*-it	E
水就溼也。	*-aj	F

Where firewood is spread out evenly,
Fire will seek out the driest.
Where the ground is leveled evenly,
Water will seek out the dampest.

草木疇生,	*-eŋ	x
禽獸群焉,	*-an	x
物各從其類也。	*-aj	x

As grasses and trees grow together with their kind,
As birds and beasts form flocks,
Each thing accords to its own category.

Taken together, these rhythmic and euphonic sections offer a series of analogies that illustrate the principle of sympathetic resonance in the natural world: because things respond to one another according to their *lei* 類 (“categories”) of natural disposition, actions have their specific and inevitable consequences. Rhetorically, the four sections contain what seem to be snippets of conventional wisdom. They are persuasive for two reasons: as observations of the natural world and by the force of sheer accumulation that amounts to a veritable catalogue of phenomena of natural resonance. The altogether eighteen tetrasyllabic lines are capped with a concluding statement of six characters that offers, by a process of induction, the abstraction of the principle illustrated: “each thing accords to its own category.” From here, the text moves closer to its conclusion, beginning with a summarizing *shi gu* 是故 (“and for this reason”) that leads to yet another set of analogies on the same theme before concluding with a three-line pronouncement introduced again by *gu* 故 (“thus”) that caps the entire fourth (or fifth) section of the chapter. At this point, the

text maps the social world onto the natural, claiming that we can choose our actions but then cannot control their "natural" and therefore inevitable and predictable consequences. The *junzi* must be cautious in speech and action because his behavior may attract calamity according to the same principle of resonance that governs the preceding analogies from the natural world:

HKCS 1/2/5–7:

是故
　質的張而弓矢至焉;
　林木茂而斧斤至焉;
　樹成蔭而眾鳥息焉。
　醯酸而蚋聚焉。

　And for this reason [it is said]:
　Where the archery target is set out, bows and arrows will arrive;
　Where the forest woods are flourishing, axes and halberds will arrive;
　Where trees provide for shade, numerous birds will rest;
　Where [things turn] sour and acid, gnats accumulate.

故
　言有招禍也,
　行有招辱也,
　君子慎其所立乎。

　Thus [it is said]:
　When speaking, one might invite disaster;
　When acting, one might invite disgrace—
　May the *junzi* be cautious about where to take his stand!

Once again, the statement on the *junzi*—which easily matches up with the three earlier ones listed above—provides the closure of the entire section; it is as much a reminder of the chapter's topic proper as it serves as a device to structure the text—indeed, a kind of punctuation mark.

It is remarkable how the individual sections discussed so far are not only self-contained but also composed in different styles, ranging from what—on purely formal grounds of rhyme and meter—could be called "poetry" to the variety of prose patterns. Thus they could be linked not only to different discourses (e.g., about the natural world, the realm of craftsmanship, or moral behavior) but also to different rhetorical figures and patterns of speech. It is unlikely that these passages were original compositions by a single author; more plausibly, they were diverse expressions of traditional wisdom and as such readily available to the compiler of "Exhortation to Learning."

It is not surprising that these expressions found their way into a range of different texts (K I.124–26). To give just one example, in Han times the statement (or half-statement, as it is only part of a "couplet" here) "I once spent the whole day thinking, but it was not as good as what I learned in an instant" is attributed to Kongzi in the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 and to Zisizi 子思子 in the *Shuiyuan* 說苑. Considering that already in the *Xunzi*, all these individual statements are not integrated with whatever follows and precedes them, it is not possible to identify their origin; just as we see them used as bits of traditional lore re-appearing in Han texts, they may well have preceded the *Xunzi* as well. The same should be held for similar passages across many other chapters of the text; what finds itself as quotation or parallel in Han texts may very well not be derived from the *Xunzi* but could have been material that was "traditional" or "shared" already in the third century BCE and entered the *Xunzi* as such.[32] The traditional idea of Xun Kuang as the principal origin of his text interprets ideological differences within the *Xunzi* as coming from different periods of Xun Kuang's life; and in a significant number of cases, it requires the assumption that certain passages are misplaced from an "earlier" to a "later" stratum or vice versa. Inescapably, this procedure may well be called a classical case of "the biographical fallacy": relying to a considerable extent on the text itself, one reconstructs a coherent author whose intellectual biography then, in beautifully circular reasoning, serves as the master tool to stratify his different ideas chronologically.

The text-critical observations made so far can be extended to the entire first half of "Exhortation to Learning." In each paragraph, metaphors and analogies from either the natural world or the realm of craftsmanship are lined up in series, no historical references are included, and the passages end with a brief statement on the *junzi*; in two of three cases, this final statement can then be found, verbatim or unmistakably related, in the *Lunyu*. In addition, the *Odes* are quoted twice, each time explicitly ("An *Ode* says:") and with six lines, and the entire text is punctuated by *gu* 故 and *shigu* 是故, each time gesturing toward established wisdom that appears both conclusive and unquestionable. Aside from the *Odes* quotations and the implicit *gu* and *shigu* gestures toward traditional authority, no other text is explicitly invoked; thus, it is impossible to decide, for example, whether the *Xunzi* is quoting from an early version of the *Lunyu* or whether the latter, at some subse-

[32] For a convenient survey of such passages, see the appendices "Composition of Each Book" in each of Knoblock's three volumes. For materials shared between the *Xunzi* and various pre-Han or early Han texts, Knoblock likewise notes that "there is no reason to consider the possibility of direct quotation since we are probably dealing with traditional material ancestral to both the *Xunzi* and these texts" (K I.125). However, Knoblock does seem to assume that where such material is present in the *Xunzi*, it was consciously selected by Xun Kuang and hence was under his authorial control.

quent stage, possibly during the Han,[33] adopted the lines on the *junzi* from the *Xunzi* or a third source.

It is only with section seven,[34] a little more than half-way into of the first chapter, that "Exhortation to Learning" adopts the diction of expository prose, starting with a two-part rhetorical question: "Where does learning begin? Where does it end?" (學惡乎始? 惡乎終?) The answer, introduced by a simple *yue* 曰 ("it is said," or "I say"), begins once again with a pair of formalized statements:

HKCS 1/3/7–8:

其數則
始乎誦經, 終乎讀禮;

其義則
始乎為士, 終乎為聖人。

"In its sequential order:
It begins with reciting the classics, it ends with reading out loud the ritual [precepts].
In its meaning:
It begins with being a learned man of service,[35] it ends with being a sage."

It is possible that *yue* 曰, as understood by traditional commentators and translated by Knoblock, means "I say." However, *yue* may well mark the above pair of lines as another "saying" of traditional origin,[36] especially as the text that follows them continues in free prose. What is emphasized by *yue* is only the paired statement, not the entire section that follows. Such "marking" of speech is a common rhetorical feature of early Chinese expository prose—in which case *yue* may indicate that the brief maxim is precisely *not* in the author's original voice but a piece of wisdom he cites approvingly.

By contrast, this maxim is followed by a rare instance (in chapter 1) of several sentences in unbound prose:

[33] For a possible Western Han compilation date of the *Lunyu*, see Zhao (1961: 11–24), W. Zhu (1986: 40–52), Makeham (1996: 1–24), Hunter (2012).

[34] In CHANT; Knoblock's section eight.

[35] In social terms, *shi* 士 refers to the lowest aristocratic rank; in the present context, it implies the *learned* man of low aristocratic status (still above the unranked commoners) who is associated with military or other service.

[36] On the rhetorical use of such markers of direct speech, see Kern and Hunter (forthcoming).

HKCS 1/3/8–9:

真積力久則入。學至乎沒而後止也。故學數有終, 若其義則不可須臾舍也。為之人也, 舍之禽獸也。

By truly building up effort for a long time, one enters [into the process of becoming a *junzi*];[37] learning is something which continues until death and only then stops. Thus, while the sequential order of learning continues to the end of one's life, when it comes to its meaning, it is what must not be abandoned for even an instant. Those who engage in it are humans; those who abandon it are wild beasts.

Without transition, this is in turn followed by a rhythmic and rhymed account of three of the classics:

HKCS 1/3/9–10

故
書者、政事之紀也; *-ə
詩者、中聲之所止也; *-ə
禮者、法之大分, 類之綱紀也。 *-ə

Thus [it is said]:
The *Documents* are the essentials for government affairs;
The *Odes* are where fitting tones come to rest;
The *Rites* provide the great distinctions according to [social] rules, they are the guiding principles of classification.

This self-contained unit of three rhymes is then elaborated upon as follows, with the learning of both the *Music* and the *Springs and Autumns Annals* added:

HKCS 1/3/10–12

學至乎禮而止(*təʔ)矣。夫是之謂道德之極(*N-kək)。
禮之敬文也,
樂之中和也,
詩書之博也,
春秋之微也,
在天地之間者畢矣。

When learning reaches up to the ritual precepts, it stops. This is what is called the pinnacle of the moral way and its virtuous power.

[37] The various commentators cannot agree on the meaning of *ru* 入 ("enter") here; see Wang (2005 vol.1: 26–27).

The reverence and refinement of the *Rites*,[38]
The moderation and harmony of the *Music*,
The breadth of the *Odes* and the *Documents*,
The subtlety of the *Springs and Autumns*:
Everything between Heaven and Earth culminates in [learning].

Nothing of this adds up to an actual argument; it is more like a parade of platitudes sputtering forth from the "discourse machine"[39] that reproduces itself in ever new variations on a circumscribed theme, in this case, "learning." But this, of course, is the force of its argument: contrary to the celebration of Xun Kuang as an author with an emphatic personal voice, the text, while certainly advancing an intellectual position, here is emptied of any individuality or surprising thought: in a mantra-like style both rhythmic and repetitive, it falls from one rhetorical pattern into the next, generating and regenerating itself in a continuous and inescapable loop of statements that are asserted but not argued. Because the passage is not built as a linear structure, its continuation is not predicated on what comes before and after any of its parts. It can be rejected but never refuted.

HKCS 1/3/14–15

君子之學也,
入乎耳,
著乎心,
布乎四體,
形乎動靜。
端而言,
蝡而動,
一可以為法則。
小人之學也,
入乎耳,
出乎口;
口耳之間,
則四寸耳,
曷足以美七尺之軀哉!

As for the learning of the *junzi*:
It enters the ear,
Manifests itself in the heart,
Extends across the four extremities,

[38] Here and elsewhere, I translate the term *li* 禮 in two different ways: when standing alone, as general "ritual precepts"; when being part of a list of what are clearly the *liu yi* 六藝 ("six arts"), or some of them, as the title of a text (i.e., the *Rites*). By the time of Xunzi, this canon of learning was well-established, as is now proven by the manuscripts from Guodian 郭店 of around 300 BCE.

[39] I borrow the term from Owen (2001: 175–91).

Takes form in activity and repose.
Gasping in speaking,
Slow in action,[40]
Altogether one can take him as model and rule.
As for the learning of the petty man:
It enters the ear,
Goes out through the mouth,
Yet between ear and mouth
There are just four inches of space—
How could it suffice to grace a seven-foot body!

The message of these lines seems clear: the *junzi* is thoroughly—indeed bodily—transformed by learning, while for the petty man, learning has a mere utilitarian purpose, exiting the mouth as fast as it enters the ear. Yet immediately thereafter follows an interesting twist: the learning of the ancients is a thing of the past—yet it is the learning of the *junzi*:

HKCS 1/3/17–18:

古之學者為己,
今之學者為人。
君子之學也, 以美其身;
小人之學也, 以為禽犢。
故
不問而告謂之傲,
問一而告二謂之囋。
傲、非也,囋、非也;
君子如嚮矣。

The learning of the ancients was for themselves;
The learning of today is for others.
The learning of the *junzi* is for gracing his person;
The learning of the petty man is for preparing sacrificial birds and calves.
Thus [it is said]:
To pronounce oneself without having inquired is called presumptuous;
to pronounce oneself twice when having inquired once is called garrulous.[41]
Being presumptuous is wrong; being garrulous is wrong.
The *junzi* is like an echo.

[40] Once again, the commentators do not agree on the meaning of these words and lines; see Wang (2005 vol.1: 30). The choices in translating *duan* 端 (interpreted as *chuan* 喘) and *ruan* 蝡 come down to the question of whether the two terms are similar (Yang Liang, whom I follow here) or opposite (Wang Tianhai, who understands them as "urgent" versus "slow").

[41] Commentators disagree on the meanings of *ao* 傲 and *za* 囋; see Wang (2005 vol.1: 32–33).

What does it mean that the *junzi* is "like an echo"? Yang Liang explains *xiang* 嚮 ("echo") as "responsive sound," and later commentators have expanded this reading to mean that the *junzi* responds in the precisely adequate way: if prompted ("asked") once, he pronounces himself once; if prompted lightly or strongly, he will respond lightly or strongly, respectively. This is a fine reading, though I take the text differently: the "asking" or "inquiring" is not directed toward the *junzi* but toward his own action, and his subsequent pronouncement is properly limited to the extent of his inquiry. In this sense, what he says is "like an echo" of what he has learned. But there is more to the use of the simile "like an echo." It invites the reader to act "like an echo"—to respond with the perceptive mind of a *junzi* able to discern what is conveyed through the *Xunzi*. Here, unlike with its unreconstructed platitudes before, the text engages the reader by means of its "poetry": in using a simile to describe the *junzi*, the text demands an act of interpretation—a choice between different possible meanings—to become understood. It is in this space of negotiated meaning that the reader encounters the mind of the author. The following paragraph contains an instance of (self?)-quotation and (self?)-commentary to exalt the role of the teacher:

HKCS 1/3/20–21

學莫便乎近其人。
　禮樂法而不說,
　詩書故而不切,
　春秋約而不速。
方其人之習君子之說, 則尊以遍矣, 周於世矣。
故曰:
　學莫便乎近其人。

"In learning, nothing is more effective than being close to a person accomplished in it."
The *Rites* and the *Music* provide models yet do not explain;
The *Odes* and the *Documents* provide precedents yet do not speak directly;[42]
The *Springs and Autumns* are terse yet not easy to grasp.
If one imitates how a person [of learning] practices the explanations of the *junzi* one becomes widely revered and [one's reputation] extends across generations.
Thus it is said:
"In learning, nothing is more effective than being close to a person accomplished in it."

Here, the final *gu yue* is an argumentative conclusion: because the classics do not lend themselves to an easy understanding, one needs to follow the instruction and

[42] Here, I disagree with Wang Tianhai who glosses *gu er bu qie* 故而不切 as *chen jiu er bu qiehe xianshi* 陳舊而不切合現實 ("[they] array old precedents but do not conform to present reality"). Instead, *bu qie zhi* 不切直, of which I take *bu qie* to be the abbreviated form, is a way of indirect (and ineffective) speech, as attested in *Hanshu* 51.2329.

model of a teacher ("a person accomplished in it"). The following passage in unbound prose is the first—and indeed only—part of the entire chapter that presents a sustained deductive argument. It also is the only longer segment of chapter 1 where linguistic patterning does not dominate the development and expression of reasoning; instead, the passage is driven by the use of logical conjunctions, interrogative particles, and conclusive markers such as *an* 安 ("how"), *er yi* 而已 ("and this is all," "merely"), *ze* 則 ("then," "thus"), *ruo* 若 ("if"), and finally another *gu* 故 ("therefore").

HKCS 1/3/23 – 1/4/4

學之經莫速乎好其人, 隆禮次之。上不能好其人, 下不能隆禮, 安特將學雜識志, 順詩書而已耳。則末世窮年, 不免為陋儒而已。將原先王, 本仁義,則禮正其經緯蹊徑也。若挈裘領, 詘五指而頓之, 順者不可勝數也。不道禮憲, 以詩書為之, 譬之猶以指測河也, 以戈舂黍也, 以錐餐壺也, 不可以得之矣。故隆禮, 雖未明, 法士也; 不隆禮, 雖察辯, 散儒也。

> For the path of learning, nothing is more expeditious than devotion to a person accomplished in it; to exalt the ritual precepts is second. If in the first place one cannot devote oneself to a person engaged in it, and in the second place cannot exalt the *Rites*, how would it be enough to only learn some miscellaneous precepts or simply follow the *Odes* and the *Documents*! In this case, to the end of one's days, one could not avoid being nothing more than a parochial *ru*. If one is bound to take the former kings as one's source and benevolence and righteousness as one's basis, then the *Rites* will rectify the warp and woof, the ways and byways. It is like when one lifts a fur coat by its collar, grasps it with five fingers from within and then shakes it, the [hair on the entire coat] that falls smoothly into its place cannot be counted. If one does not take guidance from the statutes of the *Rites* and acts by merely relying on the *Odes* and the *Documents*, it is as if taking a finger to plumb the depth of the river, or taking a dagger to dehusk the millet, or taking an awl to eat a gourd—it just cannot be accomplished! Thus: he who exalts the *Rites*, even if not yet comprehending them, is an exemplary learned man of service; he who does not exalt the *Rites*, even though being scrutinizing and discriminating, is an undisciplined *ru*.

Here we do have the argumentative and authorial style in the *Xunzi* that modern scholars hail for its incisive reasoning (or deplore for its pugnaciousness)—and it is here, in particular in the invectives against *lou ru* 陋儒 ("parochial *ru*") and *san ru* 散儒 ("undisciplined *ru*") where one might best discover Xun Kuang's authorial voice.

To summarize the findings above, chapter 1 of the *Xunzi*, however, is not the place where this voice speaks with full force. Instead, it is a chapter largely built around individual and mutually unrelated sections that dance around a set of common themes: the importance of learning, the preeminence of the ritual precepts over all other disciplines and modes of conduct, the distinctive character forms and practices that define the *junzi.* What the chapter lacks in systematic architecture, inner

coherence, and linear progression, it gains through its widely varied features of rhythmic repetition, a certain range of metaphors and similes, and the appeal of an overall declamatory style that is more the product of the "discourse machine" than an actual discourse, and that gains its persuasive force from just that. It is also exceedingly difficult to determine anything like Xun Kuang's authorial voice throughout chapter 1, if by this we understand agreeing or disagreeing with others, using a coherent way of argumentation, or including emphatic utterances such as exclamations or rhetorical questions. The general (though not complete) absence of such features and the lack of a linear development from one section to the next might suggest that we are dealing not with an authored chapter, but with a compiled one that loosely connects elements from diverse sources.

To what extent are these features of structure and diction common to the *Xunzi* as a whole? For the majority of chapters, Knoblock—basing himself on existing Chinese scholarship—has proposed more or less severe instances of textual corruption, primarily in the form of misplaced passages that do not connect well with their immediate environment and instead appear to belong together with material in other chapters. Because of his conviction that certain positions reflect the thinking of certain periods within Xun Kuang's long life, Knoblock further argues that individual chapters contain material not only on different topics but also from different periods.[43] While this may be true, one wonders how such textual confusion *within the chapters* may have come about. Is the proposed rearrangement the attempt to reconstitute a unity of thought and coherence of argument that in its proposed form may never have existed in the first place? Or does the lack of integration reflect a case of deterioration from an earlier, more tightly constructed text? Either way, the abrupt changes of topic that occur frequently even in the chapters considered most representative of the *Xunzi*'s thought suggest the relative independence of smaller textual units within the chapters, and an overall rather loose structure of argument; as Knoblock has pointed out, the *Xunzi* contains a considerable number of section titles within the individual chapters, suggesting that the sections such titled had once circulated independently (K I.107, 121, 123–24); moreover, in Knoblock's words, "we know from the history of the text that Liu Xiang and not Xunzi is responsible for the original order not only of the books but also of sections or paragraphs within the books" (K I.123). Generally speaking, however, a passage that follows logically from the previous one and, in turn, is the necessary basis for the subsequent one, is less easily transposed than a relatively isolated one that stands on its own. The editor, or series of editors, who may have rearranged the original order within a chapter presumably did not willfully vandalize the text. He or they must have considered the current arrangement as the most plausible or helpful one. This might seem improbable if the chapters had been tightly constructed to begin with; on the other hand, as the above-mentioned case of "Black Robes" reveals,[44] it is by no means impossible.

[43] See the summarizing comments in his "Composition of Each Book" appendices.

[44] See p. 6 above.

An example for the lack of textual integration is chapter 22, "Zheng ming" 正名, which together with a handful of other chapters seems to express the ideological core of the *Xunzi*. Stylistically, the chapter shows numerous similarities with chapter 1 discussed above: it contains few paragraphs in unbound prose, while the large majority of passages is composed in short, highly formulaic patterns of rhythmic parallelism that delineate the given passage from its immediate environment; a number of short passages are rhymed; the different paragraphs are not arranged in a continuous argument; there are no historical anecdotes or other specific historical references; a small number of connecting markers such as *gu* 故 or *shi gu* 是故 are used liberally throughout; in three cases, a paragraph is capped by a quotation from the *Odes*; there are few instances of an individual voice that would make itself heard through rhetorical questions or exclamations; the chapter—except for a few brief paragraphs—does not engage in refuting competing theories or positions; and a distinction is made between an ideal past and a chaotic present. Perhaps most importantly, the chapter as a whole does not have a continuous theme: after about two thirds of the text, the concern with *zheng ming* 正名 ("correct use of names") falls away almost entirely, with much of the remaining parts focused, once again, on the *junzi*. Altogether, the chapter consists far less of explicit reasoning than of apodictic pronouncements, often introduced by the formulaic *fan* 凡 ("as a matter of principle"). Thus, similar to the case of chapter 1, the persuasive force of "Zheng ming" lies not in arguments derived from traditional authority or historical precedent, nor does it rest in the compelling rebuttal of others or in a tightly woven sequential argument. Its rhetorical force gradually rises from the procedure of piling up passage upon passage, dictum upon dictum, that in their accumulation overwhelm the reader by their diversity of linguistic patterns. This principle of *copia et varietas* ("abundance and variety"), central to the European traditions of rhetoric, literature, painting, and music, can be found in early Chinese *shui* 說 ("attempts at persuasion") of Xun Kuang's time, and it defines, then in highly stylized poetic form, the core of the early *fu* 賦 ("poetic exposition"). The formal feature of extended parallelism, ubiquitous in the *Xunzi*, where a topic is pursued through a series of statements that are typically capped with a final pronouncement introduced by *gu*, is closely related to the technique of the catalogue—a rhetorical figure that is as central to the *Xunzi* as it is to the Western Han *fu*. An extreme example in "Zheng ming" is the following, where the topic of "name" appears only in passing (HKCS 22/108/14 – 22/109/3, K III.129–30):

然則何緣而以同異?曰：緣天官。凡同類同情者, 其天官之意物也同。
故比方之疑似而通, 是所以共其約名以相期也。
形體、色理以目異;
聲音清濁、調竽、奇聲以耳異;
甘苦、鹹淡、辛酸、奇味以口異;
香臭、芬鬱、腥臊、漏庾、奇臭以鼻異;
疾癢、滄熱、滑鈹、輕重以形體異;
說故、喜怒、哀樂、愛惡、欲以心異。

心有徵知。徵知,則
　緣耳而知聲可也,
　緣目而知形可也。
然而徵知必將待天官之當簿其類, 然後可也。
　五官簿之而不知,
　心徵知而無說,
則人莫不然謂之不知。
此所緣而以同異也。

This being so, for what cause does one take things as equal or different? One might say: because of the inborn facilities of the organs. In general, when things are of the same kind and the same disposition, the way the inborn facilities of the organs perceive of them is also the same. Thus, when put side by side, they resemble one another and are interchangeable; this is why they are given an agreed name by which they correspond to one another.

The embodiments of form and the patterns of color are distinguished by the eye;

The clear and muddy notes, the well-tuned reed pipes, and the unusual sounds are distinguished by the ear;

Sweet and bitter, salty and bland, acid and sour, and the unusual tastes are distinguished by the mouth;

Aromatic and foul, fragrant and stinking, fishy and fetid, rotten and festering, and the unusual odors are distinguished by the nose;

Pain and itching, cold and heat, slippery and firm, light and heavy are distinguished by the embodiment of form;

Explanation and precedent,[45] pleasure and anger, sorrow and happiness, love and hate, and desire are distinguished by the heart.

The heart has understanding by distinction. When there is understanding by distinction, then

Because of the ear, it is possible to know sound,

Because of the eye, it is possible to know form.

Following from there, understanding by distinction is always contingent upon the organ being properly impressed by what is of its category; only then it is possible.

If the five organs are impressed but do not lead to understanding,

if the heart understands by distinction but without leading to explanation,

[45] I do not follow Wang Tianhai, who reads *shuo/shui gu* 說故 as *yue ku* 悅苦 ("happiness and bitterness"), as proposed earlier by Qing commentators (Wang 2005 vol.2: 897). First, happiness is already included in the complete catalogue of emotions here; second, by accepting the characters (and words) *shuo/shui gu* 說故 I suggest that "explanation and precedent," which are clearly outside the catalogue of emotions, are purposefully added to the latter to claim that these modes of speech, too, are governed by the heart.

> then there is nobody among men who would not be inclined to call this "not understanding."
> This is the cause by which one takes things as equal or different.

For the point made here—the different organs are perceptive of different types of things, which is the basis for the human capacity to perceive of these things as belonging to different categories, and for being capable of fully perceiving of reality altogether—one might find this passage extravagantly verbose. Perhaps the passage is constructed as a forceful rebuttal of an implied philosophical adversary, but otherwise, no reader needed the extensive catalogue of different sensations and the organs receptive to them, nor was it necessary to dwell on the question of "understanding" or "not understanding." Rhetorically, however, the text exhausts its limited topic. Instead of offering some chosen examples or analogies, it says everything there is to say, as is then finally suggested by the closing formula regarding *yuan er yi tongyi* 緣而以同異 ("the cause by which one takes things as equal or different") that verbatim responds to the question at the outset. Within this frame, the mini-discourse stands on its own, and it is complete—which makes it persuasive. It also is eminently movable to fit different contexts, but within the "Zheng ming" chapter, it is part of a larger discussion on "correct names" that imply correct distinctions. Here, the keyword that frames the discussion (and runs throughout it), is *yi* 異 ("different"), which also connects the present passage to the immediately preceding one (not cited here). To this larger discussion of correct distinctions, the present passage contributes the argument that the principles of human understanding and action are biologically determined, a point that the *Xunzi* also makes elsewhere. However, what makes the passage compelling and unquestionable—its rhetorical architecture and sense of completeness—is also what facilitates its potential displacement.

The feature of the catalogue, frequent in shorter units of text regardless of the topic at hand,[46] is also operative at a larger level. In chapter 5, "Fei xiang" 非相, it appears in a rare instance (within the core chapters) of sustained references to historical figures (HKCS 5/17/10–24, K I.203–4)[47] where it is followed, in short order, by lists of "three" patterns of misfortune and behavior, respectively. Chapter 21, "Jie bi" 解蔽, contains catalogues of what *bi* 蔽 ("blinds") the human mind, examples of sage rulers from the past and of their sensual perceptions, scholars who were "blinded" by their particular convictions, and others more. Chapter 19, "Li lun" 禮論, is largely driven by a series of catalogues, beginning with the sensory organs and everything that can be *yang* 養 ("nurtured"), and then detailing the sumptuary rules concerning ancestral sacrifices, the order of sacrificial offerings, funerary arrangements including the mourning garb, human emotions and the ways to display them, tomb furnishings and grave goods, and so on. Another large catalogue can be found

[46] Compare, e.g., the passage in chapter 3, "Bu gou" 不苟, that enumerates the qualities of the *junzi*; see HKCS 3/9/15–17, K I.175.

[47] Chapter 5 is unusual in containing many references to historical precedent, always connected to well-known figures from the past. The chapter also contains a larger than usual number of quotations from the classics and anonymous sayings.

in chapter 6, "Fei shi'er zi" 非十二子. Here, the text starts out by denouncing through formulaic repetition twelve groups of *zi* 子 ("masters"), divided in six pairs before turning to the positive examples of Kongzi 孔子 and Zigong 子弓, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹. For five of the six pairs of aberrant scholars, the text concludes with the same mantra-like formula: *ran'er qi chi zhi you gu, qi yan zhi cheng li, zuyi qihuo yuzhong* 然而其持之有故, 其言之成理, 足以欺惑愚眾 : 是 A, B 也 ("Thus, when their positions have precedent and their explications become well-formed, they suffice to deceive and confuse the ignorant masses; such are [the masters] A and B"). As in the other catalogues, the list is presented as being complete, final, cast into fixed form—and is therefore compelling.

The chapter that is singularly distinguished by fierce reasoning and a forceful and emphatic (and hence distinctly individual) voice is chapter 23, "Xing'e" 性惡—the rhetorical climax of the core *Xunzi*—where the text not only argues that human nature is bad but also that the *Mengzi's* opposite view is wrong. As noted by Knoblock, the chapter is seriously damaged, and roughly the last third of the text is merely "tangentially connected with the main theme of the book" (K III.280). This having been said, the first two thirds of the chapter do stand out by their rigorous and combative style.

The chapter contains the same abundance of stylistic patterns as other parts of the *Xunzi*, and it is not short on formulaic expression: *yong ci guan zhi, [ran ze] ren zhi xing'e ming yi, qi shan zhe wei ye* 用此觀之, [然則]人之性惡明矣, 其善者偽也 ("Contemplating it from this perspective, it is clear that human nature is bad, and that what is good is artificially brought about") appears verbatim no less than eight times, and in addition with two variations. But then there is more: a purportedly direct citation of Mengzi (or from the emerging *Mengzi* tradition, though not matching up verbatim with anything in the current *Mengzi* text), followed by a rebuttal; a wealth of conjunctions and sentence adverbials to develop fully formed arguments (as opposed to mere pronouncements) that include not just the ubiquitous *gu* 故 and *ze* 則 but also *ruoshi* 若是 ("if this is the case"), *ruo* 若 ("if"), *bi* 必 ("invariably"), *ran ze* 然則 ("this being so, then"), and others more; structures pointing out what is "true" and what is "false" (*shi* 是 . . . *fei* 非), what is "ancient" and what is "today" (*gu* 古 . . . *jin* 今); patterns of causation ("if A then B, if B then C, if C then D, and hence . . . "); the use of analogies; rhetorical questions such as *he ye* 何也 ("how?") and emphatic exclamations (*qi* 豈 . . . *zai* 哉); and staged dialogues with an interlocutor. While the "Xing'e" chapter contains the same rhythmic patterns as the other chapters, these rhetorical patterns do not dominate the chapter or drive its ways of developing an argument. In this analysis, I am not referring to the philosophical unity of the entire chapter (or even of the first two-thirds), nor would I claim chapter 23 to be the philosophical core of the entire *Xunzi*.[48] Instead, I wish to

[48]As noted above, Knoblock has pointed out the problems with the textual integrity of the chapter. For challenges to the relevance of the claim "human nature is bad" in the *Xunzi*'s overall philosophical system, or for the argument that the claim does not even belong to the original *Xunzi*, see Robins (2001–02: 99–100). Robins himself, while firmly holding on to Xunzi's authorship of the "core" of the chapter, argues that it contains not one continuous argument but ten separate essays, possibly reflecting Xunzi's different ideas over the stretch of his long life. Whatever one might think of that, the point is not relevant to my argument here, which is strictly on the *stylistic* level of the text.

emphasize the striking *stylistic* features of chapter 23 especially when compared with a text like chapter 1. These features constitute a different mode of argumentation together with an intensified presence of a distinct authorial voice that speaks with fierce conviction. Remarkably, with the exception of a single line toward the very end, chapter 23 is among the very few chapters of the *Xunzi* that do not seem to share any material with other pre-Qin and Han texts (Ho et al. 2005: 209–15). At the same time, in post-Han times "Xing'e" has been by far the single most-referenced chapter from the *Xunzi* and has come to represent the *Xunzi* altogether—so much so that "readers of later centuries . . . seemed not to peruse much" of the entire text beyond this particular chapter (Goldin 2011: 72).

From this, one might venture that it was not merely the disagreement with the *Mengzi* that contributed to the *Xunzi's* more marginal status in the tradition and that in Song times, finally, led to Xunzi's expulsion from the genealogical pantheon of the Confucian orthodoxy as it became physically enshrined in the *kongmiao* 孔廟 ("Kongzi Temple") of succeeding dynasties. The double phenomenon that the *Xunzi* is at its most forceful in its attack on the *Mengzi*, and that it is also here where the textual voice appears most recognizable as that of a true author—always understood as Xun Kuang—will not have gone unnoticed. Just where the text comes closest to offering a strong argument by a strong author, it also is most vulnerable to rejection, and to the punishment of its presumed author for having taken his stance.[49] In "Xing'e," Xunzi and the *Xunzi*, rightly or wrongly, have long come to stand in for each other.

As "Xing'e" with its hard-charging logic and emphatic expressivity seems to reveal an individual voice (or constructs one rhetorically), it also reminds us that much of the *Xunzi* does not. In fact, it seems to me that chapters 1 and 23 are strikingly different in nature: while the first, at least in part, appears as a *compiled text*, the second appears as an *authored one*. There are many ways to rationalize how the author of chapter 23 can also be the one who wrote chapter 1; perhaps he was a master of many styles; perhaps his way of writing changed over the course of his long life; perhaps the different topics suggested different forms of argumentation; perhaps the deployment of traditional wisdom in chapter 1 is meant to exemplify the cause of traditional "learning," while the aggressive argument in chapter 23 is carefully crafted to reflect the harshness of its message—with both thus mimetically representing on the linguistic level the philosophical meaning that is to be to advanced.[50] But any of these explanations would have to be explicitly appropriated and defended in order to argue for the authorial unity of the *Xunzi* in the face of its

[49] On being responsible and punishable as a hallmark of authorship, see Foucault (1979: 141–60).

[50] As it happens, this is one of the characteristics of the early *fu* 賦 ("poetic exposition") for which the *Hanshu*, as noted above, names Xunzi an exemplary early proponent; see Kern (2003: 383–437). I am grateful to Eric Hutton for raising the bar here and below, as I discuss the issue of authorship.

striking internal diversity. But why? What is the evidence (other than traditional belief) for positing a single author for both chapters (and all other chapters as well), and what is gained by trying to make that case—a case as forced and arduous as it is with *every* pre-imperial Chinese text? How many problems are solved by the assumption of Xunzi as the single author of the *Xunzi*, and how many problems are created by it? Had Foucault not written his essay "What is an Author?" (Foucault 1979), we would have to invent something close to it in order to answer these questions.

Consider again the initial parts of chapter 1 that follow the statement "A *junzi* says: 'In learning, one must not desist.'" As noted above, this pronouncement leads to different metaphors from the worlds of nature and craftsmanship before offering a set piece of traditional wisdom introduced by *gu* 故. Soon thereafter, we see another *gu* introducing another, seemingly unrelated set piece which traditional readers have understood as opening a new section of the text. As I have argued above, it is not possible to begin a new section with *gu*; perhaps something is missing before, or the text might be in disarray. But there is also another way to make sense of the structure of "Quan xue" (and many other parts of the *Xunzi*). What if the chapter is not at all in disarray or incomplete—but simply appears as such because we are expecting a linear progression?[51] What if the mutually independent passages were never meant to constitute such linear progression but, instead, were compiled as parallel illustrations of the core ideas? In this way, the passages that follow the different instances of *gu* are to be read not as one following the other but as different and equally valid responses to the initial statement of the "gentleman," compiled from a larger repertoire of such responses. Such a repertoire may have accumulated from different scenes of instructions some of which might even go back to Xun Kuang himself, teaching his disciples; or it may have built up from various discussions, oral or written, of "learning" that were associated with Xun Kuang and his intellectual circle. There are numerous ways in which a repertoire concerning the traditional topic of "Quan xue"—which is not at all unique to the *Xunzi*—could have grown over time, and it is not difficult to imagine an editor compiling parts of it into the text we now have. Needless to say, any such editor would have been attracted the most to precisely the kinds of metaphors, analogies, and pieces of accepted and therefore authoritative wisdom that we find in the received text of the *Xunzi*.

In other words, by expecting a certain type of argumentative logic across the different chapters, we may be misreading the text altogether. As soon as we abandon the idea of the individual author and of the text as this author's individually crafted work, a chapter like "Quan xue" easily makes sense as a compilation of mutually independent illustrations of the principal ideas associated with Xunzi and his circle.

[51] The same question must be raised about chapter 23 which both Donald J. Munro and Robins—to my mind rather disingenuously—have labelled "a mess"; see Munro (1996: 198), Robins (2001–02: 157).

Moreover, unlike with the traditional reading of the text, we no longer struggle with questions of authorship, ideological diversity, or stylistic incoherence. We also no longer need to tie different parts of the *Xunzi* to the highly tentative reconstruction of different periods of Xun Kuang's personal life. With the exception of parts of "Xing'e" and perhaps some other passages of careful disquisition, we can let go of Xun Kuang as author. In return, we obtain a much richer vision of Xun Kuang as the teacher who inspired the many different ways to think and speak about important social, moral, and philosophical questions. This proposal must not be misunderstood as an argument about the authenticity of the text. To the contrary, it is only with the common misreading of *compiled texts* as *authored* ones, and with the false conflation of text and author, that textual authenticity is confused with authorship. A clearer understanding of this confusion, finally, may also help us to recognize a truly authored text when we see it—which most likely will not be chapter 1 of the *Xunzi*.

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Chapter 2
Xunzi on Self-Cultivation

Aaron Stalnaker

1 Introduction

Xunzi develops an elaborate, systematic, and powerful account of moral self-cultivation, a long-standing Confucian preoccupation. In this chapter I give a rational reconstruction of this account, covering a number of aspects of his presentation. I first survey the historical and cultural context within which Xunzi developed his views, then outline the overall shape and trajectory of his account of moral development, which is correlated closely with his understanding of human nature and psychology. I then analyze his account of how the crucial practices of study, ritual, and music and dance contribute to the transformation of people from our initial pettiness to states of increasing wisdom and goodness, which Xunzi arranges into an explicit hierarchy of ethical achievement. I close with a consideration of notable strengths and weaknesses of Xunzi's account, considered from a contemporary perspective.[1]

Certainly the cultivation of appropriate sensibilities, skills, virtues, and knowledge was central to the Ru 儒 or "Confucian" tradition from its textual beginning in the *Analects*.[2] Although the *Analects* is almost completely devoid of explicit theoretical argument, it reflects the existence of a teaching group of adult men centered around

[1] There are several excellent studies of Xunzi's views of these topics. Probably the best are Ivanhoe (1990, 1991, 1994), Kline (1998), and Schofer (1993). For my own account, from which this chapter borrows heavily, see Stalnaker (2006), portions of which are reprinted here with the permission of Georgetown University Press.

[2] For more on "Confucius," and astute discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of reading the Ru movement as a religious tradition called "Confucianism," see Csikszentmihalyi (2001). For ease of comprehension by English language readers, I will continue to refer to "Confucianism" throughout this essay, despite the problems with the term.

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As for the character of these "petty" (HKCS 4/15/14–15) inclinations, Xunzi writes:

> Human *xing* is bad; our goodness is artifice. Now, human *xing* is such that from birth it has a love of profit. Following this will produce wrangling and strife, and courtesy and deference will perish. From birth there is envy and hatred in it; following these will produce violence and crime, and loyalty and trust will perish. From birth it has the desires of the ears and eyes, and a love of sounds and colors. Following these will produce wantonness and chaos, and ritual, *yi*, proper form, and good order will all perish. (HKCS 23/113/3–5, cf. H 248)

On Xunzi's account we are prone to acquisitiveness and envy, along with various bodily desires. Serious problems come when we "follow" these promptings without reflective judgment based on a proper understanding of the Way. Xunzi tends to pair *xing* 性 contrastively with *wei* 偽, literally "artifice" or "artificial," but commonly translated as "deliberate effort," as in his repeated motto that "Human *xing* is bad; our goodness is *wei*." This means that for Xunzi, the *xing* does not exhaust our human capabilities; in particular it leaves out the human *xin* 心 ("heart/mind") and its capacities to respond to the world and direct action while remaining empty, unified, and tranquil.

Self-cultivation, for Xunzi, is thus a matter of deliberate effort or "artifice." Given Xunzi's preference for craft metaphors for this process, one might wonder who exactly is playing the part of craftsman, and who the raw material. As explored further in the next section, Xunzi emphasizes the necessity of good teachers for self-formation to be possible. Thus it might seem that the teacher is the one who "steams" and "grinds" the student, so that over time the student takes on the objective shape or character of the ideal human standard. Stated so baldly this cannot be right. Such a picture appears indistinguishable from "brainwashing" and coercion, and it is hard to fathom how such processes could lead to anything like genuine self-mastery or virtue.

Xunzi clearly views the human heart/mind as the "craftsman" in the process of self-formation, and our impulses, thoughts, and practical abilities as the "material" to be shaped. He describes the heart/mind as a "lord" and "ruler" that issues orders but receives none without itself choosing to follow them (HKCS 21/104/10–12). At another point he describes the heart/mind as the *gongzai* 工宰 ("master craftsman") of the Way that can represent the Way with skillful and accurate discriminations and arguments (HKCS 22/110/7, H 241). Humans have created and continue to extend the Way through purposeful "artifice," but one recurrent locus of this artifice is the transformation of individuals. Given the powers of even an ignorant and undeveloped heart/mind, however, such transformation can only take place through the slow accumulation of new understanding, sensitivity, and skill in willing submission to an external authority, one's trusted teacher.

The details of Xunzi's moral psychology are fascinating and subtle, but for present purposes I will simply sketch the outlines of his conception to help flesh out my account of his views of ethical formation. Xunzi views human motivation as having a two-part structure: on the one hand, we have a set of more or less spontaneous dispositions to feel, desire, and act; on the other we have the thought and decision

of our heart/mind, which controls what we will actually do in any given situation. Both of these systems need to develop over time for us to reach true virtue, but the heart/mind is clearly the guiding element.

Xunzi analyzes the more appetitive side of our bodily existence in terms of three key notions: *xing* 性, discussed previously; *qing* 情, which most often means "dispositions" but can sometimes refer to particular emotions; and *yu* 欲 ("desires"). He helpfully relates these ideas as follows:

> The *xing* consists of the tendencies Heaven produces [in us] (*jiu* 就); the *qing* are the substance of the *xing*; desires are the responses of the *qing*. The *qing* always seeks after an object of desire when one thinks the object may be attained; [but] judging that something is permissible and finding a path to it, these must emerge from the understanding (*zhi* 知). (HKCS 22/111/14–15, cf. H 244)

Xunzi ties *xing*, *qing*, and *yu* tightly together, as three analytically separable aspects of the same system of human responsiveness to stimuli. For Xunzi, "Heaven" stands for spontaneous and effortless natural processes of generation and completion, both in the cosmos and human life. Thus the *xing* is what all humans are born with, generically speaking: it is our innate endowment, which predictably tends in certain directions; we might even call it the collection of our "instincts." Xunzi then uses the broadly suggestive term *qing* to give content to this idea of a uniform endowment; the *qing* or dispositions are what we all share (HKCS 3/11/15; see also 23/115/23). Xunzi identifies the *qing* itself as the spontaneously responsive aspect of human beings, and the desires, *yu* 欲, as the responses of the disposition to a person's environment. Xunzi then goes on to underline the impulsive force of desires as the actively motivational aspect of a person's *qing*, while integrating this with an emphasis on the centrality of intellectual recognition and judgment to the overall process of human action.

The motive power and mutability of desire are hallmarks of Xunzi's view.[5] At the beginning of his chapter on ritual, he lays out the origin and two-fold justification of ritual, all on the basis of human desire. He writes:

> How did ritual arise? I say: Humans are born having desires. When they have desires but do not get the objects of their desire, then they will always seek some means of satisfaction. If there is no measure or limit to their seeking, then they will necessarily struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos then they will be impoverished. The former kings hated such chaos, and so they established rituals and *yi* in order to allot things to people, to nurture their desires, and to satisfy their seeking. They caused desires never to exhaust material goods, and material goods never to be depleted by desires, so that the two support each other and prosper. This is how ritual arose. (HKCS 19/90/3–5, adapted from H 201)

For Xunzi, human desire restlessly seeks satisfaction, and only the Confucian ritual order can provide a way for people to live in harmony with each other and the natural environment, moderating and ordering everyone's pursuit of satisfaction, for the greater good as well as individual flourishing. And Xunzi, in capsule form, presents here what might be called his negative and positive justifications for Confucian

[5] For an alternative view of desire in the *Xunzi*, see Sung (2012a).

ritual. The negative argument proceeds from untutored human desires, to a widespread, heedless search for their satisfaction, to social conflict and societal collapse, leading to an abhorrent state of shared poverty and suffering. Giving free rein to our desires is thus intrinsically self-defeating, on Xunzi's view, and so we cannot blindly follow our inclinations. Ritual breaks this chain of consequences by channeling the search for satisfaction within wise boundaries. The positive justification for ritual sees this restraint as an ordered transformation, both of human beings and their environment, considered as both natural and economic. By reforming desires and the quest for satisfaction, a higher flourishing is possible, wherein all receive what they need (food, clothing, shelter, safety, and meaningful social life), and some at least receive more, and more beautiful, things than would ever be possible without social order and cooperation. Desires and goods "support each other and prosper" under the guidance of ritual and *yi*, the apparent constraints that actually free up greater possibilities and lead to more and finer enjoyment.

This illuminates Xunzi's basic assumption that desires are not in any sense wicked. They aim at real human goods, whether basic and essential, or luxurious; it is primarily the consequences of everyone blindly following their innate desires that are disastrous. Xunzi makes no apologies for arguing that Confucianism is not only the best Way to avoid these consequences, but also the most satisfying possible Way (HKCS 22/111/16–18). Xunzi has no patience with opponents who argue that good government requires the elimination or even reduction of human desires; we do, however, need to reform and refine our desires. Indeed, he argues that having desires is intrinsic to being alive—the only people who truly lack desire are dead (HKCS 22/111/4–6).

Xunzi explains:

> Desires do not wait for the possibility of satisfying them, but those who seek [satisfaction] follow what they *ke* 可 ("approve of"). That desires do not wait for the possibility of satisfying them is something we receive from Heaven; that when seeking [satisfaction] we follow what we approve of is something received from the heart/mind. When a single desire received from Heaven is controlled by the many aims received from our heart/mind, it is certainly difficult to categorize it as being received from Heaven. (HKCS 22/111/6–8, cf. H 243–44)

Desires gain their force spontaneously, but actual human action is frequently a complex process involving conscious assent to particular aims via a judgment of approval. Even "the stupid" reflect on and assent to particular courses of action (HKCS 10/42/13), although their judgments are presumably only framed with the "petty" evaluative categories of benefit and harm (HKCS 4/15/14–16). For Xunzi our conscious aims, and the practices we engage in to reform our emotions and desires (or alternatively to follow them wherever they lead), are the crucial determinants of virtue and vice, success and failure, good government and destructive anarchy.

With *ke* 可 ("approval" or "assent"), we enter the realm of the heart/mind's powers of thought and deliberate effort. Xunzi describes the heart/mind as follows:

> The heart/mind is the lord of the body, and the ruler of the numinous clarity. It issues commands but receives none. By itself it prohibits or allows, seizes or grasps, moves or stops.

> Thus, the mouth can be forced to be silent or to speak, the body can be forced to crouch down or stretch out, but the heart/mind cannot be forced to change its ideas. If it judges something right, then one accepts it; if it judges something wrong, then one rejects it. (HKCS 21/104/10–12, cf. H 229)

On Xunzi's account the heart/mind rules, and the rest of the body obeys. We are not at the mercy of our immediate desires unless we assent to them. This is because "no person does not follow that to which they assent (*ke* 可) and reject that from which they dissent" (HKCS 22/111/20). We are prompted by our spontaneous desires and aversions, and usually approve of courses of action that will lead to their satisfaction, but our heart/mind always has the potential to command us to refrain from following these promptings, or to go beyond them. While we are capable of acting against our spontaneous attractions and repulsions, we initially see little reason to do so, and will only restrict our pursuit of apparent goods on the basis of prudential calculations of benefit and harm, or if our mind commits to some larger plan of action, like the Confucian Way, which trumps our desires in some categorical way. As Xunzi puts it, everyone approves of certain things, and this is what separates the stupid from the wise: the wise assent to the Way, whereas the rest of us "see only profit," and reflect only to the extent that we might more effectively satisfy our felt desires (HKCS 10/42/13, 4/15/14–16).

As Bryan Van Norden has perceptively argued, this notion of *ke* 可 is the second pillar of Xunzi's understanding of human action, and an important departure from Mencius.[6] The word *ke* is multivalent, including the notion of *possibility* (sometimes contrasted with actual ability to do something), as well as what is worthy of social, aesthetic, and/or moral *approval*. It can also be used verbally to express making a judgment of either possibility or approval, or as I would argue, the stronger idea of assent, which rules out a merely notional approval in favor of a real, motivating recognition of action-compelling factors in a situation.

Because of the commanding power of the heart/mind, properly training it is absolutely critical to good living, on Xunzi's account. After the passage quoted earlier about desires and the aims of the heart/mind, Xunzi continues as follows:

> Life is definitely what people desire most, and death what they hate most. Nevertheless, some people follow life [in this way] yet end up dead; it is not that these people do not desire to live and instead desire to die, but rather that they dissent from the means by which they could live, and assent to the means by which they will die. Thus when desires are excessive yet one's actions do not reach so far, it is the heart/mind stopping them. If that to which the heart assents hits the target of Pattern (*li* 理), then although one has many desires, how could this harm the social order (*zhi* 治)? If one's desires do not reach a certain point yet one's action moves beyond it, this is the heart/mind making it happen. If that to which the heart assents misses the target of Pattern, then although one has few desires, how could one stop before plunging into chaos? Thus order and chaos lie in what the heart assents to, not in what the disposition desires. (HKCS 22/111/8–11)

Xunzi thinks that assent simply trumps desire when the two come into conflict; this shows that Xunzi's conception of *ke* 可 is particularly strong, often more than mere

[6] Van Norden (1992). For further discussion, see Wong (1996), and T.C. Kline's (1998) rejoinder to Wong, which I find convincing.

notional approval of a possible course of action as fine or good. (That this could make sense hinges in part on the sense of *ke* as covering what the actor can conceive of doing in a given situation; some actions are simply impossible to contemplate doing.) In consequence, for Xunzi our judgments are ultimately more ethically significant than our desires, because our desires can and will be reshaped as our understanding changes, and can be resisted or surpassed in any given instance. If we judge according to the Confucian Way, which properly represents the great Pattern that orders the world, then regardless of the state of our desires we will be orderly.

Clearly Xunzi thinks developing a solid intellectual grasp of the Confucian Way is crucial to ethical formation. He devotes an entire chapter to exposing ways people's heart/minds can be "fixated" by misguided or partially correct doctrines that lead people astray. At times, as in the previous passage, he makes this point so strongly it seems that the state of our spontaneous desires and emotions are irrelevant to the quality of our character and the effectiveness of our moral striving. Nevertheless, a careful reading of Xunzi's whole account of ethical formation shows that he thinks our dispositions and desires do need to be reformed, to make the moral life easier and more satisfying, as explored further in the next section.

Xunzi also, in a way reminiscent of some contemporary readings of Aristotle,[7] thinks such a reformation of our dispositions will aid us in the task of properly perceiving morally salient qualities in various situations. Xunzi likens the heart/mind to a pan of water with particles of dirt in it. When "placed upright and not moved," i.e., developed and used properly, the mud will settle at the bottom and the "clear and bright" water in the top of the pan will reflect external reality perfectly. But if the water is stirred up by even "a slight wind," it will become turbid, barely reflective at all, and inadequate to judge even the grossest outlines of things and events (HKCS 21/105/5–7). "Thus," Xunzi continues,

> If [the heart/mind] is guided with good order, nurtured with clarity, and no thing can tilt it, then it will be sufficient to settle questions of right and wrong and resolve suspicions and doubts. But if a little thing pulls it, then externally one's correctness will be altered and inwardly one's heart/mind will be tilted, and then it will be insufficient to decide even coarse patterns. (HKCS 21/105/7–8)

For Xunzi the beginner's heart/mind is highly liable to disruption and confusion. Attractive things and possibilities *yin* 引 ("pull") and *qing* 傾 ("tilt") it, upsetting its balance and clouding its perceptions. Our innate endowment and dispositions respond too quickly with inappropriate or destructive desires, we lose our inner equilibrium and openness to other perceptions, and judge poorly. But if properly "nurtured" and "guided," the heart/mind can develop what Xunzi calls its "emptiness, unity, and tranquility" (e.g., HKCS 21/103/25 – 21/104/7), becoming able to make better, more subtle and accurate judgments, and turning the ability to assent to planned courses of action into a real asset, rather than a means of acceleration toward the struggle of all against all for the satisfaction of desires. At the climax of this process of developing the heart/mind, Xunzi reports that the sage attains a

[7] See, for example, Sherman (1989).

Sherman.[10] Let us now turn to the details of that account, as reflected in Xunzi's thorough analysis and justification of traditional Confucian practices.

3 Practices

Xunzi analyzes practices in terms of the late Warring States vocabulary of *shu* 術 ("techniques" or "arts"). Different teaching groups propounded different techniques, some more focused on politics and governance, others more focused on self-cultivation, and some focused on divination, health, medicine, and even magic. Xunzi contrasts Confucian techniques, which he thinks lead to social and personal flourishing and abundance, with those of the Mohists, which lead to poverty and disorder (HKCS 10/45/16 – 10/46/4). And in his critique of the divinatory practice of physiognomy, Xunzi begins by arguing that in discerning a person's future:

> Divining from the physical form is not as good as evaluating the heart/mind, and evaluating the heart/mind is not as good as choosing [the right] techniques [for self-cultivation]. The physical form does not triumph over the heart/mind, and the heart/mind does not triumph over techniques. If the techniques are correct and the heart/mind submits [to them], then although one's body and face are ugly, if the techniques for one's heart/mind are good there will be no harm to one's prospects for becoming a gentleman. (HKCS 5/17/11–13, cf. H 32)

Clearly, for Xunzi, correct practices are the key to human flourishing in the Confucian mode, capable of overcoming ugly bodily and emotional endowments. Indeed, Xunzi claims rather grandly that by "holding on to the [correct, Confucian] techniques" the gentleman is able to see what is near yet know what is far away, separate right from wrong, extend the guiding principles of ritual and *yi*, and order all the world's people as if employing a single servant (HKCS 3/11/14–18).

These Confucian arts are primarily classical study, ritual practice, and the performance and appreciation of music. Concerning *xue* 學 ("study" and also "learning"), Xunzi writes:

> Its order begins with reciting the classics and concludes with reading the *Rituals*. Their purpose in the beginning is to make an educated man, and in the end to make a sage. If you truly accumulate effort over a long period then you will enter [the Way]. Learning continues until death and only then ceases. Thus, though the order of learning comes to an end, the purpose of learning must never be put aside, even for an instant. Those who undertake learning become human; those who cast it aside become beasts. (HKCS 1/3/7–9, cf. H 5)

For Xunzi, humanity worthy of the name rests on an assiduously accumulated foundation of study and learning. But what should one study? Only the proper Confucian tradition that Xunzi sees himself as passing to posterity can serve as a firm foundation for human flourishing, in his view. Xunzi is one of the first people in ancient China to see this tradition as being transmitted by texts that are properly understood as *jing* 經 ("classics"). He specifies the lineage of his predecessors back to Confucius,

[10] For a more strictly exegetical account, see Burnyeat (1980). For a thoughtful reconstruction and expansion that is faithful to key elements of Aristotle's vision, see Sherman (1989).

in order to contrast it with other lineages or subtraditions that in his view had gone astray. And he views Confucius and himself as inheritors of a much older tradition of virtuous leadership passed down from earlier sage rulers.

For Xunzi, the most important objects of study are a set of crucial ancient texts (HKCS 1/3/9–12). The *Documents* purports to record various consultations and pronouncements by kings and ministers from the founding era of the Zhou dynasty, and even earlier. The *Odes* is a collection of poems on quite various subjects, ranging from folks songs to hymns for religious rites to political poems concerning the Zhou overthrow of the Shang dynasty. Xunzi quotes the *Odes* frequently, and the extant version of this text derives from a redaction by one of his students. As with the *Documents* and the *Odes*, the texts Xunzi refers to as the *Rituals* and the *Music* no longer exist in the form that he used. The extant *Liji*, the "Record of Ritual," is a Han dynasty text that incorporates an uncertain amount of Warring States and earlier material; the *Yili*, *Da Dai Liji*, and *Zhou Li* are similar ritual miscellanies. There is no single surviving text on music; the chapter in the *Liji* entitled the "Record of Music" is highly dependent on Xunzi's own writings in his "Discussion of Music" chapter.[11] The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is an exceptionally terse record of events, mostly political and occasionally environmental, that occurred in Confucius' home state of Lu between 722 and 481 BCE; it is customarily read in conjunction with commentaries that give the spare text lengthy exegesis to discern the judgments of its author, traditionally taken to be Confucius himself (although it is unclear if Xunzi shared this view).

Xunzi reveres this group of texts because he sees them as collecting the lessons of the past, and in particular, recording the highest achievements of human civilization as he knew it: the political wisdom to be gleaned from the most successful government yet known, which oversaw centuries of peace and prosperity; and the artistic products exemplifying the goodness, beauty and refined form which made such peace and harmony possible (HKCS 8/31/5–10). The connection between these points requires some unpacking. For Xunzi, as for other Confucians, *wen* 文 is a cardinal value. The word refers in its most basic sense to patterns or designs, but can also refer to writing, written texts, or humane culture generally. It connotes beauty, refinement, and wise and humane judgment. Xunzi does not recognize fundamental categorical distinctions between aesthetic, moral, and scientific realms; from our vantage point in the contemporary West the notion of *wen* especially crosses the first two realms, and through its association with *li* 理 ("pattern" or "order"), encompasses the third as well.

The purpose of studying these classics that collect the highest *wen* from the past, Xunzi writes, is to make one's understanding "clear and bright," and one's conduct "faultless" (HKCS 1/1/5); in other words, one aims to make one's whole person *mei* 美 ("fine" or "beautiful"), despite the ugliness of one's *xing* (HKCS 1/3/17; 1/4/16).

[11] Historians debate whether Xunzi actually had access to texts or text collections on ritual and music, or whether later editors of his text projected Han dynasty presuppositions about classic texts back into the *Xunzi*. Similarly, there is vigorous debate regarding the direction of the dependence relations between the chapters on music in the *Xunzi* and the *Liji*.

Xunzi thinks a problem looms, however. He writes:

> The *Rituals* and *Music* present models but no explanations; the *Odes* and *Documents* concern ancient matters and are not always relevant; the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is terse and cannot be quickly understood. If one orients oneself by means of the practices of the learned and the explanations of the gentleman, then one will be venerated for being unbiased, with a comprehensive understanding of the world. Thus I say: when studying, nothing is better than being close to the learned. (HKCS 1/3/20–21, cf. H 6)

One cannot just read the classics alone and gain all the benefits of study, or even grasp the texts' import. Without a learned teacher to guide one's study and offer exegesis of the often opaque classical texts, at best one will have only a command of disconnected facts, afflicted with jumbled intentions, able to offer quotations of the *Odes* and *Documents* but without a sense of their significance. Xunzi calls such failures "vulgar" and "scattered" Confucians (HKCS 1/3/23 – 1/4/4). In other words, the Confucian tradition is not just a collection of books handed down, but a living lineage of teachers who pass along the deeper understanding of life that accompanies and is supported by the texts. Truly cultivated Confucians always see ritual and *yi* as crucial, and the *Odes* and *Documents* as comparatively less important, Xunzi thinks (HKCS 8/32/16 – 8/33/5).

We are now in a better position to examine the Xunzian course of instruction. As noted above, according to Xunzi Confucian study commences with a lengthy process of reading and memorization of the various classics. Xunzi describes this first step as *song* 誦 ("reciting" or "chanting"). One can speculate that the *shi* 師 ("teacher" or "master") would recite a given section of text to a group of novices, thereby showing them the basic syntactical patterns in the text, as well as the pronunciation of difficult or ambiguous characters; this would have been a more significant step than it might appear, because literary remains excavated from Xunzi's era show that such texts were typically unpunctuated, and thus hard to parse, and were inconsistent at best in the way they wrote particular characters.[12] Such practices of textual production place high stress on authoritative exegesis for even basic understanding to be possible. Xunzian novices would most likely have begun by simply echoing their master's words, to grasp the basic structure of each day's text, and attended to his explanations of difficult passages to gain some understanding of their meaning.

While this sort of imitation, if given a sufficiently full sense, can serve for Xunzi as a paradigm for successfully transmitting traditional wisdom and skill (HKCS 2/8/1–3), he hastens to distinguish what he has in mind from rote memorization, and from a disembodied or uncommitted intellectual acquisition. Xunzi writes:

> The gentleman's learning enters through his ear, is recorded in his heart/mind, spreads throughout his four limbs, and takes shape in his activity and repose. The beginnings of his speech, his slightest movement—even one of these can serve as a model and standard. The

[12] There are many historical issues glossed over here, for example, about orality and literacy at various stages of early Chinese history. My own view, which I cannot defend here, is that by the latter part of Xunzi's lifetime such learning practices did use written rather than memorized and orally recited texts.

> petty person's learning enters the ear and emerges from the mouth. Since the distance between mouth and ear is only four inches, how could this be sufficient to make a [six foot] body beautiful [*mei* 美]? Those who studied in antiquity did it for themselves; those who study today do it for [impressing other] people. Through his studies the gentleman makes his own person beautiful; the petty person studies to ingratiate himself with superiors.[13] (HKCS 1/3/14–17, cf. H 5–6)

Xunzian study is not the "petty" exercise of learning classical allusions in order to win admiration and influence. It is the integral pursuit of deeper intellectual understanding, developing in tandem with a thorough practical and bodily appropriation of a whole way of life. The ideological import of various Confucian doctrines cannot be grasped apart from this deeper appropriation, such that even single words and slight movements are perfected and can serve as models to be emulated. And although Xunzi thinks certain extraneous, socially contested goods will probably accrue to the earnest student of Confucian practices, such as prestige and official posts, these are emphatically not the purpose of his Confucianism, which aims at the transformation of individuals and society via the accumulation of goods that are essential goals of Confucian practices, such as the virtues of wisdom, benevolence, righteousness, and trustworthiness.

For Xunzi, the goal of studying is complete, sage-like perfection of both understanding and practice (e.g., HKCS 1/4/12–14). Xunzi describes how this process of appropriation should go, at least in its higher reaches, as follows:

> The gentleman knows that whatever is imperfect and unrefined does not deserve praise. And so he repeatedly recites his learning in order to master it, ponders it in order to comprehend it, makes himself the sort of person who dwells in it, and eliminates things harmful to it from himself in order to nourish it. He makes his eyes not want to see what is wrong, makes his ears not want to hear what is wrong, makes his mouth not want to speak what is wrong, and makes his heart not want to deliberate over what is wrong. He comes to the point where he loves it, and then his eyes love it more than the five colors, his ears love it more than the five tones, his mouth loves it more than the five flavors, and his heart considers it more beneficial than possessing the whole world. (HKCS 1/4/16–19, H 8–9)

Xunzian study aims at a transformation so complete that one's whole person becomes "fine" or "beautiful," with learning that is pure and perfect, able in life to hit 100 targets out of a hundred, not just 99 (HKCS 1/4/12). What necessarily begins with the rudimentary exercises of imitative recitation and attentive listening to a teacher's explanations slowly grows. As the student gains understanding, both practical and theoretical, of the Confucian Way, he investigates and ponders the Way so as to understand it more deeply and eventually come to "dwell" and even delight in it. Xunzi also thinks the aspiring student exercises a rigorous self-discipline, retraining his senses so that they accept only delights consonant with the Way, which are considerable, and which if fully appreciated outshine all other pleasures of the senses and even the greatest political power. He regulates his speech and action in accord with the proximate model of his teacher and the more distant sages of the

[13] The text literally reads: "The petty person's study is used like an ox calf," with the implication that such animals were given to superiors as gifts to win favor.

past. He focuses his thought so that he will not be distracted by what is contrary to the Way, and concentrates on the task of study.

While self-regulation becomes progressively more important in Xunzian ethical development, its role in the process should not overshadow the critical importance of the group setting he envisions for Confucian practices. Xunzi suggests that the quickest route to learning is to admire and draw close to others who study, who certainly include one's teacher, but also his other students (HKCS 1/3/23). This vision of a community of learners is based on the need to put one's learning into practice, and the need for help from others when doing so. In chapter 2 Xunzi begins by writing:

> When you see goodness, diligently be sure that it will exist within you; when you see what is not good, with apprehension be certain to examine yourself for it. When there is good in you, steadfastly be sure to delight in it; when there is bad in you, be certain to hate it in yourself as if it were a disaster. Thus one who chastises me and is right is my teacher; one who approves of me and is right is my friend; one who flatters me is my enemy. Therefore the gentleman exalts his teacher and cherishes his friends, but thoroughly hates his enemies. Delighting in the good yet never satisfied, accepting admonition and able to take precautions accordingly—although someone like this has no desire to advance, how could he fail to? The petty person is just the opposite. (HKCS 2/5/3–6, cf. H 9)

Xunzi counsels constant alertness to the qualities and flaws of both ourselves and others, linked always to an earnest passion to imitate and appropriate any good we come across and eliminate what is vicious from ourselves. Daily self-examination is essential, according to Xunzi. And yet individual people are always liable to blindness and self-deception, particularly in their ethical self-assessments. Thus a community of like-minded students of the Way can provide the support and admonition necessary to slowly develop a more accurate view of oneself and of others, whittling away at greed, envy, and self-justifying illusion. Choice of friends and teacher is critical on such a view, and extreme caution needs to be exercised against those who would corrupt us through flattery; such people are our true enemies, Xunzi thinks, more than the inhabitants of any antagonistic state.

Xunzi even thinks our companions will spontaneously and unconsciously affect our developing habits, regardless of our conscious efforts to emulate them. Xunzi writes that no matter how talented someone is,

> [H]e must seek an excellent teacher and serve him, select worthy friends and act as a friend to them. If he finds an excellent teacher and serves him, then what he hears will be the Way of [the sage kings] Yao, Shun, Yu and Tang; if he gets fine people to be his friends, then what he sees will be faithful, trustworthy, respectful, and deferential conduct. He will make daily progress towards humaneness and justice without him realizing it—this is due to what he rubs up against. Now if he dwells among people who are not good . . . [what he sees and hears will be vicious, and what he rubs against will daily lead him closer to disgrace.] A tradition says: "If you do not know your son watch his friends; if you do not know your lord watch his attendants." Everything depends on what he rubs up against! (HKCS 23/117/16 – 23/118/1, cf. H 257)

For Xunzi, we *mo* 靡 ("rub") against others in numerous ways each day, who subtly polish us into virtue or abrade us into vice. We absorb the words and conduct of those around us without even realizing it is happening. Thus having good friends to help one along the path is critical to ethical progress, perhaps second only to having a good teacher.

Ritual serves as the model for human action, both in its basic orientations and its subtle refinements. As with studying the classics, a teacher is necessary, although in this case what is acquired is at least as much physical and emotional, in our terminology, as it is intellectual. The student aims to internalize the ritual skills and dispositions that the teacher embodies, so that he may flourish as a human being, and as part of this flourishing, depending on circumstances, to continue the Confucian tradition through becoming a teacher himself.[17] Lest the description of tradition as essentially being a matter of repetition seem too shallow or mechanical, we should recall Xunzi's cautions against rote memorization, and his view of the generally recalcitrant character of human *qing* 情 ("dispositions"), which necessitates a long process of reformation. Most crucially, without reliance on a teacher and external model we have no way to gain a sense of what is truly good—at first we are all morally "blind" and "deaf," Xunzi thinks. Only with carefully guided practice will we develop a taste for the Way.

Xunzi sees certain general themes running throughout the whole body of Confucian ritual precepts. Xunzi says that ritual has three "roots": "Heaven and Earth are the root of life, ancestors are the root of family lineage, lords and teachers are the root of order. . . . If any one of these three were lost, there would be no peace for human beings. Thus ritual serves Heaven above, it serves earth below, and it reveres ancestors and exalts lords and teachers" (HKCS 19/90/20–22). Ritual orients us to what is most important in life, and in particular to those powers upon which we rely for our existence, and its quality. It thus reorients us from our immediate desires to a larger, more realistic understanding, as we serve, revere, and exalt the roots of human life.

Xunzi argues that ritual also serves to differentiate various types of people, such as noble and base, old and young, poor and wealthy, humble and eminent (HKCS 19/90/10–11). Different members of the social hierarchy perform different ceremonial sacrifices, and people in particular roles or positions are accorded different degrees of respect; all this serves to distinguish degrees of accomplishment among various people, and makes visible and tangible the hierarchy of excellence that Xunzi thinks the social hierarchy should reflect (HKCS 19/91/1–5). Thus ritual clarifies degrees of status, and the duties of people toward those in different positions, including the duties of the living toward the dead to "send them off" appropriately and respectfully (HKCS 19/95/16–19). As we saw above, Xunzi thinks such harmoniously interrelated differentiation is essential to a flourishing society that can provide abundantly for all its members, not just the strong and the rapacious.

Xunzi summarizes this general role of ritual as humanizing and enriching communal life by saying in the introduction to his essay on it that "ritual is *yang* 養" ("nurturing") (HKCS 19/90/5–6). Ritual nurtures human life on several levels: it trains our senses so that we can appreciate and delight in the beauties of refined

[17] It seems clear, however, that the ultimate aim of Confucian learning and practice is to become a sage, and actively participate in government. One might teach along the way, or aspire to teach when circumstances do not permit one to serve in government, but teaching *per se* is not the highest goal.

form and good order; it broadens our attention so that we can see beyond narrow and immediate perceptions of danger and benefit; by "nurturing our dispositions" it teaches us to extend ourselves in certain ways for higher goals; and it thereby supports a mode of life that is more satisfying as well as more moral. On the community level, ritual nurtures life, wealth, and peace; Xunzi thinks his Mohist enemies argue for a foolish frugality that leads only to poverty and contention, by cutting out the most important tools of civilization in the quest for a humane existence (HKCS 19/90/5–18). Truly, Xunzi thinks, Confucian ritual is the way of human flourishing in the widest sense of that term. It is the "ridgepole of the human Way," and provides humans with much-needed *fang* 方 ("orientation") in life (HKCS 19/92/15–17).

Let us look more closely at what Xunzi means by "nurturing the *qing* 情" ("dispositions"). The word *yang* 養, translated by "nurture," "rear," or "nurse," normally refers to the proper treatment of domesticated animals, which need to be fed, cared for, and trained into useful work; it is also a word for "treating" an illness. Or to use another favorite metaphor of Xunzi's, ritual practice is a tool for training and properly reforming the *qing*, in the same way that a compass and balance are tools for the constructions of carpentry (HKCS 19/92/13–16).

Ritual reshapes the *qing* so that they are disposed toward desires and actions that accord with *wenli* 文理, "refined form and good order" (HKCS 19/92/21 – 19/93/1). Xunzi writes that "Ritual cuts what is long and stretches what is short, eliminates surplus and supplements insufficiency, extends the refined forms of love and respect, and develops and completes the beauties of right conduct" (HKCS 19/94/8). Xunzi goes on to make the connection with *qing* explicit later in the paragraph as follows:

> People definitely have the beginnings of these two *qing* [joy and sorrow] from birth. If these *qing* are cut short and stretched out, broadened and narrowed, increased and diminished, analyzed and completely extended, made abundant and beautiful, so that root and branch, end and beginning are all appropriately linked and elegantly complete, sufficient to serve as a model for ten thousand generations, then this is ritual. (HKCS 19/94/19–21, cf. H 210)

By imitating classical forms in our external presentation and interactions, we do a certain amount of violence to our spontaneous promptings and desires, and slowly reshape our disposition over time as we adjust to these respectful, deferential modes of life. Eventually, our disposition is transformed, and becomes the model we have been imitating, spontaneously tending toward Confucian ritual propriety. It is worth noting that Xunzi thinks we should make our *qing* "abundant and beautiful." His Way relies on stimulation and heightened responsiveness at least as much as restraint of chaotic impulses. In other words, according to Xunzi ritual does not just modulate or repress our desires and feelings, but also, where needed and appropriate, develops and enriches them.[18]

Xunzi theorizes the "emergence" and "adornment" of the *qing* by relating *qing* and *wen* 文 ("refined form"). He writes:

[18] For fuller discussion see Stalnaker (2006: 174–79), and Sung (2012b).

> Ritual uses valuables and other goods for offerings, relies on distinctions of eminent and humble for its forms, employs more and fewer for differences [of status], is plentiful or sparse to show [the degree of] importance. When form and pattern are abundant and emotions and offerings reduced, this is the plentiful height of ritual; when form and pattern are reduced and emotion and offerings abundant, this is the sparse reduction of ritual. When form and pattern, emotions and offerings mutually serve as inner and outer, exterior garment and lining, moving together and united, this is the middle course where ritual flows. Therefore the gentleman above reaches up to its plentiful height, below exhausts its sparse reduction, but in the middle dwells in its middle course. . . . He never departs from this, because it is the gentleman's altar and dwelling, his palace court. (HKCS 19/92/21 – 19/93/1, cf. H 206)

Rituals vary in their degree of lavishness, but whether ornate or minimal, subdued or very moving, Xunzi thinks the ideal is when emotions and appearances match each other throughout the sequence of ritual actions. In this way emotions "emerge" and are "adorned" by action and observance; but the reverse is just as true: the forms and patterns of ritual cut and stretch the emotions, pushing and pulling our disposition into a new form that will more spontaneously tend toward humaneness, reverence, and justice. Indeed, on this second formulation the height of ritual is when form predominates, while the lowest point is when emotion and offerings predominate; it would seem that formative influence is primary for Xunzi, even though the *telos* of ritual remains harmonious synchronization. The image of the "middle course where ritual flows" suggests the ease and grace that can be attained as ritual practice grows more expert, and the harmony between what one feels and wants and what one should do becomes greater. For the sage, this harmony of inner and outer is sustained through all variations in circumstances (HKCS 19/93/2–3).

Xunzi's conception is thus not so much that humans have irrepressible inner emotions that might burst out and disrupt good external order. Rather, he aims to shape the combination of inner and outer, of emotions and outward signs, into a pleasing and appropriate form, which is both beautiful and proper. This is why when he discusses the mourning rites he shows how they manipulate reality to generate and heighten certain emotions, such as reverence and longing, while guarding against others, such as disgust (e.g., HKCS 19/94/1–6, 19/95/13). Xunzi is concerned to form and order inner and outer experience together, and bring harmony and beauty to what can be chaotic and even violent. He wants us to rely on ritual to modulate our emotions and actions into satisfying, orderly forms that both signify and reinforce our commitment to humane values.

5 Music

The third principal technique of personal formation that Xunzi promotes is the playing and appreciation of music. Music for Xunzi is based on a classical repertoire instituted by the ancient kings, and includes the entire ritual performance in multiple media: playing instruments, singing, and sacred dance. The bulk of Xunzi's chapter on music is an indignant defense of Confucian practices in the face of

Mohist attacks.[19] Mohists considered musical performances wasteful and pointless, but Xunzi sees music as one of the crucial "arts of civilization," in John Knoblock's well-turned phrase, without which human life would not just be poorer, but savage and despicable (K III.53).

He begins by exploiting a peculiarity of the Chinese language, suggesting what to his readers would have been intuitively appealing, that "music is joy" (HKCS 20/98/14). In classical Chinese, the word for music, *yue* 樂, is written with the same character as the word for joy, *le* 樂. Little argument is necessary to establish what is already taken for granted in one's language. Xunzi explains:

> Music is joy, the human emotion that is certainly unavoidable, and thus people cannot be without music. When one feels joyful then it must emerge through sounds and tones, take shape through movement and stillness, and [thus] the human Way—sounds and tones, movement and stillness, and the changes wrought by the techniques for living—is completed through this [i.e., music]. Therefore people cannot be without joy, and when there is joy it cannot fail to take shape, but if it takes shape contrary to the Way then they cannot avoid chaos. The former kings hated such chaos, and thus established the sounds of the festal songs and hymns [parts of the *Odes*] in order to guide them, made their sounds sufficient for joy but not to overflowing, made their forms sufficient to mark distinctions but not induce anxiety, made their directness, complexity, intensity, and rhythm sufficient to arouse and move the good in people's hearts, and made it so that evil and stagnant *qi* would have no way to enter them. This was the method of the former kings in establishing music, and so what is Mozi doing opposing it? (HKCS 20/98/14–19, cf. H 218)

In structure this is partially similar to Xunzi's justification of ritual: music both prevents the chaos that would result if people's tendencies to joy were wrongly directed, and promotes full human flourishing by guiding us to more edifying forms of emotion and practice consistent with the Way. Here Xunzi straightforwardly postulates a human proclivity for joy, as well as a need for it to emerge and take shape, and yet also clearly sees music as a way to "guide" people, generate and support the right kind of joy in the proper measure, and "arouse and move the good in people's hearts."

I think we should see this reference to "the good in people's hearts" as a rhetorical flourish that shows his very high opinion of music's transformative power.[20] Xunzi thinks music can draw us out and inspire us like nothing else. A later review of these points makes this clear:

> Music is what the sages delighted in, and can be used to make the hearts of the people good; it arouses people deeply, and alters their manners and changes their customs. Thus the

[19] For further discussion, see the chapter by Hutton and Harold in this volume.

[20] The potential interpretive problem here is whether this mention of "the good in people's hearts" might conflict with Xunzi's contention that human *xing* is "bad." Briefly, I think it does not. There are essentially three routes away from the difficulty: what I propose here (a rhetorical flourish that alludes to music's transformative power); reading "the good in people's hearts" as referring to people as they actually are in a functioning society, with at least some reasonable cultural and moral training that points them toward goodness; and a textual solution that hinges on a well-attested alternative meaning of the character *zhi* 之, often a possessive marker, as "go to" or "reach," which would change the sense of the phrase to something like "move people toward developing good hearts."

> former kings guided them with ritual and music, and the people became harmonious and amicable. If the people have the dispositions of love and hate yet lack [a way to] respond through delight and anger, then there will be chaos. The former kings hated their chaos, and thus improved their conduct, corrected their music, and all under Heaven became compliant through this. (HKCS 20/99/24–26, cf. H 220)

Music makes our hearts good by deeply arousing us and altering our manner and customs, whether we participate or merely watch and are moved as spectators. Xunzi thinks music makes people "harmonious," "amicable," and *shun* 順 ("compliant"), a word that is one of his favorite attributes of good people, yet is hard to convey cleanly in English. It is usually translated rather starkly as "submissive" or "obedient," but for Xunzi it also carries overtones of agreeableness and sociability, and interest in and concern for others, in contrast to people who are arrogant, rebellious, or resentful. As Xunzi points out in the first quote above, the human Way is *jin* 盡 ("exhausted," "fulfilled," and "completed") in music, just as human *qing* are in ritual. These passages show that Xunzi considered music to be essential to a humane way of life, i.e., one that does not radically truncate our existence by suppressing or amputating our tendencies to feel, desire, and act, but uses these tendencies and shapes them into better and more fulfilling forms.

Among formative practices, music is perhaps the most straightforwardly efficacious, and also the easiest and most delightful. Xunzi writes that "music enters people deeply, transforms people rapidly, and therefore the former kings were careful to give it refined form" (HKCS 20/99/15, cf. H 219). Music produces these effects by working on and transforming the *qing* 情 ("dispositions") and *zhi* 志 ("intent"). Music shapes and inspires harmonious fellowship between people, uniting them through shared feelings of reverence, familial love, and compliance, according to the occasion and type of music (HKCS 20/98/21–22). Xunzi writes:

> The gentleman uses bells and drums to guide his intentions, uses zithers to bring joy to his heart. He is moved by shields and battle-axes, adorned by feathers and yak tails, becomes obedient through chimes and flutes. . . . Hence when music is performed so that intent becomes pure, when ritual is developed so that conduct becomes complete, then ears and eyes become acute and clear; blood and *qi* become harmonious and even, manner is altered and customs changed, and all under Heaven is at peace, the beautiful and the good mutually giving joy. Thus I say "music is joy." The gentleman finds joy in attaining the Way, while the petty person finds joy in getting what he desires. If you use the Way to regulate desires then you will be joyful and not chaotic, if you forget the Way for the sake of your desires then you will be deluded and unhappy. Thus music is the means by which to guide joy, and metal, stone, silk [strings], and bamboo are the means by which to guide virtue. When music is performed the people will turn to face in its direction. Thus music is the flourishing of human governance. (HKCS 20/100/7–11, cf. H 221)

Music brings joy to the heart/mind while guiding one's intentions, i.e., one's goals and aspirations. The substance of this guidance is that the right sort of music reorients people's manner, customs, and intentions to the pursuit of the Way above all. It even provides benefits to perception and physiological function, Xunzi thinks. Only through the Way and the music that is a part of it can we attain true joy, and peace in our life together; otherwise people are condemned to a deluded and restless race to satisfy endlessly shifting desires. Xunzi thinks the right sort of music is critical,

classic texts. This is the beginning period Xunzi seems to be pointing toward with his craft metaphors of straightening crooked wood and grinding dull metal. Here one begins to learn about the Confucian Way, and one assents to it despite its conflicts with one's immediate desires. This is where significant problems begin to appear, according to Xunzi, and thus he dedicates much of his moral psychological analysis to the difficulties of the aspiring Confucian.

Eventually a Confucian beginner may become what Xunzi calls a *shi* 士, often translated as "knight" or "scholar," but probably closer in Xunzi's time to "educated man," i.e., someone fit for government service through intelligence, literacy and dependability.[23] In Xunzi's hands this class of men are distinguished primarily by their ethical qualities. He writes: "Those whose enactment of the model has reached a steadfastness such that they do not let selfish desires disorder what they have heard [from their teacher] can be called a forceful *shi*" (HKCS 8/30/12–13). In contrast to beginners, who apparently are still easily swayed and confused by their wayward desires, an educated man is someone who has learned enough to have a basic commitment to the Way. An educated man desires to develop himself (HKCS 2/7/5–6), despite many remaining selfish desires, and is capable of following the classical Zhou models as long as he has support from others around him. In Aristotelian terms, Xunzi's educated man is continent, at least when he can rely on a supportive community around him, but not yet truly virtuous, although he genuinely aims to become so.[24] He is convinced of the goodness of the Way, even if he has only begun to truly embody it, and so is still vulnerable to deflection from it.

After a long period of assiduous practice of Confucian disciplines, a *shi* may become a *junzi* 君子, usually translated as "gentleman." This term literally denotes the son of a lord, but Confucianism transmutes this marker of elite birth into a sign of high ethical character, and *junzi* becomes one of the more resonant terms in the classical Confucian conceptual repertoire. Xunzi discusses the gentleman repeatedly as one of the primary exemplars of his views, second only to the sage. He writes in one such passage:

> One whose enactment of the model has become so steadfast that he likes to practice and correct himself in accord with what he has heard in order to rectify and adorn his dispositions and *xing*, that his speech is mostly appropriate but he does not yet fully understand, his conduct is mostly appropriate but he is not yet at peace, his understanding and reflection is mostly appropriate but he is not yet comprehensive and settled, if above he is able to glorify what he exalts, and below is able to open up the Way for those not equal to himself—if he is like this, then he may be called a strong and solid *junzi*. (HKCS 8/30/13–15, cf. H 59)

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[23] The word *shi* 士 was in wide use before and during Xunzi's lifetime to refer to a common class of government officials. While this may once have been a relatively low level of aristocratic hereditary office, in Confucian hands this word, and also most notably the more lofty *junzi* 君子 (often "gentleman," on which see below), are transmuted into markers of developed states of good character and capability.

[24] Continence and incontinence are discussed in Book 7 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Briefly, the continent person has disordered desires but correctly uses reason to choose rightly, overcoming or "mastering" his wayward desires to do the right thing. The incontinent person loses track of his knowledge of the good and is swept away by his desires to choose wrongly.

The gentleman has internalized the Way to such an extent that he has begun to like the process of personal improvement, even if it is not yet finished and his speech, action, and thought are not yet perfect. His ambitions have become clear and unified, even if he is not flawlessly virtuous. He is at ease in the moral hierarchy of the Confucian social order, delighting in what is superior to him, helping those less accomplished, solidly committed to the Way, even if his disposition has not yet been completely transformed, and he still must battle internally at times with disruptive desires so that broader concerns of justice win out in his action (HKCS 2/8/16). The gentleman develops himself internally while yielding externally, accumulates virtue, and has a reputation, Xunzi contends, that shines like the sun and moon. Despite his yielding demeanor he triumphs in his exquisitely polite dealings with others, because all are spontaneously moved to echo him like a clap of thunder (HKCS 8/30/1–2). The gentleman's commitment to the Way is so thorough that he will follow it through poverty and ignominy, even unto death, without faltering (HKCS 1/4/16–20).

The sage (*sheng ren* 聖人) is the pinnacle of Xunzi's hierarchy of personal development, and the ultimate *telos* of Confucian learning.[25] Xunzi writes:

> If someone imitates the model of the hundred kings as easily as he distinguishes white and black; if he responds appropriately to the changes of his age as easily as he counts one, two; if he enacts the essentials and details of ritual and is at peace with them just as he has been born with four limbs; if his skill in establishing accomplishments at the crucial time is like announcing the four seasons; if his excellence at making the people peaceful, upright, and harmonious is such that he can unify the numerous masses as if they were a single person; then he may be called a sage. (HKCS 8/30/15–17, cf. H 59)

A sage has assimilated the ancient models into his being so thoroughly that he has himself become the ultimate model, with his ritual propriety as perfect and natural as his full human form, his timing and judgment unerring, his leadership wise and powerfully effective. The sage has thoroughly regulated himself with good order, and thus can "follow his desires and fulfill his dispositions" (HKCS 21/105/18–19), because they have been transformed. The sage has no need for the preservative or corrective virtues of lesser people, who depend on strength and watchfulness as they try to singlemindedly follow the Way; in a sense he embodies the Way, because he enacts it without strain (HKCS 21/105/19 – 21/106/1). The sage is distinguished by his comprehensive understanding of all phenomena relevant to the human Way; he is free from obsession, and can smoothly handle whatever changes arise without endangering his heart/mind's emptiness, unity, or tranquility (HKCS 21/104/7–10). The sage is joyful, delighting in the Way and its fruits (HKCS 8/31/1).

It is worth asking to what extent Xunzi believed sagehood was really attainable. His descriptions of both the gentleman and the sage are rich and resonant, but while the gentleman often sounds heroic he is always recognizably human in his continued

[25] It is worth noting that there are occasional passages in the *Xunzi* that seem to treat the gentleman as equivalent to the sage, operating splendidly at the peak of human perfection (for example, HKCS 9/39/1–7), but this distinction still seems a useful way to track different degrees of moral excellence in Xunzi's vision.

striving for goodness. By contrast, the sage often sounds super-human in his perfection. But Xunzi is quite clear in his claim that it is possible for a "person in the street" to become a sage if he or she accumulates goodness without ceasing. Anyone, in other words, has the capacities, at least in the abstract, to come to understand and enact the patterns of humaneness and justice that are transmitted within the Confucian Way. Nevertheless, Xunzi thinks a developed ability to be sagely is not already present in us, and can only become a real possibility after enormous work in submission to Confucian disciplines, as part of the right sort of community of learners (HKCS 23/116/6–23). Furthermore, he thought there had been at least a few sages in the past, and Xunzi clearly hoped that others would arise and guide the peoples of the central states back to the harmonious flourishing first achieved by the Zhou dynasty. The rare possibility of perfection, then, is real for Xunzi. This possibility serves to chasten the virtuous to remain dissatisfied with themselves and continue striving to enact the Way flawlessly, not just well. The universality of this potential also gave Xunzi hope as he tried to persuade the warlords of his age to adopt a more humane way of governance, and thereby eventually end the savagery afflicting everyone.

7 Strengths and Weaknesses

Xunzi's account has some notable strengths, and also weaknesses. As I have argued elsewhere, because they focus on a transformation of personality moving from the outside in, via performance practices like ritual and music, Xunzi's views of personal formation provide a fascinating counterpoint to more familiar Western views, such as Stoicism and Augustinian Christianity, which try to change moral personality by focusing on reshaping one's "inner discourse" first and foremost.[26] But here I briefly discuss other issues: strengths and weaknesses of Xunzi's model of human psychology, and how it is hampered by his debate with Mencius; Xunzi's perhaps excessive faith in the power of Confucian practices to change our thoughts, emotions, and desires; and the power of Xunzi's focus on social pressure and the ritual shaping of feelings to respond to what is now referred to as the "situationist challenge" to virtue ethics.

Xunzi's psychology is remarkably contemporary, at least in its clear separation between spontaneous impulses such as emotions and desires, and a system of intellectual or "rational" impulse control based on judgments.[27] This basic model seems to square well with empirical psychology and neuroscience, at least at a basic level, while providing a deservedly central place for change and development in our

[26] See Stalnaker (2006), and for Stoicism, Hadot (1995, 1998).

[27] He seems not to take "weakness of will" very seriously as a problem, in contrast to many Western analyses, although he does think inappropriate desires and emotions will skew the perceptions that provide the basis for our decisions, sometimes disastrously. For more discussion, see Stalnaker (2006).

impulses over time. However, his account of our "bad" innate tendencies and dispositions seems to be rather one-sided. Although he makes some allowance for pro-social tendencies, his attack on Mencius leaves him little room to accept such tendencies as innate rather than learned. This is unfortunate, both because it seems false to the actual character of innate human impulses, which range widely across both pro- and anti-social domains, and also because his account of our dispositions as the "raw material" that is formed by learning and practice could relatively easily absorb such a position within Xunzi's broader picture. He could easily argue that our innate compassion and concern for others are inadequate without training, and so need to be corrected through education and practice, although this is very close to Mencius' position.[28] He could also point out that other virtues have even less direct innate basis, such as *yi* 義 ("righteousness") as a commitment to public justice, and so need to be learned and developed. He could, even more directly, grant all that Mencius says about the character of innate human impulses, while still insisting that what Mencius calls the "greater," more sociable impulses by themselves are wildly inadequate as a guide to self-cultivation, precisely because of the importance of intellectual judgment and decision to what humans actually do. So in these respects his efforts to attack Mencius end up unnecessarily weakening his own account.

Let us look at these issues a bit more deeply. Xunzi does in one place explicitly grant that all creatures "love their own kind" (HKCS 19/96/10), and implies that human beings feel this way most of all, because of our greater understanding, and thus our strong feelings for our kin can only be properly expressed and exhausted through extensive mourning rituals after their deaths (HKCS 19/96/10–13). This admittedly brief remark does seem to be a way of responding to the above objection about innate pro-social feelings and desires. Xunzi in effect agrees that we have strong innate feelings of affection for our immediate kin, but suggests that these by themselves are far from sufficient to serve as trustworthy guides to our moral development, nor are they virtuous in and of themselves. Instead, such feelings must be tutored and developed over time, by means of Confucian practices like deferring to elders, serving superiors, and caring for those who depend on us. Mencius seems to think that we can "extend" such feelings through analogical reasoning and gradually cultivated perception until they become true virtues, sufficient to "care for all

[28] In his direct comments on Mencius' theory of human nature, Xunzi argues that what counts as our *xing* are those abilities that are truly innate, and require no practice or learning to activate; Xunzi gives as examples the ability of eyes to see and ears to hear. He grants, somewhat obscurely, that human beings have an original "simplicity" and "material," but necessarily depart from them as they grow up (HKCS 23/113/21–22, H 249). While this might be a recognition that the stark line he likes to draw between what is innate and what is learned is for adults often rather hard to draw (a point he makes more clearly elsewhere: HKCS 22/111/6–8), it seems more likely that he is insisting that as we grow up and become acculturated we necessarily learn to defer immediate satisfactions in pursuit of higher goods, like deferring to elders when eating together in order to show appropriate respect to them, and refraining from contending with others and stealing from them when we can, in order to live in a decent society that does not thwart everyone's desires (HKCS 23/113/16 – 23/114/6).

within the four seas" (2A6). But Xunzi argues that it is dangerously wrong-headed to think such impulses are anything more than "raw materials" that still need extensive training and refinement before they can be considered virtuous. In a way that strongly foreshadows recent criticisms of empathy as morally good or sufficient by itself as a sort of virtue of benevolence to others (for example, Prinz 2011), Xunzi insists that virtue is an acquired state of character, one that requires extensive training and practice despite some basis in our innate sympathy for and interest in our immediate kin relations. Our innate feelings of affection for kin are too prone to unfair favoritism, cruelty to outsiders, and general moral myopia, to lead directly to the virtues of benevolence or justice. But they do provide enough emotional basis for such virtues that we can have a reasonable hope of either developing them, or at least learning to approximate them when supported and constrained by strong institutions and social norms and incentives.

More deeply, Xunzi's vision of education is exceptionally hopeful. He thinks that the vast majority of people will prudentially decide to pursue a Confucian education if they get the chance to seriously consider it, because of the attractiveness of the life such an education leads to. And even more hopefully, he thinks the study, ritual, and musical practice that primarily make up that education will be tremendously effective at transforming people if they stick with it. If anything, this probably reflects an unrealistic faith in the power of education, or suppressed premises about who exactly will be pursuing this regime of study and practice, and the qualities they bring to the process. But Xunzi is explicit that even a commoner, a "person in the street," can become a sage if they get the opportunity to be properly trained and steadfastly work at it. This amounts to a strikingly egalitarian insistence that what matters above all to any kind of achievement is practice, and the dogged will to pursue excellence.

At another level, however, Xunzi's view on these matters has hidden strengths worth attending to, especially in his account of the stages of personal development discussed above. Xunzi clearly thinks very few people will cultivate themselves to such a degree that they will be truly virtuous in the sense that they can do what is right in difficult circumstances, when lured by countervailing temptations, and without social support and the threat of imminent sanctions for wrongdoing. Such people are what he calls "gentlemen," and even they are not perfect, still vulnerable to making mistakes despite their robust good intentions. Much more common are "petty" people who seek what will directly benefit them, and often cannot even be bothered to consider long term benefits in contrast to immediately available goods. Because of this, the common people need to be ruled as well as inspired, and a well functioning system of penal law is essential, Xunzi thinks. Xunzi speaks repeatedly of the power of virtue to attract allegiance without the need to coerce people with force (for example, HKCS 9/37/14–17), but he also insists that the Way must include real and not merely symbolic punishments to constrain crime and violence (HKCS 18/85/5–15), which implies that virtue alone will not be enough to draw the most vicious back toward goodness. And even those who choose to "steam" and "grind" themselves into a finer shape will at first become only *shi* 士 ("educated men"), who

Chapter 3
Ethics in the *Xunzi*

Eric L. Hutton

Xunzi's views on ethics can be approached from at least two different perspectives.[1] One, a more historical perspective, seeks to understand how Xunzi fits into the Chinese tradition, by way of comparison and contrast with other Chinese thinkers. The other perspective is more philosophical, and is concerned with understanding how Xunzi's ideas fit together, and what are their strengths and weaknesses. This chapter will take the latter approach, since Xunzi's relation to his historical context is covered in other chapters in this volume.

It will perhaps be helpful to start with some observations about the subject of ethics in relation to Xunzi. First, as philosophers commonly treat ethics today, it is largely discussed separately from politics, with ethics focusing on prescriptions for individuals, and politics focusing on prescriptions for communities. Xunzi himself, though, draws no sharp distinction of this sort. What he advocates and defends is—in his terms—the *Dao* 道 ("the Way"), but this Way is to be followed by *both* individuals and communities. Thus, although we can focus on his prescriptions for individuals and discuss these as his "ethics," it should be borne in mind that in doing so we are singling out one piece of what he treats as a larger, integrated whole, and that he does not recognize "ethics" as a distinct area of inquiry.[2]

[1] For an explanation and defense of this personified way of speaking of Xunzi, see the introduction to Hutton (2014).

[2] Some, therefore, might criticize this approach. However, the project here is to *understand* Xunzi, and *not* to try to *do* what Xunzi conceived himself as doing, namely adhering to and defending the Way, so we need not follow his own approach exactly. Also, scholars standardly break problems down into smaller, more manageable pieces, and so unless one rejects that basic practice (which would come at a substantial cost), there should be little objection to singling out part of Xunzi's view *as* a part and analyzing that. Other chapters here address other parts, and the task of integrating (and perhaps readjusting) one's understanding of the various parts is left to the readers of this book, in light of all the discussions taken together.

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Second, many philosophers nowadays approach ethics (or more specifically, normative ethics) as a matter of *theoretical* inquiry, rather than as a matter of what we might call "hands-on practice." Their concern in writing and teaching is primarily with clarifying and evaluating various prescriptions and whole systems of prescriptions for individuals, instead of with exhorting people to follow a particular set of prescriptions or with getting them to abide by those prescriptions consistently.[3] In contrast, Xunzi's approach to ethics is decidedly practical, in that he is genuinely trying to follow the Way himself and to get others to do so as well. For this reason, much of his writing on ethics is more in the vein of advice than theorizing. Even so, that does not preclude him from having certain theoretical commitments that underlie that advice, and in what follows I shall attempt to explain those theoretical commitments and why it is valuable to attend to them, but that should not be taken as an attempt to make Xunzi into an ethical theorist in the vein of contemporary philosophers.[4]

1 The Main Elements of Xunzi's Ethics

With these preliminaries in mind, let us now turn to Xunzi's text, and let us start with a linguistic point. In English, ethical prescriptions are often put forward in terms of what is "right" or what a person "should" or "ought" to be like. Classical Chinese has terms that can serve much the same function as these English words, but Xunzi himself rarely uses those terms to present his ethical views. Rather, he conveys such ideas through a number of other expressions, and I will review a few of them here, both as a means to discuss how to approach the study of Xunzi's ethics and as a means to survey some of the main elements in his ethical views. Due to the complexity of the subject matter and limits of space, the survey to follow will of necessity be highly selective: instead of offering a comprehensive treatment, I aim to provide a general orientation to the text, especially for those who are relatively new to it.

Since we have already mentioned Xunzi's notion of the Way, we can begin by observing that in many of Xunzi's discussions, it is often simply taken for granted that those whom he is addressing want (or should want) already to know and follow the Way,[5] and so one manner in which he presents his ethical views is simply in terms of what is or is not (part of) the Way. As an example of this manner of

[3] Here I merely report the current situation, rather than endorsing it. The desirability or undesirability of treating ethics as a theoretical inquiry is itself a topic of no small debate, but one that would not be appropriate on this occasion.

[4] The discipline of "applied ethics" is arguably closer to what Xunzi is doing, but even applied ethics as commonly practiced today tends to be more theoretical than Xunzi's own approach.

[5] Of course, Xunzi does at times offer reasons for wanting to follow the Way. However, since those remarks pertain more to the question of "Why be moral?" than "What is the content of morality?" (which is my focus in this essay), I will not be discussing them further here.

presentation, and one that will also serve to introduce a major element of Xunzi's ethics, consider the following: "Learning comes to ritual and then stops, for this is called the ultimate point in the Way" (HKCS 1/3/10, H 5.140–41).[6] In what sense ritual should be seen as the "ultimate point" in the Way is an issue to which we will return later (p. 76 below), but for the time being it is sufficient simply to note that the force of such a remark is to prescribe in very strong terms that one *should* practice ritual.

In speaking of "ritual," Xunzi has in mind a particular set of standards for behavior that he believes were created by great rulers of the past. These standards pertain to virtually every aspect of life, including what and how one eats and drinks, what clothing to wear and how to wear it, the placement and manner of one's dwelling, when and how to move or stay still, the expression to have on one's face, and more (HKCS 2/5/12–15, H 10.38–47). The situations they cover also range from what we would now think of as everyday etiquette to distinctive occasions such as weddings or funerals. In this regard, the English word "ritual" does not do full justice to the Chinese term *li* 禮 for which it serves as the standard translation, though I will continue to use it here for the sake of convenience.

There are some further important points to note about the rituals. The first is that for Xunzi they are, in a primary sense, *traditions* that have been handed down from the past and that help connect later generations to earlier generations, but at the same time, they also have the character of *rules*, as can be seen in remarks like this:

> According to ritual, when a feudal lord summons his minister, the minister does not wait for his chariot to be harnessed, but goes off running, making a shambles of his clothing. . . . According to ritual, when the Son of Heaven summons a feudal lord,[7] the feudal lord rides his chariot, pulled by men, out to the horses. (HKCS 27/126/13–14, H 288.15 – 289.21)

Here, the rituals address one kind of situation, namely a summons by one's superior, but they are keyed to different relations (a minister summoned by a feudal lord, versus a feudal lord summoned by the Son of Heaven), and they dictate various *highly specific actions* accordingly. Insofar as Xunzi prescribes the practice of ritual as the "ultimate point" in the Way, and in turn the rituals pertain—as noted in the previous paragraph—to virtually every aspect of life, Xunzi's ethics requires learning and following a large number of traditions as rules for conduct. Below, we shall see that the rituals are not absolutely inviolable rules on Xunzi's view, but for now the salient point is simply that Xunzi's thought gives a significant place to rules (or at any rate, standards that operate like rules), which is a position that has been regarded by many thinkers over history to be important, even essential, to ethics.[8]

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[6] Compare also the similar remark about ritual as "ultimate" at HKCS 19/92/15–16, H 205.163–64. All translations of the *Xunzi* here are taken or modified from Hutton (2014).

[7] The title *tianzi* 天子 ("Son of Heaven") was the official title of the ruler of the Zhou dynasty, who was regarded as having authority over the *zhuhou* 諸侯 ("feudal lords"), to whom he awarded control of particular territories.

[8] One reason for why rituals occupy such a prominent place in Xunzi's ethics is that he believes that human nature is bad, and hence that in general people must depend on tradition and other resources outside themselves in order to learn how to be good. This point is discussed at length in the essays

In the meantime, let us turn to another set of expressions used by Xunzi in presenting his ethical views. Apart from statements about what is or is not (part of) the Way, many of Xunzi's ethical prescriptions also come in the form of remarks describing the attributes of one of two ideal figures whom he takes to follow the Way perfectly or nearly perfectly, namely the *junzi* 君子 ("gentleman") and the *shengren* 聖人 ("sage"),[9] where again it is presumed that those to whom he is speaking want (or should want) already to become gentlemen and sages and are capable of doing so.[10] Here are two such descriptions:

> And so, the gentleman's relation to right words is that he enjoys them in his thoughts, takes comfort in putting them into practice, and delights in speaking them. (HKCS 5/19/11–12, H 37.178–81)

> How joyfully he upholds the Way without tiring! . . . How magnanimously he takes joy in people's goodness! How apprehensively he fears people's wrongdoing! Such a one can be called a sage. (HKCS 8/31/1–3, H 59.266 – 60.272)

One significant feature of these and many other such passages is that they are not confined to describing just the externally observable behavior of the gentleman and sage, but moreover include discussion of the underlying psychology that motivates and informs that behavior, namely their feelings, attitudes, desires, and so on. By that very token, since the gentleman and sage are the models one is to follow, such comments serve to prescribe not only certain kinds of conduct, but also certain psychological states and inclinations as well. We may thus say that Xunzi's ethics is concerned with the sort of person one ought to be *as a whole*, and that the Way he advocates is a way to live *overall*, rather than merely the right way to act. Also, to the extent that Xunzi is concerned with a person's tendencies of thought, feeling, and action, we may say that virtues form an important component of his ethics.[11]

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by Tang Siufu and Aaron Stalnaker in this volume, so I will not explore it here. However, in addition to its role as a corrective to human nature, another imporant reason for ritual's prominent place in Xunzi's view has to do with how ritual relates to the other elements of his ethics. I discuss this issue further below in the main text, on pp. 75–76.

[9] A few passages in the text treat the gentleman as second best after the sage, but many other passages make no distinction between them or even treat them as equivalent. The passages that differentiate the gentleman from the sage appear mostly in contexts where Xunzi is speaking in detail about stages of moral development, whereas the passages expressing Xunzi's ethical ideals tend to overlook any such distinction. For these reasons, in this essay I will largely bypass the distinction as well, and readers looking for treatment of cases where the distinction is more relevant are advised to consult Aaron Stalnaker's contribution to this volume.

[10] As per note 5 above, Xunzi also offers some reasons for wanting to become a gentleman or sage, and he is explicit that in some sense ordinary "people in the streets" all have the potential for achieving such moral perfection (HKCS 23/116/6, H 254.252). Again, though, I will not discuss those passages here, since they pertain to a different set of questions than the focus of this chapter.

[11] How to understand "virtue" in relation to Chinese texts is a potentially contentious issue that I cannot analyze in depth here. In order to avoid confusion, in this essay I am not using "virtue" as a translation of the Chinese term *de* 德, though "virtue" is how that word is most commonly translated. Rather, as I deploy it, "virtue" is simply a label for whatever tendencies or dispositions of thought, feeling, and action that a thinker prescribes for people as desirable, good, and/or praise-